
G O S P E L A D V O C A T E S E R I E S

Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary

ON

UNIFORM BIBLE LESSONS

FOR THE

CHURCHES OF CHRIST

1959

This commentary is based on the Uniform Bible Lessons for the Churches of Christ

THIRTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL VOLUME

PRICE

Paper Covers

Single copy, postpaid	\$1.10
Five or more copies to same address, each, net.....	\$1.00

Clothbound

Single copy, postpaid	\$1.50
Five or more copies to same address, each, net	\$1.35

ORDER FROM

GOSPEL ADVOCATE COMPANY
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

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PREFACE

The lessons contained in this volume are intended primarily for those who are interested in teaching the Bible in the church's program of work in what is commonly known as the Lord's day Bible study period. Those who have the responsibility of teaching are interested in such helps as will aid them in doing their work well, but any wide-awake student is also desirous of help in learning the will of the Lord. This book, while intended primarily for teachers, is by no means limited to them.

There is nothing which can take the place of the Bible itself, but anyone who thinks that he does not need any help in the study of the word of God is sadly mistaken. J. W. McGarvey said that the man who attempts to gain a knowledge of the Bible by his own unaided powers, while the aid furnished by a multitude of learned and devout predecessors is at hand, seems to declare himself the equal in exegetical power of all who have gone before him. He continues, "In no other department of human study do we reject the aid of our fellow students; why should we reject them in this?"

The author of this volume has endeavored to collect and bring into a convenient compass some of the best ideas which are available, in addition to his own comments, so that the student of the Word may have at close range a commentary on the lesson of the hour. And it is gratifying to know that thousands of people are using this annual every week. The following words from the pen of Charles H. Spurgeon seem to be appropriate here. They were written primarily for preachers, but are equally applicable to teachers.

"The preachers who can entirely dispense with notes must be few; but, if their preaching is up to the mark, they are happy men. Some go on crutches, and read almost all the sermon; this, as a rule, must be a lame business. The most of us need to carry a staff, even if we do not often lean upon it. The perfectly able man requires nothing of the kind. I am not one of these first class brethren; 'with my staff I have crossed over this Jordan,' and I hereby lend it to any who feel that they can pursue their journey by its aid.

"As we pour a little water down a pump to help it to draw up a stream from below, so may these sermon notes refresh many a jaded mind, and then set it working so as to develop its own resources."

This is the thirty-eighth annual volume which the Gospel Advocate Company has published for the use of churches of Christ, and the fourteenth which has borne the title, *Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary on Bible School Lessons*.

Both the writer and the publishers sincerely trust that this volume will prove to be helpful to the many thousands of teachers and students who make use of it throughout the years.

THE AUTHOR

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LESSONS FOR 1959

FIRST QUARTER

God, Creator of All Things.....	Lesson I—January 4	Gen. 1: 1-3, 26-31; 2: 1-3
Woman, a Help Meet for Man	Lesson II—January 11	Gen. 2: 15-25
The First Sin	Lesson III—January 18	Gen. 3: 1-13
Cain and Abel	Lesson IV—January 25	Gen. 4: 1-12
Great Wickedness in the Earth	Lesson V—February 1	Gen. 6: 1-12
The Flood	Lesson VI—February 8	Gen. 7: 1-12
Covenant of the Rainbow	Lesson VII—February 15	Gen. 9: 8-17
Confusion of Tongues	Lesson VIII—February 22	Gen. 11; 1-9
The Call of Abram	Lesson IX—March 1	Gen. 12: 1-9
Abram and Lot	Lesson X—March 8	Gen. 13: 5-15
Abram Delivers Lot	Lesson XI—March 15	Gen. 14: 13-24
God's Covenant with Abram	Lesson XII—March 22	Gen. 15: 5-18
Birth of Ishmael	Lesson XIII—March 29	Gen. 16: 1-16

SECOND QUARTER

Birth of Jesus	Lesson I—April 5	Matt. 1: 17-25
Herod Seeks the Death of Jesus.....	Lesson II—April 12	Matt. 2: 1-12
John the Forerunner of Jesus	Lesson III—April 19	Matt. 3: 1-6
The Temptation of Jesus	Lesson IV—April 26	Matt. 4: 1-11
Subjects of the Kingdom	Lesson V—May 3	Matt. 5: 1-12, 43-48
First Things First	Lesson VI—May 10	Matt. 6: 19-34
Instruction and Admonition	Lesson VII—May 17	Matt. 7: 12-27
Works of Jesus	Lesson VIII—May 24	Matt. 8: 14-27
Apostles Sent Forth	Lesson IX—May 31	Matt. 10; 1-15
Warning and Invitation	Lesson X—June 7	Matt. 11: 20-30
Jesus and the Sabbath	Lesson XI—June 14	Matt. 12: 1-13
Parable of the Sower	Lesson XII—June 21	Matt. 13: 1-9, 18-23
Five Parables of the Kingdom	Lesson XIII—June 28	Matt. 13: 31-33, 44-52

THIRD QUARTER

	Lesson I—July 5	
John the Baptist Beheaded		Matt. 14: 1-12
	Lesson II—July 12	
Jesus and the Canaanitish Woman.....		Matt. 15: 21-31
	Lesson III—July 19	
Peter's Confession and the Lord's Promise.....		Matt. 16: 13-26
	Lesson IV—July 26	
The Transfiguration of Jesus		Matt. 17: 1-13
	Lesson V—August 2	
Jesus Teaches Humility.....		Matt. 18: 1-S, 10-14: 19: 13-15
	Lesson VI—August 9	
Jesus Teaches Forgiveness.....	Matt. 18: 21-35
	Lesson VII—August 16	
Jesus and the Young Ruler		Matt. 19: 16-30
	Lesson VIII—August 23	
The Road to True Greatness		Matt. 20: 17-28
	Lesson IX—August 30	
Jesus in the Temple		Matt. 22: 15-22. 34-40
	Lesson X—September 6	
The Final Judgment		Matt. 25: 31-46
	Lesson XI—September 13	
Jesus in Gethsemane		Matt. 26: 31-46
	Lesson XII—September 20	
The Crucifixion		Matt. 27: 33-50
	Lesson XIII—September 27	
The Risen Lord		Matt. 28: 1-10. 16-20

FOURTH QUARTER

	Lesson I—October 4	
Birth of Isaac Promised		Gen. 17: 1-8. 15-19
	Lesson II—October 11	
Abraham Intercedes for Sodom		Gen. 18: 23-33
	Lesson III—October 18	
Abraham's Faith Tested		Gen. 22: 1-13
	Lesson IV—October 25	
Isaac a Man of Peace		Gen. 26: 12-25
	Lesson V—November 1	
Jacob at Bethel		Gen. 28: 10-22
	Lesson VI—November 8	
Jacob and Esau Reconciled.....		Gen. 33: 1-11
	Lesson VII—November 15	
Jacob Worships Jehovah.....		Gen. 35: 1-15
	Lesson VIII—November 22	
Joseph Is Sold Into Egypt		Gen. 37: 23-36
	Lesson IX—November 29	
Joseph Made Ruler of Egypt		Gen. 41: 46-57
	Lesson X—December 6	
Joseph's Brethren in Egypt.....		Gen. 44: 18-34
	Lesson XI—December 13	
Joseph Forgives His Brethren.....		Gen. 45: 1-15
	Lesson XII—December 20	
Jacob's Last Days.....	Gen. 46: 1-7. 28-30; 47: 28-30; 49: 28-33	
	Lesson XIII—December 27	
Joseph Returns Good for Evil		Gen. 50: 15-26

FIRST QUARTER

STUDIES IN GENESIS

Aim: *To discover anew, in the first book of the Bible, the many evidences of God's greatness and grace, and so to increase our faith in him as the Creator of the world and the Supreme Ruler in all the affairs of men.*

Lesson I—January 4, 1959

GOD, CREATOR OF ALL THINGS

Lesson Text

Gen. 1: 1-3, 26-31; 2: 1-3

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2 And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

3 And God said. Let there be light: and there was light.

26 And God said. Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

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

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

29 And God said, Behold, I have

GOLDEN TEXT.—"For he spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." (Psalm 33: 9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 19: 1-15.

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

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

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

1 And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

2 And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

3 And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made.

Daily Bible Readings

December 29. M.

December 30. T.

December 31. W..

January 1. T.

January 2. F.

January 3. S. .

January 4. S.....

Story of Creation (Gen. 1: 6-31)

Jehovah, the Creator (Isa. 40: 18-26)

Design of Creation (Rev. 4: 1—11)

Works of God (Psalm 33: 1-9)

Christ, Creator (Col. 1: 9-17)

God's Care (Psalm 104: 1-14)

Praise of the Creator (Psalm 8: 1-9)

TIME.—From "the beginning" to A.M. 1 (the first year of the world).

PLACE.—Presumably in or near the location of the garden of Eden.

PERSONS.—God, the Word, and the Spirit.

Introduction

Those who study the Holy Scriptures should make an effort to acquire a working knowledge of the Book of Genesis, not only because it is the first book in the Bible, but chiefly because it is preeminently the book of beginnings. No one can understand the remainder of the Bible, if he is not acquainted with the origin of Biblical history. The relation therefore of the Book of Genesis to the rest of the Bible, along with the varied and striking character of its own contents, makes it one of the most prominent books in the Sacred Collection.

We may think of the name of the first book of the Bible as being derived from the opening words "In the beginning," or from the contents of the book itself. It is, as has already been suggested, a book of beginnings. It would be both interesting and profitable, as the class goes through the Book of Genesis during this quarter, to keep an account of the various beginnings which are recorded on its pages. For example, we read of the beginning of the material universe in its present form; the beginning of the human race; the beginning of human sin; the beginning of the scheme of human redemption; the beginning of the nations of the earth; the beginning of the Hebrew nation; and the beginning of a life of faith and consecration in God's service.

When we come to analyze the Book of Genesis, we may consider it from different viewpoints, as, for instance, a broad outline of the book may be described as (1) A General History from Adam to Abraham, 1; 1-11:9; (2) The History of Abraham, 11; 10-25; 18; (3) The History of Isaac and Jacob, 25: 19-36; 43; and (4) The

History of Joseph and his Brethren, 37: 1-50: 26. But as we look at the book more in detail, we may observe that the term "generations" marks several natural divisions. An outline with this point of view in mind would be as follows: (1) the Creation, 1: 1-2: 3; (2) The Generations of the Heavens and of the Earth, 2: 4-4: 26; (3) The Generations of Adam, 5: 1-6: 8; (4) The Generations of Noah, 6: 9-9: 29; (5) The Generations of the Sons of Noah, 10: 1-11: 9; (6) The Generations of Shem, 11: 10-26: (7) The Generations of Terah, 11: 27-25: 11; (8) The Generations of Ishmael, 25: 12-18; (9) The Generations of Isaac, 25: 19-35: 29; (10) The Generations of Esau, 36: 1-37: 1; and (11) The Generations of Jacob, 37: 2-50: 26.

If the Book of Genesis is studied from the standpoint of its "generations," it will be seen that its composition it to a great extent a compilation of family documents. Moses who wrote this historical work evidently made use of the materials which were available, pretty much as Luke did when he wrote the book of the New Testament which bears his name. See Luke 1: 1-4. The Book of Genesis has a genealogical character which is due, no doubt, to the author's purpose in tracing the fulfillment of God's purpose in redemption through the line of the chosen people. These genealogies therefore are an essential part of the book, and they form a consecutive series from Adam to Jacob, with occasional interruptions for the purpose of introducing collateral and connected facts which are necessary to the full development of the history.

The Golden Text

"For he spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast."

This passage is taken from the Thirty-third Psalm which is devoted to the praise of the Creator and Preserver of the world. The full statement of the immediate context is, "By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea

together as a heap: He layeth up the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear Jehovah: Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast."

If we read all that which the Bible says regarding creation, we will learn that God was the great Architect or Designer, and the Source of

all things; Christ, or as he was originally known, the Word executed the plans, or actually did the creating; while the Spirit gave form to, organized, animated, and gave laws for direction. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made." (John 1; 1-3.) "For in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist." (Col. 1: 16, 17.)

If people would only stop and

think of the significance of the creation, they would, as the psalmist exhorts, stand in awe of him; for people and all they have and are are the handiwork of God. "The God that made the world and all things therein, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 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; and he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; 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: for in him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17; 24-28a.)

The Text Explained

From "the Beginning" to Time

(Gen. 1; 1-3)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The words with which the Bible begins are sublime. They tell us the very first thing which is possible for us to know about the world in which we live. It was created by God in the beginning. We have no means of knowing just how long Jehovah existed before his creative voice broke the silence of eternity. The *beginning* refers to the beginning of the created universe; not to the beginning of God. There is no beginning nor ending with him. He is eternal—from everlasting to everlasting.

It is not possible for the mind of man to go any farther back into the distant past than to the beginning. If we could go back beyond the beginning, we would by that act demonstrate that the beginning is not the beginning. Only God was before the event of creation; and the Bible, which is his inspired revelation to man, does not in any place attempt to prove the fact or truth of God. He is everywhere taken for granted. There must be a First Cause for the existence of the universe; and only the God who is revealed in the Bible can satisfy that demand.

And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep:—The first thing that we

should fix in our mind here is exactly what the Bible says. Genesis does not say that "the heavens and the earth" were waste and void, but only the earth was in that chaotic condition. We are told by some eminent Hebrew scholars that the term "was" could just as well have been translated "became;" and if that is true, then the passage would read, "And the earth *became* waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." The Aramaic rendering of this passage is, "And the earth had become ruined and uninhabited."

If what has just been said is true, then the earth, along with the rest of the universe, was originally perfect as the creative work of God; but that subsequent to the beginning the earth collapsed and "became waste and void." And here again we have no means of knowing when that occurred, but we do know that it was unfitted for the habitation of man when the next event transpired, namely,

And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. The marginal reading is "was brooding upon," that is, the Spirit was brooding upon the chaotic condition of the earth. The Spirit's work in the economy of God is to organize, animate, and give law or direction to creation.

And God said, Let there be light:

and there was light. This verse records the beginning of the historic period. The three great events of Gen. 1: 1-3 are (1) the beginning, verse 1; (2) the collapse and subsequent chaotic condition of the earth, verse 2; and (3) the beginning of time, verse 3. The entire first chapter of Genesis, beginning with verse 3, is a record of the third event, namely, that of getting the earth in a suitable condition for the habitation of the man whom God planned to create.

The original word for "create" in verse 1 does not occur again in the chapter until we reach verse 21; there is an entirely different original word to describe that which was done in the intervening verses. The first of these original words means to make something outright, or out of nothing; while the second term has reference to renovation or reconstruction. The heavens and the earth had not previously existed when they were created (cf. Heb. 11; 3; Job 26: 7); and inasmuch as the same original word for create is found in verses 21ff., the implication is that the animal life and man had also not previously existed.

The Origin and Dominion of Man

(Gen. 1: 26-31)

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. This and the following verses of chapter 1 tell of the creation of man and the purpose for which he was created. As we read of the wonderful work of verses 3-25 we learn nothing of the reason for it; but as we begin with verse 26 we are told why all that was done. Man was made to rule over all of God's creation, and was himself made tributary only to his Maker. All of the handiwork of God was made so that man would have a suitable dwelling-place.

When God said, "*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,*" the use of the plural indicates that this great act involved Jehovah, the Word, and the Spirit. This is a subject which is beyond the comprehension of finite man. The best that we

can do is to offer a simple illustration. Man, his word, and his spirit are one and they are also in a sense distinct. A man and his word are not the same, and yet they are inseparably joined together—his word is his means of expressing himself to others. The same is true of the man and his spirit: they are in a sense distinct, and yet they cannot be separated without bringing an end to life. Man's spirit is the manifestation of his power or energy. Thus, in the case of God he is one, but he manifests himself through his Word (communication) and his Spirit (power or energy).

The two Hebrew words used in this chapter for create or make are forcefully illustrated in the case of man, as may be seen in the closing part of chapter 1 and the beginning of chapter 2. His body was formed (asah) from the dust of the earth, that is, from material which previously existed, while his spiritual nature came directly from God (bara).

What does the Bible mean by saying that man was made in the image of God? It was not in his erect form or physical features. It was not in his intellectual capacity; for the devil and his angels are equal, if not superior, to man in this respect. It was not in his immortality; for man had a beginning, a thing not true of God. It must have been in the moral nature of his soul or spirit, or what may be described as original righteousness. "Behold, this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." Man's restoration from sin, that is, his conversion or return to God, is declared to be a new creation. See 2 Cor. 5: 17. "And have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him." (Col. 3: 10.) "And put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth." (Eph. 4: 24.) Knowledge, righteousness, and holiness of truth, then, must be the grand features of the divine likeness.

The psalmist tells us that God made man to have dominion over the works of his hands, and that he put all things under his feet. See Psalm 8: 6. Man therefore has responsibilities second only to those of God.

But man is directly akin to God and if he will do as God directs he will have no difficulty in carrying out his assigned duties. This thought should humble every man and cause him to fear to live a single day in sin.

A Complementary Statement of Creation (Gen. 2: 1-3)

And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. This is not to be understood as a separate account of creation, but rather as a recapitulation and an amplification of that which was said in the preceding chapter. Chapter 1 may be considered as a full or general statement of the events, while the first part of chapter 2 is more specific. Chapter 1 places the emphasis on creation itself, while this section of our lesson focuses our attention on some of the objects in view. If we read both the first and second chapters together we will see creation detailed in the first, and the place of man outlined in the second. It is man's starting-point in human history.

And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. The term "finished" is used here in the sense of brought to completion. All the work of creation was done in six days, that is, all that was done in making the earth a suitable place for man to inhabit; and then when that was done, that is, when the place was prepared, God created man to dwell in it.

Our word "sabbath" comes from the term "rested," and it should be considered here in its primary meaning. The word literally means to cease, a cessation. Paul discusses this original idea at some length in

the fourth chapter of Hebrews. The Lord's people will enter into their joy after they have finished, that is, after they have ceased from their labors in this life. Many people seem to find it difficult to think of the term "sabbath" apart from the word "seventh." Sabbath and seventh are not synonyms. The basic meaning of "sabbath" is and always has been cessation.

And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it: because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made. This is the first time that the word "sanctify" is used in the Bible, and it means to consecrate or set apart for sacred use. Later on in the history of his people, God gave Moses specific instructions regarding the sabbath, and he framed the commandment in this way, "*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.*" Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: *for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*" (Ex. 20: 8-11.)

The expression "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" implies that the Israelites knew something about it; for they could not remember that about which they were entirely ignorant. One of the motives which was assigned for keeping the day was the fact which is stated in our lesson today: it commemorated that which God did. Cf. Deut. 5: 15. They had likewise *ceased* from Egyptian bondage.

Questions for Discussion

What is the basis for the studies in this quarter? and with what aim?

Give the subject of the lesson for today.

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Show something of the importance of studying the Book of Genesis.

What is the chief characteristic of this book?

How is this part of the Old Testament related to the rest of the Bible?

How did the term "Genesis" come to be

applied to the first book of the Sacred Collection?

What are some of the "beginnings" listed in it?

Give an analysis of Genesis.

Why is so much emphasis placed on the several generations?

The Golden Text

From what part of the Scriptures is the golden text taken?

What does the Bible teach regarding the plan of creation?

What was the part of each of the members of the Godhead?

What impression should the facts of creation have on the average person?

From -the Beginning" to Time

Discuss the significance of the first statement of the Bible.

When was "the beginning"? and what beginning?

Why is no effort made in the Scriptures to prove the existence of God?

What is meant by the earth's being waste and void?

When did that happen?

What did the Spirit do and when?

What are the three great events of Gen. 1: 1-3?

What is the purpose of verses 3-31?

What does the word "create" mean? and what is implied in the term "made"?

What is the basic difference between "create" and "renovate"?

The Origin and Dominion of Man

Why did God want to make man?

Why say, "Let us," etc.?

How are God, the Word, and the Spirit related?

In what sense was man made in the image of God? Give reasons for your answer.

Why is man able to do the work which God assigned to him?

A Complementary Statement of Creation

How are the facts in this section of our lesson related to those in chapter 1?

What change in the emphasis is seen in the two chapters? and why?

What is said regarding the seventh day?

What is the meaning of the word "finished"? and what was finished?

In what sense did God "rest"?

From where did our word "sabbath" come? and what is the basic meaning of the term?

What application does Paul make of the idea in Hebrews 4?

What did God do for the seventh day? and why?

How is the fourth commandment of the Decalogue related to this lesson?

How could the Israelites "remember" the sabbath day?

What motives were given to them for keeping the sabbath? and why?

Lesson II—January 11, 1959

WOMAN, A HELP MEET FOR MAN

Lesson Text

Gen. 2: 15-25

15 And Je-ho'-vah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

16 And Je-ho'-vah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

IT But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

18 And Je-ho'-vah God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.

19 And out of the ground Je-ho'-vah God formed every beast of the field, and every bird of the heavens; and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them: and whatsoever the man called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

20 And the man gave names to all

cattle, and to the birds of the heavens, and to every beast of the field; but for man there was not found a help meet for him.

21 And Je-ho'-vah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof:

22 And the rib, which Je-ho'-vah God had taken from the man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23 And the man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man."* (1 Cor. 11: 9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Eph. 5: 22-33.

Daily Bible Readings

January 5. M.

January 6. T.

A Good Woman (Prov. 30: 10-31)

Women Serve Jesus (Matt. 26: 6-13)

January 7. W.
 January 8. T.
 January 9. F.
 January 10. S.
 January 11. S.

Women Labor With Paul (Phil. 4: 1-3)
 Duties of Women (Tit. 2; 1-6)
 Apparel of Women (1 Pet. 3: 1-4)
 Needy Widows (1 Tim. 5: 1-6)
 A Faithful Wife (Acts 18: 24-26)

TIME.—Probably A.M. 1, or 4004 B.C.

PLACE.—Probably in or near the location of the garden of Eden.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Adam, and Eve.

Introduction

The origin and place of woman in the divine economy is a subject in which we all should be interested, but it is a subject which demands careful attention, if we are not to go astray in some of its details. The full account of the origin of woman is found in the second chapter of Genesis, and if one does not watch his step, he is likely to be led to the conclusion that considerable time elapsed after man was created before his companion stood by his side.

If we go back to chapter 1 and read of the creation of man we shall also read of the creation of woman in the same connection: "And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; *male and female created he them.*" (Gen. 1: 27.) This strongly implies that both the man and the woman were created on the same day—the sixth day. Alexander Campbell, in commenting on this, said, "Indeed, he not only created man on the sixth day of the first week, but on the same

day he solemnly enacted matrimony, simultaneously with woman's creation. This was the only marriage in the annals of time unpreceded by courtship; the only marriage, too, celebrated when the parties were only one day old. Everything on this occasion was, of course, original and unprecedented."

The reason for the creation is clearly stated in the text: she was to be a help suited to the man's needs. The term "helpmeet" does not exactly express the idea which is found in the Scriptures. Man alone was incomplete for the purpose which God had in mind, and it was therefore necessary that a companion be created which would supply that need, hence the statement, I will make him a help meet, that is, one answering to his needs. This idea expresses woman's true relationship to the man. She is his counterpart, his complement, and whenever this is realized in marriage, God's purpose is being fulfilled.

The Golden Text

"For neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." This statement is in complete harmony with the narrated facts of our lesson text. The man was created first, that is, before the woman, and when there was found no suitable companion for him in all the previous creation, woman was made for him. This does not mean that she was made simply for his own pleasure, but rather in order to enable man to fulfill his highest and greatest possibilities as God has ordained.

The woman, then, was the crowning act of the last scene in the drama of creation. She, as well as the man, was the offspring of Jehovah's creative power, and was a microcosm of animated nature in a personal and social embodiment, in which the Creator and the creature are for ever

united in the bonds of a holy compact, "pregnant with all the elements of social being and social blessedness."

Most people are acquainted with the remark which suggests that woman was not taken from the head of man, lest she be regarded as his superior; nor from his foot, lest she be looked upon as his inferior; but rather from his side, so that she could be thought of as his equal. There is, no doubt, an element of truth in this viewpoint, but it should be interpreted in the light of such scriptures as 1 Cor. 11: 2-16; Eph. 5: 22-33; 1 Tim. 2: 11-15; and 1 Pet. 3: 1-6. Our lesson today deals, not only with the creation of woman, but also with the primary ordinance of marriage which was and is essential to both human life and the elevation of the race.

The Text Explained

Work and Responsibility Ordained for Man

(Gen. 2: 15-17)

And Jehovah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. There are some people who look upon labor as a curse which resulted from the fall of man, but the error of that idea is clearly seen in the passage now before us. Man's assignment to dress and keep the garden of Eden was made before sin entered into the world. This clearly shows that God intended from the very beginning that man have work to do. The necessity of service is one of the fundamental principles of man's existence. Few things bring more genuine satisfaction than that which comes from the performance of the work which God has given us to do.

After sin entered into the world there was a condition brought forth which did make toil out of man's work; but that was because the ground itself was cursed: 'And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou returned unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.' (Gen. 3: 17-19.)

The New Testament specifically teaches that it is disorderly conduct for an able-bodied Christian not to work. "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. (2 Thess. 3: 10-12.) Read also verses 6 through 15.

And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good

and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. It is here for the first time that we are introduced to the idea that man is capable of receiving and understanding instruction from his Maker; and herein is also seen man's responsibility. His freedom was to be a freedom within certain limits. The authority of God must always be recognized and respected. One prohibition may seem insignificant within itself; but if it is disregarded the result will be the eternal condemnation of the soul.

We are not told anything about the particular nature of the tree which is here called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, other than the fact that when its fruit (whatever it was) was eaten, the one eating would acquire the ability to tell good from evil. See Gen. 3: 1-7. The tree stood before the primeval pair as a test of their obedience. The principle of obedience can be emphasized as easily one way as another; but it is the prerogative of God to designate the manner of the test.

The result of disobedience is declared to be death, the first mention of such a penalty in the Scriptures; and it is well to keep in mind that the idea conveyed by death is that of separation rather than annihilation. James says, "For as the body *apart* from the spirit is dead, even so faith *apart* from works is dead." (James 2: 26.)

Making Man Conscious of His Need

(Gen. 2: 18-20)

And Jehovah God said. It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him. This is another way of showing that man is separate and distinct from the brute creation. He was alone so far as any companionship was concerned. That is what God said about it and it could never be otherwise without a further creation.

And out of the ground Jehovah God formed every beast of the field, and every bird of the heavens; and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them: and whatsoever the man called every living creature, that was the name thereof. This is a recapitulation of the

events of creation as narrated in chapter 1. Some Bible students are of the opinion that one of the reasons for bringing the lower creation before man was to make him conscious of his own need. Adam's ability to name all the creatures was a demonstration of his dominion over the natural sphere. References to man's exalted station in the universe are found in various parts of the Bible (cf. Psalm 8), and some one has suggested that it is not altogether speculative to try to imagine the direction this lordship would have taken if sin had not entered into the world. Cf. Isa. 11: 6-9; Heb. 2: 5-10; Rom. 8: 18-23.

And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the heavens, and to every beast of the field; but for man there was not found a help meet for him. The design of this scene seems to have been to show Adam that nothing alive of God's creation was on an equal footing with him. Furthermore, it is reasonable to suppose that all the various animals and birds came with their mates, thus impressing the man of his own need with respect to companionship. The term "found" implies that an effort was made to determine whether or not there was among the created things a help suited to his needs. This, of course, was done for the benefit of Adam, and not to convince God of the lack: for Jehovah already knew that there was no such help before the animals were brought to man. See verse 18

Woman Created and Marriage Instituted

(Gen. 2: 21-25)

And Jehovah caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof: Unless one is careful, he is likely to try to interpret this transaction in the light of the time and effort which a surgeon would require if he were performing such an operation. But when we consider the fact that the entire universe, along with all the living creatures of the earth, was created in the short space of six days it would seem improper for us to think that comparable time and effort to that of a surgeon were inquired of God. Adam's sleep and the whole process of the creation of woman were miraculous, and the

time element may have been instantaneous. Alexander Campbell thinks that the entire time involved may not have been even a second.

And the rib, which Jehovah God had taken from the man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. Hebrew scholars tell us that the original term which is here translated "rib" also means "side," and that it could have been so rendered here. The statement made by Adam in the next verse regarding the newly created being seems to confirm this idea, that is, that the woman was not fashioned from a mere piece of bone—a bare rib.

And the man said. This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. This statement seems to imply that a part of both the bone and the flesh of Adam were taken, and from them the woman was made. God could have, of course, made the woman out of the dust of the earth, just as he did the man; but if that had been done, she would have appeared to him as a distinct being, with no natural relation to him. But since Jehovah made her out of a part of the man himself, he saw that she was of the same nature, that is, of the same flesh and bone as himself; and that would at once "ensure his affection, and excite his esteem."

Jehovah himself tells us why he made the woman, namely, a help suitable to man's needs: and this means that they complement each other. In answer to the question, What is woman? Campbell observes, "She is but the one-half of man—only the one-half of humanity. But she is, or may be, the better half. She is of a finer tissue in body, soul, and spirit: the last, and, we think—if mortals of such dim vision and within so contracted a horizon dare so think—decidedly the better half—not in muscular power, not in physical strength, not in animal courage, not in intellectual vigor, but in delicacy of thought, in sensitiveness of feeling, in patient endurance, in constancy of affection, in moral courage, and in soul absorbing devotion.

"But God did not for her own sake bestow upon her all these distinguishing qualities. He did not, indeed, create her immediately from the earth. Adam was made out of

the cold dust of Eden; but Eve was made out of the animated dust and from the left side of Adam—nearest offshoot from his heart. He not only made her out of the left side of the first man, but in holy wedlock he placed her there to protect the wound and vacuum whence her personal being came."

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. This passage clearly teaches that God has ordained that there shall be a more intimate connection formed between husband and wife than there can be between parents and children. This implies, of course, that when two people are united in marriage the tie which binds them together is the strongest bond which should affect their lives. This does not mean that children should love their parents less, but rather that they should love their companions more.

The divine conception of marriage is the union of one man and one woman for life. Jesus makes this plain in Matt. 19: 3-9: "And there came unto him Pharisees, trying him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said. Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and put her away? He saith unto them, Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: *but from the beginning it hath not been so.* And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away

committeth adultery." Jesus in making this statement struck at one of the most fruitful sources of the degradation of human society—namely, the departure from the divine plan for marriage, as given by God in the beginning of the race.

The Lord makes it plain that sin can enter in and break the union, but that is entirely contrary to God's will and purpose. Charles Foster Kent notes that "Jesus' teachings on this subject do not stand alone, but are an integral part of his practical philosophy of living. These principles, when applied to the problems of life, make his austere position eminently practical. It is the despondent husband or the nerve-racked wife who supremely needs the loyal love and sympathetic help of the one who too often selfishly seeks to escape these obligations through divorce. All the chivalry of Jesus' nature revolted against the craven cowardice and the beastly egoism revealed in an ordinary divorce procedure. He fought it not merely by direct command but by making love the ruling principle in human life and by thus eliminating the causes which lead to divorce. When husband and wife are working whole-heartedly for each other's happiness and highest development, divorce is an impossibility. The limitations and needs of the one tend only to inspire the sympathy and devotion of the other. A marriage consummated and interpreted in accord with Jesus' principle of living is impregnable. But if founded simply on the shifting sands of personal passion and caprice it is in constant danger of only adding to the hideous social wreckage of the divorce courts."

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.—Not only was the temperature perfect for their needs, but sin had not entered into their lives. No part of their body had been put to any improper use, and there was therefore no shame; for shame can arise only from a consciousness of sinful or irregular conduct.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of our lesson for today?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What can you say of the importance of this lesson?

When was the woman created? Give reasons for your answer.

Why was she created?

The Golden Text

How is the relation of man and woman expressed in the golden text?

In what sense was the woman created for the man?

Is it correct to say that woman was the crowning act of creation? Give reasons for your answer.

Discuss the creation of woman in the light of 1 Cor. 11: 2-16; Eph. 5: 22-33; 1 Tim. 2: 11-15, and 1 Pet. 3: 1-6.

How is the ordinance of marriage related to our lesson? and what of its importance?

Work and Responsibility Ordained for Man

When and why was work ordained for man?

What effect did sin have on work as it respects the human race?

What does the New Testament teach regarding the necessity of man's working? and why is this true?

What does the command regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil imply?

What does it show regarding man's freedom?

Why was this tree called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

What was the result of disobedience? and what of its nature?

Making Man Conscious of His Need

In what sense was man alone?

What did this show regarding his relation to the brute creation?

Why were the animals and birds brought before Adam? and how would this make him feel his need?

Woman Created and Marriage Instituted

What error are people likely to fall into regarding the creation of woman?

Do you think that the woman was made from a bare rib? Give reasons for your answer.

What did Adam mean by saying, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh?

What was the purpose of making the woman out of the man, rather than out of the dust?

In what way is marriage introduced in this lesson?

Why is man told to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife?

Does that mean that he should love his parents less? Give reasons for your answer.

What is the divine conception of marriage?

What alone in God's sight can break the marriage tie?

Show how the principles taught by Jesus will always prevent divorce?

Why were the first man and woman unashamed in their nakedness?

What does it take to make one ashamed today, as the average thinking goes?

Lesson III—January 18, 1959

THE FIRST SIN

Lesson Text

Gen. 3: 1-13

1 Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which Je-ho'-vah God had made. And he said unto the woman. Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden?

2 And the woman said unto the serpent. Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat:

3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.

6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked: and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

8 And they heard the voice of Je-ho'-vah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Je-ho'-vah God amongst the trees of the garden.

9 And Je-ho'-vah God called unto the man, and said unto him. Where art thou?

10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked: and I hid myself.

11 And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

12 And the man said. The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

13 And Je-ho'-vah God said unto the woman. What is this thou hast done? And the woman said. The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

Golden Text.—*"Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin."*
(John 8: 34b.)

Devotional Reading.—2 Cor. 11: 1-3.

Daily Bible Readings

January 12.	M.	.. Sin Defined (1 John 3: 4-10; 5: 17)
January 13.	T.	Progress of Sin (James 1: 12-18)
January 14.	W.	Sowing and Reaping (Gal. 6: 1-10)
January 15.	T.	Deliverance from Sin (1 John 1: 1-10)
January 16.	F.	Cain of the Evil One (1 John 3: 10-12)
January 17.	S.	Consequences of Sin (Rom. 2: 1-11)
January 18.	S.	Temptation of Christ (Matt. 4: 1-11)

Time.—A.M. 1, or probably soon thereafter, or 4004 B.C.

Place.—The garden of Eden.

Persons.—Jehovah. Adam, and Eve.

Introduction

The greatest problem which challenges us today is that of sin. There are other great problems, of course, but they all grow out of the problem of sin. When we have solved the problem of sin, all other problems which demand our attention have also been solved. The Bible reveals all that we need to know on the subject of sin and its solution, and it is to our interest that we try to understand that which is contained therein on this all important subject.

Sin, like everything else which is connected with the things of this world, had its beginning, and that is the story which is before us in this lesson. Sin entered the lives of the first pair when they listened to the evil one and turned aside from the commandment of the Lord. They were told what to do in language which they could understand, and which they did understand: but the woman was deceived by the tempter

and was led to think that she was benefiting herself when she sought to become wise by eating the forbidden fruit. Adam was not beguiled (1 Tim. 2: 14), but deliberately followed his wife into sin.

As we continue to read on through the Bible we are impressed with the fact that sin always results from a failure to listen to that which Jehovah commands. Because of Adam's transgression we have inherited a fallen nature and a proneness to sin. "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned." (Rom. 5: 12.) We are not responsible, however, for our inheritance, but for our yielding to sin; not for the Adamic or original sin, but of our personal sins. That which was lost in Adam has been gained in Christ by all who are willing to follow him.

The Golden Text

"Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin." This is the grim reality and the eternal truth regarding sin. No man is free who engages in sin. Every person who commits sin is in bondage, regardless of that which he may think about it. When Jesus spoke the words of this text, he was endeavoring to show men how they might be free, but their bondage was so great as to cause them to fail to understand his meaning. "They answered unto him, We are Abraham's seed, and have never yet been in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" (John 8: 33.) It was in reply to this statement that

Jesus spoke the words which serve as our golden text for today.

It is easy to see that the reply which those Jews made to the Lord's offer of freedom grew out of a misunderstanding of the kind of freedom he was talking about; and the same is true of people today. We must learn what essential bondage is before we are prepared to seek for and enjoy true freedom. For example, unbelief in spiritual verities leaves us slaves to the senses. The carnal-minded may fancy themselves possessed of large liberty, but earth and time at their best are narrow and limited, and must eventually give way to the judgment of God.

The awful tyranny of sin is evident when once it becomes the habit of life, and those who are so bound find themselves unable to shake off its shackles. Such people are like one who unwittingly takes hold of an electrifying machine: he writhes in pain and cries for deliverance, but he cannot let go the torturing thing. But the bondage of sin does not stop there; people are not always conscious of the fact that sin is holding them. When once the con-

science has become defiled by wrongdoing, man no longer considers that he is a sinner. When the elder brother was objecting to his father's receiving the returning prodigal, he said, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine," he was unaware that he was at that moment rejecting his father's pleadings. He was then and there in bondage to sin, but he did not realize it.

The Text Explained

The Temptation to Sin

(Gen. 3: 1-5)

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made. The word "subtle" means cunning, crafty, or artful. This implies that the tempter did not come boldly to the point and make it plain to the woman what he was attempting to do. Instead of talking plainly, the serpent insinuated and sought to raise doubts in the mind of the woman. There is no reason to think that the fear of a snake affected Eve as it does now; for this scene took place before the dread of any of the creatures under the rule of man became known.

Satan is not mentioned by name in this entire context, but there is no doubt that it was he who inspired the serpent in the temptation of Eve. "And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years." (Rev. 20: 2; cf. 12: 9.) "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lust of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof." (John 8: 44; cf. 2 Cor. 11: 3; 1 John 3: 8.)

And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden? It has already been observed in our studies in Genesis that all creation had been placed under the sovereignty of man, and this probably accounts for the fact that Satan worked through a serpent (a lower creature, but the most subtle) rather than to appear in person himself. No effort was made to

overpower the women in the temptation and compel her to yield to its influence. The first question which the serpent asked was calculated to raise suspicion in the mind of Eve. The language of the serpent was a wilful distortion of God's prohibition. Jehovah had never said that they must not eat of *any* of the trees; there was only one upon which the divine veto was placed.

And the woman said unto the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. This shows that Eve understood that which God had spoken, and there was therefore no reason for her to listen to anyone else; but the Bible says that she was deceived, that is, she was led to accept something else as being as good if not better than that which Jehovah had spoken.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. Here is the devil's first bold lie—God had said that they would die if they ate the fruit, but Satan said that that was not so. His, of course, was the lie. After raising a suspicion of God in the mind of the woman, Satan next proceeded to inject into her thinking a threefold doubt of him: (1) of his *goodness*, because of his restriction regarding the tree; (2) of his *righteousness*, in the assurance that they would not die; and (3) of his *holiness*, because they, too, would be as God to know good and evil.

Satan was able, by this subtle attack to lead the woman into unbelief, and from that to disobedience. It should be observed that the temptation was based primarily upon doubt of God's word; and what was true then is still true today. Furthermore, we are made to see that curiosity has a vital part in the success of temptation. Instead of allowing the temptation itself to have the emphasis, the curiosity of the victim is first excited, so that instead of seeing the true nature of the temptation (something which is evil), it is something curious and interesting. Our greatest security against temptation is in being shocked at it. Eve gazed and reflected when she should have fled from it.

Sin Enters the World

(Gen. 3: 6-8)

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat: and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. With the exception of the fact of creation itself, the entrance of sin into the world is the most important and far-reaching event in the world's history. Every sorrow, pain, and every death, both physical and eternal, can be traced directly to this first sin. Read Rom. 5: 12-21. Every bloody sacrifice throughout the Old Testament period was a vivid testimony to the fact of sin; and it required the offering of Christ himself to make possible the salvation of those who were held within its bondage. "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5: 21.)

We sometimes hear people complain that it is unreasonable to suppose that so much misery and despair should descend to all future generations from so little an act as the eating of an apple, or some other fruit. But this only shows a complete misunderstanding of the matter. It was not simply the eating of some kind of fruit which did the damage, but the rebellion against God. The eating of the fruit was only the manifestation of the state of the heart. Truly Satan, finding occasion,

through the commandment beguiled Eve, and through it slew her. See Rom. 7: 11. That is still his Satanic practice: for he has found occasion to deceive and slay countless thousands of others by the same method. Cf. Mark 16: 15, 16.

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked: and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons. No sooner had the first human pair sinned than a sense of their guilt fell upon them. Their eyes were opened and they immediately became conscious of the shame which was associated with their wrong-doing. They had fallen from the serenity of their innocence, where a pure heart so reflected its own purity upon everything that in all the universe there was for man no jar of discord or sight of uncomeliness. But after sin came the feeling of guilt seized upon them and shame sprang from their disturbed and distorted vision. They could no longer bear the sight of their own unclothed bodies.

And they heard the voice of Jehovah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and the man hid his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah God amongst the trees of the garden. Adam Clarke notes that the term "voice" is properly used here, because God, as an infinite Spirit, cannot be confined to any form, so as to have a personal appearance. Although the first human pair lost much when they sinned, they did not lose the voice of God. That voice continued to haunt the garden and their lives. Adam and Eve once walked with God in familiarity and confidence: in child-like trust and without shame or fear. But now an immense spiritual distance intervened between them and their Creator. The old intimacy was gone for ever, and man was no longer a child. One thing, however, would remain: they were not beyond the sound of the divine voice. Man's soul had sinned, but his ears could still hear the heavenly voice to which they had grown accustomed.

The voice of God is now heard through his revealed word, and each individual is responsible for the manner in which he listens to that which is spoken. Everything depends upon

how we react to his message. Adam and Eve heard his voice, and they hid themselves; but they did not get beyond the reach of its sound. It is well to keep in mind that God himself had no part in the terror and flight of the disobedient couple. At the mere sound of his approach, and before he had spoken a word, they hid themselves from his presence. And even today, that which is sometimes referred to as the wrath of God is but the natural result of the violation of his righteous law. Truly, "the wicked flee when no man pursueth."

Sinners Must Answer before God

(Gen. 3: 9-13)

And Jehovah God called unto the man, and said unto him. Where art thou? Man was made in God's image and Jehovah loved him with an everlasting love. See Jer. 31: 3; cf. John 3: 16. It is for this reason that God is not willing to give man up. We may expect therefore to hear his voice, calling, "Where art thou?" The entire Bible is but a picture of God calling for his people. It matters not how far away man may go, and how hard he may try to hide himself, God's voice can reach him. if man is only willing to respond. Jesus has authorized the gospel of God's love to be proclaimed to every creature in all the world.

And he said. I heard thy voice in the garden and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. No sooner had our foreparents sinned than they felt the sense of guilt; and being conscious of their wrongdoing, they were filled with shame and fear. These are always the fruits of sin. That divine trait within them, known as conscience, was at work, and their sin was finding them out. It is still the nature of people who sin, as a rule, not to want their wrongdoing exposed to the light of truth and righteousness. This is especially true of people who do not make any pretension of doing right.

Jesus gave his testimony on this subject in these words: "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his

works should be reprov'd. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God." (John 3: 19-21.) There is something about sin which makes men want it covered, and there are two ways of doing that, namely a wrong way and a right way. See Prov. 28: 13; Psalm 85: 2.

And he said. Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? These questions were asked no doubt to make man know that his sins could not be hidden from God, and also to impress upon him the fact that he had sinned. Adam would have to confess that he had transgressed God's law, even if he was unwilling to accept the blame for it himself.

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. Many Bible students understand Adam to mean that he was, in effect, blaming God for his transgression. It is as if he had said. You gave her to me, and must, of course, be responsible to that extent for that which she did. This view does not necessarily follow from that which the man said. It is possible that he meant no more than to say that the woman gave him the fruit and he ate it. Paul seems to imply that Adam's act was deliberately done, after seeing that his wife had been deceived into disobeying God. He may have felt that he wanted to share her fate with her. See 1 Tim. 2: 14.

And Jehovah God said unto the woman, What is this thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. It was true that the serpent did beguile Eve, but she was under no necessity to yield to his cunning and lies. God had told her what to do and she knew what he had said. But fallen humanity has always tried to blame sin on someone else. It is very difficult for any wrongdoer to say, I have sinned, but occasionally one is found with that kind of courage and determination. When he was confronted by Nathan and convinced of his sin, David said, "I have sinned against Jehovah;" and in his prayer for forgiveness, he said, "For I know

my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, And done that which is evil in thy sight." (2 Sam. 12: 13; Psalm 51: 3, 4.)

The sentence of condemnation followed next, and the man and his

wife were banished from the beautiful garden which God had planted for them. Paradise was lost and could never be regained by human effort. Only the sacrifice of God's sinless Son could bring man back to his rightful place.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction
Why is sin our greatest problem? Discuss fully.
How can the solving of that problem solve all other problems?
When and under what circumstances did sin have its beginning?

What causes people to commit sin today?
What effect did Adam's sin have on succeeding generations?
Are we responsible for the sin of Adam?
Give reasons for your answer.

The Golden Text
Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?
Why is every sinner a bondservant of sin?
What is necessary before people can actually enjoy freedom?
What is essential bondage to sin?
Why can't people themselves throw off the bondage of sin?
How is it possible for one to be a sinner and not realize it?

The Temptation to Sin
What is the meaning of the term "subtle"?
How did the serpent go about his work of tempting Eve?
For whom was the serpent really acting?
Give reasons for your answer.
What is implied in the serpent's first question?
What was the advantage of Satan's working through a serpent?
If Eve understood God's commandment, how was she deceived?

What was the devil's first lie?
What threefold doubt did he raise in Eve's mind regarding God?
At what aim was Satan really driving and how well did he succeed?
What part does curiosity play in the matter of temptation?
What is our greatest security against being overcome by temptation?

Sin Enters the World
Why is this subject so far-reaching? Discuss fully.
Why was so much significance attached to Eve's eating the forbidden fruit?
How can Satan find occasion to slay people in connection with a commandment?
Can you illustrate this?
What happened to Adam and Eve after the fruit was eaten?
Why were they ashamed? and what did they do about it?
Why say that they heard the "voice" of Jehovah God walking?
Is it possible for people to get beyond the hearing of God's voice?
How is his voice heard today?
Why did the first human pair attempt to hide themselves from Jehovah?
What do sinful people frequently call the "wrath of God"?

Sinners Must Answer before God
Why did Jehovah seek for man in his sin?
What caused Adam to be afraid? and why do people still dread the light?
What questions did Jehovah ask? and why?
How did the couple seek to excuse their sin?

Lesson IV—January 25, 1969

CAIN AND ABEL

Lesson Text

Gen. 4: 1-12

1 And the man knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man with *the help of* Je-ho'-vah.

2 And again she bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Je-ho'-vah.

4 And Abel, he also brought of the

firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And Je-ho'-vah had respect unto Abel and to his offering;

5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

6 And Je-ho'-vah said unto Cain. Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

7 If thou doest well, shall it not be lifted up? and if thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door; and unto thee shall be its desire; but do thou

rule over it.

8 And Cain told Abel his brother. And it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

9 And Je-ho'-vah said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper?

10 And he said, What hast thou

Golden Text.—"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." (Heb. 11: 4a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gen. 4: 13-17.

Daily Bible Readings

January 19.	M.	The Offering of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4: 1-12)
January 20.	T.....	Character of the Offerings (Heb. 11: 16)
January 21.	W.	Sacrifices Acceptable (Psalm 51: 12-19)
January 22.	T.	Cain's Sin (1 John 3: 10-12)
January 23.	F.	Unacceptable Sacrifices (Isa. 1: 10-17)
January 24.	S.	Love Excludes Fear and Hate (1 John 4: 16-21)
January 25.	S.....	Entrance of Sin (Gen. 3: 1-13)

Time.—Probably about 129 A.M., or 3875 B.C.

Place.—Probably near the location of the garden of Eden.

Persons.—Jehovah, Cain, and Abel.

Introduction

The story of Cain and Abel, as related in the Scriptures, never grows old to Bible readers. They, as every one knows, were the first two children born into the world; and any light which comes to us regarding their lives and characters is always both interesting and profitable. However, if we are to get the lessons which the inspired writers intended to convey, we must consider that which is recorded in the light of the full revelation of divine truth, or, Which is the same thing, the whole scheme of human redemption. The record of these two individuals therefore is not to be understood as a narrative complete within itself; but rather as one of the incidents of early human history which has been preserved to convey the information which the Lord wants us to have regarding such subjects as sin, man's fallen nature, and Jehovah's attitude toward the righteous and the sinner.

We have no way of knowing exactly when or where Cain and Abel were born, but it is reasonable to suppose that the time was shortly after the expulsion of their parents from the garden of Eden, and that the place was somewhere near the garden's location. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Adam and Eve continued to live in the general vicinity

done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

11 And now cursed art thou from the ground, which hath opened its mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee its strength; a fugitive and a wanderer shalt thou be in the earth.

ity of their original home; but the Cherubim, of course, would prevent their re-entrance into the garden itself. It is further reasonable to suppose that Jehovah continued to make known his will there, and later on when Cain was driven away, the Scriptures themselves all but confirm these suppositions. "And Cain went out from the presence of Jehovah, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden." (Gen. 4: 16.)

It is well to keep in mind the fact that the history contained in the Book of Genesis is very brief. From Adam to Moses is a period of approximately twenty-five hundred years, and that entire time is covered by the fifty chapters of Genesis. Just as John selected a few from the many things which Christ said and did (John 20: 30, 31), so Moses must have done. His object seems to have been to record those things which would be most helpful as a background to the fuller development of the facts concerning the chosen race. This probably accounts for the lack of information regarding the amount of time which elapsed between events, the origin of sacrifices, and many other questions concerning which we would have an interest.

The third chapter of Genesis gives

the origin of sin. while chapter 4 tells something of its progress. Sin was first seen in individuals, but in due course of time it appeared also in families. Chapter 4, like the three preceding chapters, is full of "begin-

nings." Here we have the first motherhood, the first birth, the first family, the first sacrifices, the first murder, the first martyrdom, and the first indications of human develop-

The Golden Text

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain."

The entire eleventh chapter of the Book of Hebrews, the chapter from which our golden text for today is taken, is devoted to a discussion of the subject of faith. The first thing the writer does is to define faith, and then he goes on to illustrate its meaning. The definition is stated in these words: "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen." (Verse 1.) Perhaps a clearer translation of this passage is that by Edward Robinson: "Faith is confidence as to things hoped for; conviction as to things not seen."

The faith of Abel is cited as the second example which the writer used to illustrate faith in its practical application. When Abel offered his sacrifice by faith, he was convicted or convinced that God does exist, and confident that he would be blessed by Jehovah. "And with-

out faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is I that is, that he exists, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." (Heb. 11: 6.)

The expression "a more excellent" is the translation of a single Greek word, and is the comparative degree, the primary meaning of which is much. The original word used here is found more than fifty times in the New Testament, but it is nowhere else translated as it is in Heb. 11: 4. It is rendered "greater" in Matt. 12: 41, 42; "much more" in Mark 12: 33; "more" in Luke 12: 23; and "more" in Heb. 3: 3. This is enough to show that the idea is not that Cain offered an excellent offering, but Abel, a *more* excellent; but on the contrary the emphasis is on the superior quality of Abel's offering. His offering was fuller and more complete, including, as it did, all that which God required or commanded.

The Text Explained

The Birth and Occupations of Cain and Abel

(Gen. 4: 1, 2)

And the man knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man with the help of Jehovah. When Jehovah pronounced the curse upon the serpent for leading Eve into sin, he said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen. 3: 15.) This is generally understood to be a reference to the conflict between Christ and Satan involving the death and resurrection of the Lord. Some Bible students are of the opinion that when Eve used the words "I have gotten a man with the help of Jehovah" she was expressing the hope that Cain was that seed. That, of course, is possible, but it is probably true that she was simply saying that Jehovah had blessed her with an heir, and that

now hope could be entertained to the effect that the race would be continued upon the earth.

And again she bare his brother Abel. The peculiar construction of the language here in the original has led some Hebrew scholars to conclude that in all probability Cain and Abel were twins. Adam Clarke says, "From the very face of this account it appears evident that Cain and Abel were *twins*. In most cases where a subject of this kind is introduced in the Holy Scriptures, and the successive births of children of the same parents are noted, the acts of conceiving and bringing forth are mentioned in reference to each child: here it is *not* said that she *conceived* and brought forth Abel, but simply *she added to bring forth Abel his brother*: that is, as I understand it, Cain was the first-born, and Abel, his twin brother, came next."

And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

We learn from chapter 2 that Adam was a gardener, and here we see his two sons engaged in somewhat related occupations, namely, a shepherd and a farmer. Thus early in the history of the world we are reminded of the necessity and dignity of work as being necessary to human life and progress. Work is one of the blessings which God has provided for his people. Sir Joshua Reynolds notes that "nothing is denied to well-directed labor; nothing is ever to be attained without it." According to Henry Davis Thoreau, "It is not enough to be busy; so are the ants. The question is: What are we busy about?" Thomas Carlyle who knew the meaning of work said, "Blessed is the man who has found his work. Let him ask no other blessedness. Know thy work, and do it: and work at it like Hercules. One monster there is in the world—the idle man." John Ruskin observes that "it is no man's business if he has genius or not. Work he must, whatever he is, but quietly and steadily: and the natural and enforced results of such work will always be the thing that God meant him to do, and will be his best."

Offerings Presented and Murder Committed

(Gen. 4:3-8)

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Jehovah. Many questions have been raised regarding the meaning of the expression "in the process of time," but it appears that the most natural meaning is that in due course of time, that is, when Cain and Abel became men and assumed their own responsibility, they brought their offerings unto Jehovah. The offering of Cain consisted entirely, or so it seems, of the fruit of the ground.

And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. Whatever else Abel may have brought, we are distinctly told that he brought "of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof." The word "also," however, must not be overlooked.

And Jehovah had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect. The Lord's attitude toward Abel and his offering is plainly de-

scribed in Heb. 11: 4: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gifts: and through it he being dead yet speaketh." His offering was made by faith, which means that it was according to God's direction. Cf. Rom. 10: 17. A willingness to obey that which Jehovah commanded and the actual performance of it constituted Abel a righteous man. Cf. Psalm 119: 172; Matt. 3: 15.

But why was Cain's offering rejected? The answer which is usually given is that Cain *substituted* the fruit of the ground for a lamb. But insofar as the record goes there does not seem to be anything said or implied from which such a conclusion can be fairly drawn. On the other hand, however, after stating that "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Jehovah," the historian adds, "And Abel, he *also* brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof." The word "also" means, according to Webster, "in addition to; as well; besides; too."

The record does not say that Cain "brought an offering," and that Abel also "brought an offering." On the contrary, the inspired writer tells us what Cain brought, and then implies that Abel, in addition to what Cain brought, offered of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. The writer of the Book of Hebrews seems to confirm this idea; for he says, "God bearing witness in respect of his *gifts*: . . ." It was pointed out in the comments on the golden text that the expression "a more excellent," used in connection with Abel's offering, is the translation of a single word in the original, the meaning of which is that Abel offered *more* sacrifice than Cain, that is, that his sacrifice was a fuller and more complete sacrifice than was Cain's. See Thayer and Young in *loco*.

If that which has just been said is correct, then it is evident that Cain reasoned that it was not necessary for him to do all that God commanded, but that whatever he thought was sufficient should be acceptable to God. *Thus, his own reason was substituted for God's word.* This plan has been followed in all

ages since the day Cain inaugurated it. How many people today reject baptism in the plan of salvation on the same basis! There are few members of the churches of Christ who actually set aside that which God has commanded, and bring in something entirely different; but how many of us are satisfied to do less than that which he has commanded! Read Luke 17: 10; James 2: 10; 4: 17.

And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And Jehovah said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shall it not be lifted up? and if thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door: and unto thee shall be its desire: but do thou rule over it. Verse 7 is rendered in the Septuagint as follows: "Hast thou not sinned if thou hast brought in rightly, but not rightly divided it?" Thus, instead of saying that Cain substituted the fruit of the ground for a lamb, it seems more in keeping with the facts in the case to say that he offered only a part of that which Jehovah commanded; and he became angry because God did not approve his action. The term "sin" here, according to Adam Clarke, means a sin-offering, and he thinks that God graciously reminded Cain that that which he had neglected to bring was lying at his door, and that he could yet offer it. It is possible that the last part of verse 7—"and unto thee shall its desire be; but do thou rule over it"—refers to the fact that Cain, being the older, had the priority over Abel, and that it would be continued if Cain did his duty, but it may be a part of the exhortation to Cain to do his duty.

And Cain told Abel his brother. And it came to pass when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. John asks, "And wherefore slew he him?" and his answer is, "Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous." See 1 John 3: 12. This kind of attitude is still being manifested among religious people today. When those who do not follow God's revealed word have their error pointed out to them, they, as a rule, become angry and try to destroy those who faithfully follow the divine plan.

Cain's Punishment

(Gen. 4: 9-12)

And Jehovah said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper? God's question was evidently meant to impress upon the mind of Cain his responsibility regarding his fellow man. Responsibility is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Bible, but, in spite of its prominence, the sin of social irresponsibility is one of the most common sins of our day. Men and women on every hand, even the most religious, are seemingly indifferent to the great duties which relate to their fellow men. The Bible is filled with examples of this sin, as well as with ways of overcoming it. Every person who is at all interested in serving the Lord should be vitally interested in this phase of our study; for no one can fulfil the law of Christ and shun his responsibility to his brother. See Gal. 6: 1, 2.

The first part of Cain's answer—"I know not"—was a *falsehood*, as most selfish answers are; and behind the falsehood was the sin of irresponsibility. But Cain was not the last person to make falsehood his refuge; do not many of us do the same? Cf. Isa. 28: 15. Our common plea is, I am not responsible; but if that is true, then why seek to excuse ourselves? Verily, "conscious doth make cowards of us all." The second part of his answer—"am I my brother's keeper"—was an *insult*. Cain's cool insolence was an indication of the state of the heart which led to the murder of his brother. When he cast off the fear of God, he was then ready to defy him.

Some one has said that if you want to find out the true condition of one's heart, see him after the service which he pretends to render to God. He is best known when he is not engaged in devotional activities. The minister sees the best side of a man, the lawyer the worst, while the physician sees the real. It was after the service at the altar that Cain killed his brother, and that was the exact measure of his piety.

And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. This question would tend to fix in the mind of Cain something of the

enormity of his sin. It is possible that the remark regarding the blood of Abel was based upon the fact that Cain had buried him in an effort to hide his sin, and now the blood was crying to God from the ground. Cf. Heb. 12: 24. Jehovah's words here clearly demonstrates that he will not tolerate sin in his presence. Cf. Heb. 4: 12, 13.

And now cursed art thou from the ground, which hath opened its mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand: when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield

unto thee its strength: a fugitive and a wanderer shalt thou be in the earth. When Cain failed to offer the sacrifice which God had commanded, Jehovah dealt kindly with him and exhorted him to fulfill his duty: but when murder was committed something had been done which Divine Justice could not overlook, nor patiently endure. Cain must now answer for a specific crime, and he must bear the punishment which God alone is able to administer. Murder then was an overt act, but now it can be committed by our thoughts. See 1 John 3: 15.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Why is the story of Cain and Abel always interesting to Bible students?

In what light should this narrative be studied? Give reasons for your answer.

When and where were Cain and Abel probably born?

What is the probable reason for such brief records concerning the early people and times of our race?

How is the chapter of our lesson related to sin?

Name some of the "beginnings" in the fourth chapter of Genesis.

The Golden Text

What is the setting of the golden text for this lesson?

What is meant by saying that Abel offered his sacrifice by faith?

In what way was it "a more excellent" sacrifice? and more excellent than what?

The Birth and Occupations of Cain and Abel

What did Eve probably mean by saying that she had gotten a man with the help of Jehovah?

What is the basis for thinking that Cain and Abel were twins?

What were the occupations of these two brothers?

What can you say of the necessity and dignity of work?

Offerings Presented and Murder Committed

In the process of what time did Cain and Abel present their sacrifices?

What was the offering of each? Give reasons for your answer.

How did Jehovah regard them and their offerings? and why?

What makes one a righteous person?

Why was Cain's offering rejected?

What is implied by saying, "And Abel, he also brought," etc.?

What "substitution" did Cain actually make?

In what way is that practice continued today? Discuss fully.

How was Cain affected when his offering was rejected?

What did Jehovah then say to him? and why?

What was couched at the door? Give reasons for your answer?

Why did Cain kill Abel?

Why do people still follow Cain in this respect too?

Cain's Punishment

Why did Jehovah ask Cain about his brother?

Why is the sin of irresponsibility so widespread among people today?

How are responsibility and the law of Christ related?

Why did Cain say that he did not know the whereabouts of Abel?

Why do people seek to excuse themselves if they are not responsible?

What was the nature of the second part of his answer? Why was this true?

When is the best time to learn the true nature of an individual? Why?

Why did Jehovah ask Cain what he had done?

In what way did Abel's blood cry unto Jehovah from the ground?

What was the curse pronounced upon Cain? and when was it pronounced?

How may this lesson be applied to people today?

How is it possible to commit murder by hating one's brother?

What is the meaning of the term "hate"?

Lesson V—February 1, 1959

GREAT WICKEDNESS IN THE EARTH

Lesson Text

Gen. 6: 1-12

1 And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born unto them,

2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair: and they took them wives of all that they chose.

3 And Je-ho'-vah said. My Spirit shall not strive with man for ever, for that he also is flesh: yet shall his days be a hundred and twenty years.

4 The Neph'-i-lim were in the earth in those days, and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men. and they bare children to them: the same were the mighty men that were of old. the men of renown.

5 And Je-ho'-vah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

6 And it repented Je-ho'-vah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

7 And Je-ho'-vah said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground: both man. and beast, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens: for it repenteth me that I have made them.

8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of Je-ho'-vah.

9 These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man. and perfect in his generations: Noah walked with God.

10 And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Ja'-pheth.

11 And the earth was corrupt before God. and the earth was filled with violence.

12 And God saw the earth, and. behold, it was corrupt: for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"But Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah."* (Gen. 6: 8.)

Devotional Reading.—Gen. 6: 13-22.

Daily Bible Readings

January 26. M.
January 27. T.
January 28. W.
January 29. T.
January 30. F.
January 31. S.
February 1. S.

Improper Marriages (Neh. 13: 23-27)
Marriage and Divorce (Matt. 19: 6-9)
Wickedness in the Earth (Gen. 8: 20-22)
God's Attitude Toward Evil (Jer. 18: 5-12)
Destruction Threatened (Deut. 28: 58-68)
Noah, a Righteous Man (Gen. 6: 9-12)
Ark to Be Built (Gen. 6: 13-22)

Time.—1536 A.M.. 2468 B.C.

Place.—Probably in the general vicinity of the East.

Persons.—Jehovah, Noah, and his three sons. Shem. Ham, and Japheth.

Introduction

It is well to keep in mind the fact that some fourteen hundred years intervened between our last lesson and this one; and that the entire period is covered by the inspired historian in Gen. 4: 16-5: 32. Our last lesson saw Cain driven out from the presence of Jehovah. The true worship of God was seriously affected by the death of Abel, and it was not until the birth of Seth that new forces were set in motion which restored it to its rightful place. Thus instead of

true devotion to Jehovah perishing with the passing of Abel, it reached a new development in the descendants of Seth. But we do see in the posterity of Cain and Seth two different types of humanity which run throughout the entire Bible.

The chief characteristic of the descendants of Cain is that of irreligion. See Gen. 4: 16-24. That which is said in the inspired record regarding Cain shows no trace of the influence of God's mercy upon him,

and no indication of penitence on his part. He remains both godless and reckless. His sacrifice which he offered prior to the murder of Abel showed that while he recognized Jehovah as the God of providence, he gave no indication of the need for his divine favor. There was no trace of real homage in his heart, nor of any thought of sin and salvation in his offering. We are not surprised therefore to see him increase in wickedness, so far as his posterity was concerned.

Although a godless line, the descendants of Cain were enterprising. They were devoted to the arts of civilization, to building cities, to manufacturing various articles, and to worldly comfort and success in the pursuit of earthly good. Beginning with the founder of this line, we have the names of six outstanding men, the last being Lamech in whom

the brutal spirit of Cain reached new heights. Lamech not only committed revengeful murder, but introduced the practice of polygamy. It is worthy of note that when the emphasis is placed on the material, less attention will be paid to the spiritual. Cf. Matt. 6: 33.

But when we look at the descendants of Seth there is a different story to tell. See Gen. 4: 25-5: 32. It was his race which gave renewed emphasis to religion, and became the means through which redemption was wrought. Here we see such men as Enoch who walked with God, and Noah who was chosen to build the ark and perpetuate the race after the flood. It was also in the record of this race that the first intimation of prayer is found. "Then began men to call upon the name of Jehovah." (Gen. 4: 26b.)

The Golden Text

The golden text for today will be treated in the body of the lesson.

since it is found in the lesson text itself.

The Text Explained

The Blending and Corruption of the Streams

(Gen. 6: 1-4)

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair: and they took them wives of all that they chose. The reference here does not seem to be to a general increase in population as such, but rather to the increase in the descendants of Cain. It is generally understood among Bible students that "men" in this context refers to the posterity of Cain, while the "sons of God" were the descendants of Seth. In the preceding chapters the two streams of Adam's race, those of Cain and those of Seth, are set forth, and now in the beginning of this chapter we see the streams blend.

It is well to keep in mind the fact that these women were "daughters of men." This can only mean that they were estranged from God. They are not described as being gentle, or meek, or loving, but as being "fair," that is, as being physically beautiful and attractive. It is altogether possible that their manner

of life, being accustomed as they were to the finer arts of living, enabled them to develop a sensuous nature which would supply them with the means of great enchantment: so that they presented to the eye that most perilous of temptations—beauty and grace, while at the same time concealing heartlessness, cruelty, and all ungodliness.

The descendants of Seth—"the sons of God"—were captivated by those beautiful women. Being infatuated by their personal charms, and blinded by passion to all the fatal consequences of such alliances, they "took them wives of all that they chose." This language not only suggests that they married these women, but that they became polygamists. One man was not satisfied to take one woman, but took as many as he wanted. This was a surrender of the spirit to the flesh, and resulted in two fatal sins, namely, the sons of God not only turned their backs upon him, but became guilty of a marriage relationship which was contrary to his original plan for the race. Cf. Gen. 2: 24: Matt. 19: 1-9.

It is altogether possible that the "sons of God" did not realize all that

was involved in thus marrying the "daughters of men," and therein lay the great danger. It sometimes happens even now when such unions are contemplated that the one who is in covenant relationship with God feels that possibly he can win the other to a better life by the alliance: but in most instances, as is usually the case when compromises are made with evil, the result is the other way. People should learn the lesson well that God's blessings cannot be expected when he is forsaken.

And Jehovah said, My Spirit shall not strive with man for ever, for that he also is flesh; yet shall his days be a hundred and twenty years. Many ideas have been advanced as to the meaning of the term "Spirit as used in the text, but it appears that the most natural explanation is that the reference is to the Holy Spirit himself. The striving seems to have been done through such inspired preachers as Enoch (Jude 14, 15) and Noah (2 Pet. 2: 5). It is possible that other righteous men were used by the Spirit of God to condemn the wickedness of the antediluvians, but we do know that he used the two which have just been named.

The one "hundred and twenty years" very likely has reference to the period of respite which was granted to the sinners of that day. God simply announced that he would give the antediluvians that much additional time in which to repent. Some Bible students have thought that the reference was to a shorter life-span for the race, but one has only to turn to Gen. 11: 10-26 in order to see that that theory is not true. The most reasonable view is that God had determined to cease pleading with the corrupt and sinful race and abandon them to destruction; but in his mercy he would give them a definite period in which to return to him. This, in the view of some Bible students, was the prison in which the spirits were shut up to judgment, while they were being warned of the impending condemnation. See 1 Pet. 3: 19, 20. Those antediluvians could not re-live their past, and could not go beyond the limits of the one hundred and twenty years; and they were therefore shut up in that period. Others think that Peter meant that the spirits were in prison at the time

he wrote. The first view, on the whole, seems more reasonable.

The Nephilim were in the earth in those days, and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children unto them: the same were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown. The manner in which the Nephilim are here introduced clearly implies that they were already on the earth before the sons of God began to marry the daughters of men, and that they were there distinct from the fruits of those marriages. The Nephilim were giants. Cf. Num. 13: 33. It appears from the history of the term that these men were characterized, not so much by their great physical size, but rather as men of violence, overbearing, and who plundered the weak and the defenseless: they were marauding nomads.

The result of these intermarriages is given in the verse now before us. Thus instead of elevating the daughters of men, the offsprings of these unholy alliances produced a situation which was in every way comparable to the Nephilim who were already plying their trade. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown note that "the mixed marriages that became so frequent produced a vast increase of violent and lawless characters like the Nephilim—persons of reckless ferocity and audacious impiety, who spread devastation and carnage far and wide, and by the terror which their name inspired, obtained such lasting notoriety that in subsequent ages of ignorance and idolatry they were exalted by different nations, under various names, into the demigods of pagan mythology." We do know that the entire human race was so corrupted that only a single family was found acceptable to Jehovah. Cf. Ezek. 14: 14, 20.

Depravity Complete and Destruction Decreed

(Gen. 6: 5-8)

And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart were only evil continually. The corruption of the world was not only practically universal: it was colossal. The men of that period were not content merely

with performing wicked deeds, their very thoughts from which their action sprang was only evil continually. This means that all was corrupt within and all was unrighteous without. This terrible condition can only be matched by Paul's description of the Gentile world in Horn. 1: 18-32. There was a pitiable contrast between what God saw in the antediluvian age and what he saw when he had finished his work of creation. Cf. Gen. 1: 31.

And it repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. These are startling words and it is probably not out of place to speak of them as expressing the Divine Sorrow. The term which is usually employed to describe them is "anthropomorphic" or "anthropomorphism." The idea is that God is represented as having human attributes. The use of anthropomorphic language is our highest and best method of expression concerning God. Just as we adapt ourselves to the conceptions of a child in an effort to get him to understand us, and use language which he can grasp, so the Bible employs anthropomorphic language when it becomes necessary to bridge the great chasm between the Infinite and the finite minds.

There is nothing in the use of anthropomorphic language which implies that Jehovah is mutable. The immutability of God is shown, not in always doing the same things, but in always acting on the same principles. He always rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. There is never any change in him in this respect. Jehovah does not repent as man does (1 Sam. 15: 29; Num. 23: 19), and neither does he change (Mai. 3: 6; James 1: 17). But in language which finite beings can understand, the passage now before us describes God as about to alter his procedure toward the race which he had created. This, of course, was due to the fact that man himself had changed, and that made a change on God's part necessary.

And Jehovah said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground; both man, and beast, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens; for it repenteth me that I have made them. It should be

observed that the Destroyer is here identified with the Creator, that is, God said that *he* would destroy the man whom *he* had created. This threatened punishment was not for just a portion of the race, but for all: only the righteous being excepted. This was necessary to vindicate the Divine character and government. In the usual course of Providence the lower creation is frequently involved in the destructive calamities which befall man, such as pestilence, fire, flood, etc.: and in order to demonstrate the intensity of the Divine wrath in the case now before us, the beast, creeping things, and birds of the heavens, would share in the sweeping punishment which awaited the wicked. Cf. Rom. 8: 18-22.

But Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah. This is the Divine contrast. Destruction had been decreed for the entire race, but mankind would not be annihilated. God's mercy would lead him to save those who trusted in him, just as his justice would cause him to punish the wicked. "For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; . . ." (See 2 Pet. 2: 4-9.)

The term "favor" means grace; or, to state the same thing in another way, grace is unmerited favor. Such a blessing is always given without compensation, and there is nothing which the one needing the favor can do to merit it. When the text says that Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah, it means that he was found acceptable to God. This does not imply that he was entirely without fault, being as he was a human being; but it does signify that his heart was right, and that his life *was* such as to make him worthy to be favored of God. This great patriarch, in contrast with his contemporaries, did not deserve to be lost.

The Life and Character of Noah (Gen. 6: 9-12)

These are the generations of Noah. It was pointed out in an earlier lesson in this series that the Book of

Genesis is made up of several "generations," and that an analysis of the book can be made under the headings of the various generations. This means therefore that a new section of Genesis begins at this point. The entire history from Adam to Noah is very brief, and little is said of human progress during that time, except the great wickedness of the race. The corruption of man is about to reach its climax, and now we are to learn something of the only family which escaped the earth's destruction.

Noah was a righteous man, and perfect in his generations: Noah walked with God. The terms "righteous" and "perfect" are not to be understood in their absolute senses. Noah is here contrasted with his contemporaries. He was righteous in the sense of being acceptable to God because he had kept his commandments (Psalm 119: 172; Matt. 3: 15); and he was perfect ("blameless," margin) in that he was not blame-worthy. Peter calls him a preacher of righteousness (2 Pet. 2: 5), and Paul, in citing his example of faith, shows why he was acceptable to God: "By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to the faith." (Heb. 11: 7.) "Noah walked with God" in the text is an explanation of why he was righteous and perfect. This expression was applied only to Enoch and Noah among the antediluvians and it denotes a habitual practice.

And Noah begat three sons. Shem, Ham, and Japheth. These four men

and their wives were the only people in the entire earth who were spared the destruction of the flood; and these three sons became the progenitors of the race of the new world. See Gen. 9: 19; 10: 32. The entire tenth chapter of Genesis is devoted to "the generations of the sons of Noah."

And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt: for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. The phrase "before God" gives some idea of the enormity of the corruption. It began with man, but, as already noted in this lesson, the corruption had reached even the earth itself and all of the lower creation. No other such condition has ever been recorded, a condition so grave and far-reaching that only a single family could be found which had not rebelled against Jehovah.

The record says that "the earth was tilled with violence," which implies that no effort was made by the heads of the families and tribes to restrain and punish the violators; and this, of course, is not surprising when we remember that even the "mighty men" themselves were the leaders in the violence and crime. When men have no fear of God in their hearts, and are determined to have their own way, misery and destruction are always the result; and when sin becomes the order of the day, with no sign of penitence on the part of the offenders, the justice of an ever righteous God must be vindicated. Moral putridity cannot be allowed to continue. Cf. Matt. 5: 13; Gen. 18: 22-33.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

How much time elapsed between this lesson and the last one? and what part of the inspired history covers the period?

Point out some of the chief characteristics of this period.

What were the chief traits of the descendants of Cain?

What was the general attitude of the descendants of Seth?

The Blending and Corruption of the Streams

In what ways are the descendants of Cain and Seth described?

How were the "sons of God" affected by the "daughters of men"?

What two wrongs did they commit? and what were their motives?

Why is polygamy wrong?

Why is it wrong for one to marry out of covenant-relationship with God?

In what way did Jehovah's spirit strive with man?

What two preachers of righteousness were among the antediluvians?

What was the connection of the one hundred and twenty years?

Who were the Nephilim?

What were the results of the intermarriages of the sons of God with the daughters of men?

How did these results compare with the Nephilim?

Depravity Complete and Destruction Decreed

What condition of the earth is here described?

What relation between the thoughts and deed of the people is suggested?

What great contrast was seen with what God saw when he finished creation?

How was Jehovah affected by this sinful condition?

In what sense does God repent and how does he grieve?

What is the meaning and significance of anthropomorphic language?

Does the fact that God repents imply that he is mutable? Give reasons for your answer.

When the decree of destruction was announced, who said he would destroy what?

Why was the lower creation included in the destruction?

What was said regarding Noah? and why?

What is the meaning of the term "favor"? Discuss fully.

The Life and Character of Noah

What is signified by the statement "these are the generations of Noah"?

What was said regarding the character of Noah?

In what sense was he "righteous" and "perfect"?

In what way did Peter and Paul speak of the life and character of Noah?

Who were the three sons of Noah? and how did they figure in the new world?

What is the significance of the phrase "before God" in verse 11?

What was the great extent of the corruption of the earth?

What led to the great violence which followed?

Why would Jehovah decree that the destruction would be so complete?

What lesson do we learn here regarding the influence of the righteous?

How should a lesson like this affect the Lord's people today?

Lesson VI—February 8, 1959

THE FLOOD

Lesson Text

Gen. 7: 1-12

1 And Je-ho'-vah said unto Noah. Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

2 Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee seven and seven, the male and his female; and of the beasts that are not clean two. the male and his female:

3 Of the birds also of the heavens, seven and seven, male and female, to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.

4 For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made will I destroy from off' the face of the ground.

5 And Noah did according unto all that Je-ho'-vah commanded him.

6 And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.

Golden Text.— . *eight souls. were saved through water.*" (1 Pet. 3: 20b.)

Devotional Reading.— Gen. 7: 13-24.

Daily Bible Readings

February 2. M. Jesus Speaks of the Flood (Matt. 24: 37-39)

February 3. T..... Noah's Faith (Heb. 11: 1-7)

February 4.	W.	Saved by Water (1 Pet. 3: 19-22)
February 5.	T.	Noah, a Preacher of Righteousness (2 Pet. 2: 1-5)
February 6.	F.	Ignoring God's Judgment (Luke 17: 22-37)
February 7.	S.	God's Covenant with Noah (Gen. 9: 8-17)
February 8.	S.	The New Covenant (Heb. 8: 6-13)

Time.—1656 A.M., or 2348 B.C.

Place.—Probably in the general vicinity of the East.

Persons.—Jehovah, Noah, and his family.

Introduction

In our last lesson we saw how wickedness had filled the earth, and heard the judgment of God pronounced against it. This divine judgment was in the nature of a flood, and it is well to keep ever in mind that the flood was not a great cataclysm which resulted from natural causes, but was a deliberate act of God for the destruction of the world which was steeped in sin. But as is always the case, the righteous found favor in God's sight and were delivered from the fate of the wicked.

There is no inspired description of the horrors of the flood, but we can well imagine some of the results which were seen when the waters began to cover the earth. In the first place, the people no doubt had scoffed at the preaching of Noah, and it is certain that they made no preparation to escape the impending flood. But now that the mighty deluge had become a grim reality, we can see them crying out for mercy and making a desperate effort to keep above the rising waters. But nothing could deliver them from the destruction which Jehovah had decreed. Unforgiven sin can never escape the punishment of God. Defeat and death therefore are seen on every hand, and soon there is an awful stillness and desolation. Not a sound of life could be heard anywhere outside the ark, but only the low moaning of the surging waters.

This terrible catastrophe is made to foreshadow another and greater destruction of the world; and we are told that practically the same con-

ditions will prevail then which were present when the flood came. People will still be mocking and refusing to believe the divine warnings which God in mercy is giving to the wicked. Peter declares that both of his letters which have come down to us were written to stir up the sincere minds of the righteous by putting them in remembrance. Here is his statement regarding these matters in full:

"This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write unto you; and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance: that ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles: knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying. Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." (2 Pet. 3: 1-7; cf. 2 Pet. 2: 1-5; Matt. 24: 37-39; Luke 17: 26, 27.)

The Golden Text

"... *eight souls, were saved through water.*" These words are a part of Peter's discussion of the blessedness of suffering for righteousness' sake. His words are: "Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unright-

eous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah,

while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water: . . ." (See 1 Pet. 3: 13-22.)

The eight souls, of course, were Noah, his wife, their three sons, and their wives. That was a small number compared with the human race, but that is the story of mankind. Jesus says, "For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it." (Matt. 7: 14.) Peter says that the eight souls were "saved through water," which apparently means that they were saved "by means of water." The same water which destroyed the wicked bore up the ark, and so brought the righteous safely through the flood. It appears that Peter put the emphasis on the water rather

than on the ark (cf. Heb. 11: 7) for the sake of the illustration in the following verse.

"Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the tilth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 3: 21.) The water of baptism is here declared to be the antitype of the water of the flood, and in both instances it is said that salvation was due to the water. In the latter instance the sinner is represented as inquiring how he might obtain a good conscience toward God, and the inspired answer is through baptism. Cf. Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 37, 38. God saves only the obedient. See Matt. 7: 21-23; Heb. 5: 8, 9.

The Text Explained

The Last Week before the Flood

(Gen. 7: 1-5)

And Jehovah said unto Noah. Conic thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. The closing verse of chapter 6 tells us that Noah did all that God commanded him, and that, of course, included the building of the ark. That work had now been completed, and Noah, in the same implicit faith which had influenced his conduct in all that God required of him, was waiting for further directions from the Lord. We are not to understand that Jehovah meant for him to enter the ark at once, but rather to make the needed preparation during the few remaining days before the rain would start.

The statement regarding Noah's righteousness is another implication of the universal wickedness of the people of his day. Cf. Ezek. 14: 14, 20. Paul tells us in Heb. 11: 7 how Noah came to be regarded as righteous: "By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house: through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." This shows that Noah's faith was strong enough to move him to do exactly as God had commanded him: and it was on this basis that he became the heir of the righteousness

which is according to faith. One may search the entire Bible through, but he will not find any other principle upon which God will save men. Each individual must believe God, and then do that which he tells him to do. Cf. Heb. 11: 6; Mark 16: 16. But, says one, if people must be baptized in order to be saved, then the majority of them will be lost. Well, it was true in Noah's day that only a few were saved, and people today should, accordingly, take warning.

Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee seven and seven, the male and his female; and of the beasts that are not clean two, the male and his female: of the birds also of the heavens, seven and seven, male and female, to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. This shows, in the first place, that the distinction between clean and unclean animals existed long before the law of Moses put the matter into writing. See Lev. 11. We have no record of how or when this distinction was given, but we do know that God recognized the difference. This is another illustration of the fact that the law of Moses did not originate certain conditions, but rather reaffirmed them and made them a part of its code. Cf. John 7: 22.

It appears that the reason for taking more of the clean animals and birds into the ark was for a twofold purpose: (1) for use in sacrifice, Gen. 8: 20; and (2) because their rapid

multiplication for sacrificial purposes would be needed for the period following the flood. Then, too, God may have been making preparation for animal food which would have to be clean animals and birds; for it appears that man did not consume such food until after the flood. Set-Gen. 9: 1-4. Nothing is said here about the number of unclean birds which were to be taken into the ark, but it is reasonable to suppose that there were two of each, as was the case of the unclean animals. Cf. verses 8, 9. The over-all purpose was "to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth."

For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights: and every living thing that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the ground. The "week" had its origin with the first seven days of Genesis, and it is interesting to observe the manner in which these seven-day periods were observed by the patriarchs. Cf. Gen. 8: 10, 12. When Jehovah made this solemn pronouncement, just one more week of grace awaited the godless world of Noah's day; and as Noah and his family were getting the great host of living creatures into the ark, what impressions were made on the people? We are not left to guess about this; for Jesus has told us. "And as it came to pass in the days of Noah, even so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all." (Luke 17: 26, 27.)

And Noah did all according unto all that Jehovah commanded him. This is the true spirit of obedience, and no one can hope to be saved in any other way. In addition to being saved himself, Noah became the first man in history whose righteousness led others to salvation, namely, his own family. Cf. 1 Tim. 4: 16.

The Day in Which Noah Entered the Ark (7: 6-9)

And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth. The dates in the life of Noah, as recorded in the Book

of Genesis, have an important bearing upon many things connected with the flood and his deliverance. Some people, for example, have supposed that Noah was engaged in the actual construction of the ark for one hundred and twenty years. But if one will only consider that which is said regarding dates in his life, he can easily see that there is no basis in fact for that conclusion.

Gen. 5: 32 informs us that Noah was five hundred years old when his first son (Shem) was born, and the verse we are now considering tells us that Noah was six hundred years old when the flood came. That, of course, means that Shem was one hundred years old at that time. The command to build the ark is found in Gen. 6: 13-22; and in verse 18 we learn that Noah's three sons were married. This shows conclusively that the time in the actual construction of the ark was much less than even one hundred years—just how long nobody knows. The one hundred and twenty years as pointed out before, was the period of grace which God extended to the people when he informed Noah that his Spirit would not strive with man for ever.

And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. This was an essential part of their obedience. Salvation from the flood was to be had only in the ark. This is an important lesson to remember, and Jehovah has seen fit to emphasize it time and again. Cf. Ex. 12: 12, 13; 2 Tim. 2: 10; Acts 4: 12.

Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creepeth upon the ground, there went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, male and female, as God commanded Noah. There is nothing in the inspired record about the manner in which Noah was able to get this vast multitude of creatures to go into the ark in such an orderly and systematic form. It is only fair to suppose that it was accomplished through the providence of Jehovah. It is enough to know that two, the male and the female, of every species of living creatures upon the earth went into the ark. No mention is made here of the ad-

ditional clean animals and birds which were included.

The Flood Becomes a Reality (Gen. 7: 10-12)

And it came to pass after the seven days, that the waters of the flood i-ere upon the earth. The final week is now over and God's word comes to pass. Those who deny the inspiration of the Bible claim that there never was in reality a flood, but that which we have is based only on tradition. They further claim that all nations have such a tradition. But the very fact that the tradition of the flood is practically universal tends to prove that it was a fact; for if there was no fact of a flood, how can a reasonable person account for a universal tradition of such a deluge? It would have been utterly impossible for any individual or even a nation of antiquity to invent such a story and have it universally accepted. But why should any one feel that the Biblical record of the flood is not true? Practically all informed scientists unite in saying that the greater part of the earth was at one time under water.

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day were all the fountains of tin- great deep broken up, a)id the windows of heaven were opened. The inspired writer is very exact in slicing the time in which the flood began. There is some question among Bible students regarding the calendar on which this calculation was made. Previous to the Exodus the Hebrew people began their year in the autumnal equinox, corresponding to about the middle of our September; but starting with the Exodus their sacred or religious year began about the middle of our March. Some are of the opinion that Moses, writing for the immediate benefit of his own people, used the calendar with which they were familiar. There is, of course, no way for us to be absolutely sure about the matter, and it really is not necessary for us to have that information.

It appears from Gen. 8: 13-19 that Noah went out of the ark on the twenty-seventh day of the second month of the six hundred and first year of his life. Adam Clarke, in his

commentary, says, "From this it appears that Noah was in the ark a complete solar year, or three hundred and sixty-five days; for he entered the ark on the 17th day of the second month, in the six hundredth year of his life, chapter 7: 11, 13, and continued in it till the 27th day of the second month, in the six hundred and first year of his life, as we see above. The months of the ancient Hebrews were lunar; the first six consisted of thirty days each, the latter six of twenty-nine; the whole twelve months making three hundred and fifty-four days: add to this eleven days, (for though he entered the ark the preceding year on the seventeenth day of the second month, he did not come out till the twenty-seventh of the same month in the following year.) which makes exactly three hundred and sixty-five days, the period of a complete solar revolution; . . ." (Vol. I, p. 7.)

But how did so much water come upon the earth? The text indicates two sources. (1) All the fountains of the great deep were broken up; and (2) the windows of heaven were opened. The "great deep" was evidently the ocean, and there must have been some great upheaval in its bottom which caused its waters to flow out over the land. The windows of heaven were opened in pretty much the same manner in which we speak of a cloudburst, the idea being that torrential rains fell for the entire period of forty days and forty nights. An excessive, steady down-pour of rain, together with the overflowing of the heaving ocean, would soon cover the entire land area: and when we consider the fact that this continued for forty days and forty nights, we are not surprised to read that "all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered." (Gen. 8: 19.)

And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights. This is to be accepted as a literal statement of the actual time the rain of the flood fell. Bible students have long wondered whether or not the entire lace of the globe was covered, or whether only that portion of the earth which was then inhabited was affected. This in reality is not an important question, so far as believ-

ers are concerned. The language used, if taken literally, would indicate a complete covering; but the submergence of only the inhabited

part would satisfy the demands of the Scriptures, and would also account for the universal tradition of a flood.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction
How do you account for the fact of the flood?
What difference was made between the wicked and the righteous? and why?
Describe the impressions which the account of the flood makes on you.
What did the flood foreshadow?
What do these things suggest regarding human nature?

The Golden Text
Give the general context of the golden text for today.
What is meant by saying that the eight souls were saved through water?
What lesson is found here for us today?
How does baptism affect one's conscience?

The Last Week before the Flood
When was Noah invited to enter the ark? and under what circumstances?
What did the statement regarding his righteousness imply?
How are faith and righteousness related?
How does this principle apply to people of our day?
What commandment was given regarding the beasts and birds which were to be taken into the ark?
What reasons were implied for taking more of the clean animals and birds?
When did the "week" originate? and how was it regarded by the patriarchs?

What attitude did the people generally manifest during the last week before the flood?

In what way did Jesus endorse the account of the flood?
How did Noah react to God's commandments? and with what effect?

The Day in Which Noah Entered the Ark

What are some of the lessons we can learn from the dates in Noah's life?
How can it be shown that he was not one hundred and twenty years in building the ark?
What important lesson is learned from Noah's entrance into the ark?
How was Noah able to get all the animals and birds and creeping things into the ark?

The Flood Becomes a Reality

Why do skeptics deny the reality of the Flood?
What proof does the universal tradition regarding it offer?
When did the rain of the flood begin?
How long was Noah and his family in the ark?
What other source helped to supply the great amount of water?
How deep did the water get?
How much of the earth was covered with the waters of the flood? Give reasons for **YOUR** answer.
Name some of the advantages one may receive by a careful study of the inspired record regarding the flood.

Lesson VII—February 15, 1959

COVENANT OF THE RAINBOW

Lesson Text

Gen. 9: 8-17

8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,

9 And I, behold. I establish my covenant with you. and with your seed after you;

10 And with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that go out of the ark, even every beast of the earth.

11 And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of the flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

12 And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living

creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud,

15 And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh: and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living

creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

17 And God said unto Noah. This

is the token of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth." (Gen. 9: 13.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 89: 3-18.

Daily Bible Readings

February	9. M.....	A Covenant with Noah (Gen. 6: 18-22)
February	10. T.....	A Covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17: 4-8)
February	11. W.....	A Covenant with David (Psalm 89: 3-18)
February	12. T.....	An Everlasting Covenant (Isa. 55: 13)
February	13. F.....	Ministers of the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3: 1-6)
February	14. S.....	A Better Covenant (Heb. 8: 6-13)
February	15. S.....	Waters of Noah (Isa. 54: 1-9)

TIME.—1657 A.M., or 2347 B.C.

Place.—Presumably upon or near the mountains of Ararat.

Persons.—Jehovah, Noah, and his three sons.

Introduction

In the later part of Gen. 7, the chapter from which our last lesson was taken, we have the inspired record of the flood. The rain and the waters of the great deep continued to pour upon the earth for forty days, and we are told that "the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail: and the mountains were covered." (Verses 19. 20.) Bible students are not agreed as to the exact length of a cubit, but granting that it was only eighteen inches, that would mean that the waters went more than twenty feet above the highest mountains.

The terrible destruction which followed is described in the closing verses of the chapter: "And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both birds, and cattle, and beasts, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, of all that was on the dry land, died. And every living thing was destroyed that was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens; and they were destroyed from the earth: and only Noah was left, and they that were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days."

The entire eighth chapter of Gen-

esis tells of the manner in which the water gradually left the earth, and of Noah's efforts to learn whether or not they had abated. We also learn from this chapter that they were in the ark exactly one year, that is, one solar year. We can well imagine the feeling which characterized Noah and his family as they looked out upon the new world, and we are not surprised to read of the offering which he made, and the gracious promise which Jehovah made in response to it.

"And Noah builded an altar unto Jehovah, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean bird, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. And Jehovah smelled the sweet savor; and Jehovah said in his heart. I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, for that the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter and day and night shall not cease." (Verses 20-22.)

It appears from verse 3 of chapter 9 that the flesh of animals and birds, or "every moving thing that liveth," was now given to man for food for the first time. "Every moving thing that liveth shall be food for you; as the green herb have I given you all." They were, however, strictly forbidden to eat blood, and the law was announced regarding the shedding of

human blood, whether by man or beast. With this kind of a background before us, we are better pre-

pared to study the lesson regarding the covenant which God made with Noah and every living creature.

The Golden Text

The golden text for today is a part of the passage upon which our

lesson at this time is based, and we shall discuss it in its regular order.

The Text Explained

The Beneficiaries of the Covenant

(Gen. 9: 8-11)

And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you. Noah now takes his place as the new head or representative of the human race. The old order has been destroyed, and now a new beginning is to be made. This new beginning must be filled with hope, and must have every guarantee of Jehovah's blessings. This is why a new charter of privileges was given to Noah and his family, which contained a brief and simple, yet majestic, code of fundamental laws for the guidance of all future generations. Sin had been punished and Jehovah was now ready to guide and bless the people through whom the earth was again to be populated and ruled.

We are not to understand that it was necessary for God to bind himself by a covenant, in order to make sure that he would do his part; but he was willing to show weak and frail humanity that he would meet them on the level of human transactions, and give the necessary pledges and tokens to assure them that they could with complete confidence commit their ways to him. The philosophy of covenants between God and man is clearly stated in Heb. 6: 16-18: "For men swear the greater: and in every dispute of theirs the oath is final for confirmation. Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us."

There is another thing which we must keep in mind regarding covenants and that is that when it comes to a covenant between God and man

the matter is not a mere bargain between equals. God is always the superior party, and he dictates the terms; man is always the inferior party, and he must accept the terms if the covenant is to be binding. But God does condescend to bind himself to the performance of his promises—a gracious adaptation to the weakness and wants of man—so that man may have some tangible assurances on which to rest his faith. Covenants as a whole fall into two classes—conditional and unconditional; but in the case now before us it is easy to see that it is unconditional.

And with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you: of all that go out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. When we consider the significance of this statement, it will be seen to be a remarkable passage. The Scriptures teach us that the smallest of God's creatures are the objects of his watchful care. Not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without our Father. Cf. Matt. 10: 29. The passage now before us is an example of how God feels toward the animal creation; they are mentioned specifically in the covenant which God made following the destruction of the flood. He is high and mighty, but he "humbleth himself to behold the things that are in the heaven and in the earth." (See Psalm 113: 4-6: cf. Isa. 11: 6-9; Rom. 8: 18-22.) No one who believes the Bible can be unkind to the dumb creation.

And I will establish my covenant with you: neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of the flood: neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. We can well imagine that Noah and his family prayed earnestly to God that they would never again be subjected to the destruction of another flood. Josephus, in fact, says that Noah accompanied his sacrifices with

such a prayer; and if that is true, these words may have been given as an answer to that prayer. Noah and his family were thus assured that nature would move on in the same peaceful order as before the flood, and that if extraordinary amounts of rain should fall at any time in the future, the inhabitants of the earth could know that they were not being sent to punish mankind.

The Divine Token

(Gen. 9: 12, 13)

And God said. This is the token of tin covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. The first question which is usually asked in this connection is, "Was this the first rainbow?" But inasmuch as the rainbow is a natural phenomenon, being produced upon the cloud by the sunray's shining through the raindrops, there is no reason for saying that this was the first rainbow. The original word for "set" in the expression "I do set my bow in the cloud" is found in other passages, and if we compare some of them with this passage it will be relatively easy to see in what sense God *set* his bow in the cloud.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have *set* thee over all the land of Egypt." (Gen. 41: 41.) Nehemiah, in speaking of the sin of the Israelites when they refused to enter the land of Canaan, as recorded in Num. 14, said, "And refused to obey, neither were they mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them, but hardened their neck, and in their rebellion *appointed* a captain to return to their bondage." (Neh. 9: 17a.) The language found in Num. 14: 4 is, "And they said one to another. Let us *make* a captain, and let us return into Egypt." The original for "set" in the passage now before us is found in other parts of the Old Testament, but these which have been quoted are sufficient to show that the idea expressed in the term is not "to create," but "to appoint or designate."

The covenant which Jehovah made with Noah and every living creature had not existed before; but having

now made it, God *designated* the rainbow, a natural phenomenon, as the sign or token of the covenant. And although science has enabled us to understand something of the origin and nature of the rainbow, it still remains as surprising as any magic and lovelier than any deliberate art. It is hardly possible for any thoughtful person to look at its radiant grace and not be inclined to believe that it is the work of a Mind which is careful for beauty and benevolence; for no wild and savage power, bent upon destruction, could or would want to draw forward and exalt our human spirits by such a scene of unearthly beauty.

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown note that "no external sign could have been chosen for this purpose more suitable, from its natural properties, than the rainbow; for its elevated position renders it visible to all; and it never appears but when there is a gentle rain with the sun shining—which kind of rain is never known to do any harm, but much good. Moreover, 'its rundle or part which should look toward the object aimed at, is always from the earth, showing thereby that it does not aim at men. And it has no string, which shows that the Master will not shoot: so that a bow unbent, or without a string, is a proper symbol of peace and friendship.' In fine, its appointment as a sign seems to intimate that, as the rainbow is a necessary effect of sunshine in rain, and must continue such as long as the sun and atmosphere endure, so surely shall this earth be preserved from destruction by water; and its preservation shall be as necessary an effect of God's promise as the rainbow is of the shining of the sun in a shower of rain." See Adam Clarke, *in loco*.

The Use Made of the Rainbow

(Gen. 9: 14-17)

And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud. This is to say that "there is never rain without a rainbow being visible if we could only get to the right spot to see it, but God is always above the clouds and he always sees it." There is never a cloud between God and the rainbow, or anything to prevent his seeing it. That is not always true of

us; in fact, the clouds hide it from us much, if not most, of the time.

And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh: and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. While Jehovah evidently intended for man to look upon this token and remember the covenant which God had made with him, it is, however, with reference to Jehovah's use of ii that the Scriptures speak particularly. One could hardly think that Noah and his family could ever forget their experiences during the Flood, yet they were only human; and when life would become normal again and they would settle down to ordinary interests and daily occupations, the thought of the flood would go to the back of their minds just as the waters had receded from the earth.

That is characteristic of human minds. The fears, pains, anxieties, and tribulations of yesterday leave their scars; but when life becomes commonplace again, they are largely forgotten. It is not easy to imagine that disaster may strike us at any time. We seldom stop to think that we are always in danger of sickness, accident, death, and a hundred familiar things which we take for granted. The rainbow in the cloud may not make a very good impression upon our minds; but the thing which counts most is the meaning it has for God. *He will never forget.*

And the bow shall be in the cloud: and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. "I will look upon it, that I may remember." The rainbow which is spread across the heavens is something upon which God can look; and when he does gaze upon it, he always remembers what it means and keeps his word. The meaning which the rainbow has for God therefore is far more important than the meaning which it has for us. When a rainbow is arced in the clouds it stirs our souls when we think that Almighty God is himself looking at that same bow, and that he is remembering that which he spoke in the long ago.

Jehovah has solemnly promised

that the world will never again be destroyed by a flood, and who can ever cease to be thankful for these gracious words: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." (Gen. 8: 22.) All of the blessings which come to us through the course of nature are blessings which grow out of the covenant of which the rainbow is a token or symbol, and they are not conditioned on anything which man may or may not do. God makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust (see Matt. 5: 45.) Man may, and often does, go far astray, but all the while God does not leave himself without witness, in that he does good and gives all of us rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness (Acts 14: 17.) All of this is the direct testimony of the faithfulness of God. He will never forget his promise.

And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth. In addition to the material blessings which come to us directly from the covenant which God made with Noah, there are also some deep spiritual realities. When we look intelligently upon the rainbow, the token of that covenant, we are led to *believe*, that is, trust or have confidence in God. Cf. Heb. 11: 6. Then there is *hope* for the future. See Rom. 8: 24. And last, but not least, there is *love*. Cf.

1 John 4: 19. These three are principles of living, and no one can please God without them. See 1 Cor. 13: 13.

Although the literal rainbow was given many centuries ago, we must constantly keep the fact before us that we are still enjoying the blessings of the covenant for which it stands. But since we are also living under a new covenant, the covenant of the New Testament, it is not out of place to suggest a figurative use of the rainbow for us. As has already been pointed out, the rainbow originally stood (and still stands) as a witness to the faithfulness of God, especially with reference to material blessings, but we may also assume

that it symbolizes as much for us in every dark experience of life. Cf. 2 Cor. 12: 7-10.

The greatness of God's grace to us is seen in the fact that he remembers that which we forget, that he sees in the rainbow that for which we seldom think to look. He has provided for our every need: and we may be assured that as he looks upon the rainbow he will always remem-

ber to do that which he promised. Cf. Rom. 8: 28. And when this life is over and we are safe on the other side, it may be then that we shall see what deep waters and what mortal dangers God brought us through — without our even suspecting what could have been happening to us all the time, all because he was looking upon his rainbow and remembering his promise to us.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What does the Bible say regarding the amount of water which covered the earth?

Describe the destruction which resulted?

How long did the waters prevail upon the earth?

How did Noah seek to determine whether or not the waters had abated?

What did he do upon leaving the ark?

What did Jehovah say and do in response to the offering?

What new item of food for man was authorized following the Flood?

What law was given in regard to it?

The Beneficiaries of the Covenant

What position did Noah assume after the flood?

Why was a new covenant necessary?

What does a covenant imply? and why was God willing to make one?

What does the New Testament teach regarding the philosophy of covenants?

Are the parties to such covenants equal? Give reasons for your answer.

What two general classes do covenants fall into?

Why did God's covenant with Noah include the lower creation?

What effect should this have on our attitude toward dumb creatures?

What did God say regarding another flood?

The Divine Token

What was the token of this covenant? and what is meant by a token?

Was this the first rainbow? Give reasons for your answer.

What can you say regarding the appropriateness of the rainbow as a token of the covenant?

How is a rainbow made?

The Use Made of the Rainbow

How often does the rainbow appear in the heavens?

Who always sees the rainbow?

What did Jehovah say that he would do when he looks upon it?

How do you account for man's not being able to remember any better than he does?

What is the most important thing about the rainbow so far as we are concerned?

When you see a rainbow, do you always think that God, too, is looking upon it?

What did Jehovah say regarding the continuance of the natural order of things?

Name some of the earthly blessings which we receive as a result of the covenant we are now considering?

What proof do we have that God always keeps his part of the covenant?

What are some of the spiritual realities which grow out of the covenant?

How are faith, hope, and love related to it?

What figurative significance is seen in the rainbow?

What encouragement should the rainbow give to us in living the Christian life?

What application does Paul make of this principle in Rom. 8: 28?

What effect does the study of this lesson have on your personal attitude toward the Lord?

Lesson VIII—February 22, 1959

CONFUSION OF TONGUES

Lesson Text

Gen. 11: 1-9

1 And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech.

2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shi'-nar; and they dwelt there.

3 And they said one to another. Come, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick

for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

4 And they said. Come, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven, and let us make us a name: lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

5 And Je-ho'-vah came down to

see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

6 And Je-ho'-vah said. Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is what they begin to do: and now nothing will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do.

7 Come, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's

speech.

8 So Je-ho'-vah scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off building the city.

9 Therefore was the name of it called Ba'-bel; because Je-ho'-vah did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did Je-ho'-vah scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Golden Text. — *"And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech."* (Gen. 11: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING. — Gen. 9: 18, 19.

Daily Bible Headings

February 16.	M.....	Noah's Descendants (Gen. 10: 1-32)
February 17.	T.....	Slime Pits (Gen. 14: 10-12)
February 18.	W.....	Confusion of Speech (1 Cor. 14: 1-14)
February 19.	T.....	Origin of Babel (Gen. 10: 10)
February 20.	F.....	Corrupt Speech (Eph. 4: 25-32)
February 21.	S.....	Speech of Christians (James 3: 1-14)
February 22.	S.....	Christians Scattered (Acts 8: 1-4)

TIME. — Probably about 1757 A.M., or 2247 B.C.

PLACE. — A plain in the land of Shinar.

PERSONS. — Jehovah and the people of that place.

Introduction

The historical setting of this lesson can best be seen if we read Gen. 9: 18, 19 and 11: 1 as if they were connected statements. "And the sons of Noah, that went forth from the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah: and of these was the whole world overspread. . . . And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech." The practical meaning of this is that the entire tenth chapter, which relates to the nations of the earth, was a kind of parenthetical statement, with some things said about them which apparently happened after the confusion of tongues.

The shame and prophecy of Noah (9: 20-27) were evidently recorded in order to give a kind of background to the subsequent history of the various people of the earth. Or to state the same thing in other words, Noah became intoxicated from the fruits of his labors and was found inside his tent naked and helpless under the power of sin. The two different attitudes which were manifested toward their father by his sons, led Noah, in the spirit of prophecy, to pronounce upon their descendants the punishment and rewards which

the spirit and deeds of their fathers merited. These prophecies were fulfilled in a remarkable way.

According to the chronology which is generally followed in these studies, about one hundred years elapsed between the flood and the events of today's lesson. The careful reader will note that chapter 10 not only covers all of that century, but apparently goes beyond it. Bible students are not agreed as to what division is referred to in 10: 25, but some are of the opinion that our lesson for today gives an account of the division and how it was accomplished. Others think that possibly the reference is to the division into continents and islands. But whatever the division was, it took place in the days of Peleg who was born about one hundred years after the Hood, or at the time of our lesson for today. See Gen. 11: 10-16.

Chapter 10 closes with these words: "These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and of these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood." Moses did not write the Book of Genesis until after about twenty-five hundred years of the

world's history had passed, and his only purpose was not to give a detailed account of all nations as such, but rather to give the setting and background of the chosen family of Abraham. This will explain why we have

fragmentary information regarding the world as a whole. But we do see that all nations came from the same family and are therefore blood relatives. See Acts 17: 26-28; cf. 1 Chron. 1.

The Golden Text

This part of our lesson for today is found in the main text, and will be

dealt with in its proper order.

The Text Explained

The Unity of the Race

(Gen. 11: 1, 2)

And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. Literally, of one lip, and of the same words. See margin. Returning again to the last verse of chapter 10, where the division of the people is spoken of as having already taken place, the writer's object here was evidently to call attention to the original status of the people before telling how the difference in locality and various languages came to be. After Noah and his family came out of the ark. "God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them. Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." (Gen. 9: 1.) This implies that God intended for the people to inhabit the various sections of the earth, and not to remain in one locality.

We have no means of knowing just what the one language was. Adam Clarke notes that "the proper names, and their significations given in the Scripture, seems incontestable evidences that the Hebrew language was the original language of the earth—the language in which God spake to man, and in which he gave the revelation of his will to Moses and the prophets. 'It was used,' says Mr. Ainsworth, 'in all the world for *one thousand seven hundred and fifty-seven years*, till Peleg, the son of Heber, was born, and the tower of Babel was in building *one hundred years* after the flood. Gen. 10: 25, 11: 9.'" This, of course, could be true, and probably is: but we should not be dogmatic about it.

And if came to pass, as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. The marginal reading "in the east." That whole section of the country is referred to in the Bible as the east. We are told in the

Scriptures that the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat, and it is fair to suppose that Noah and those who were with him in the ark came out of it there. Ararat is in Armenia. It would be natural for them to come down from the mountains and cultivate the more fertile valleys; and as they did so, they doubtless would travel farther on as their needs or desires arose. It is also probable that they were nomadic in their nature, and if so, that would account for their travels.

The journeys of the people now under consideration brought them to a plain in the land of Shinar. Later known as Babylonia (the modern Iraq); and they dwelt there. Gen. 10: 10 mentions four cities of Shinar—Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh—; and implies that they were built by Nimrod. The Bible does not tell us who the people were who made the journey, but it is fair to gather from the text they were from all the sons of Noah, that is, before the division came. "And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. And it came to pass, as *they* journeyed east. . . ." The reference to Shinar in the 10th chapter would suggest that they were the descendants of Ham, if taken alone, but that, apparently, referred to later events.

Humanity Asserts Itself

(Gen. 11: 3, 4)

And they said one to another. Come, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. The marginal reading for slime is "bitumen," or, with us, "asphalt." The making of brick seems to have been a necessity because of the absence of stone for

building purposes in that area. Judging from the history of that country during early times, it is probably safe to say that the bricks were made after this fashion: "Moistening the loam with water, and mixing the softened gypsum with a small quantity of chopped straw or reeds, to increase its consistency, they moulded the raw brick into shape, and then dried it either by the sun or in the kiln." The expression "burn them thoroughly" suggests the kiln in the case now before us. We are told that with such building materials as could be had only from the alluvial plains, the people of that area were skilled builders; and it appears that the people of our text were familiar with that type of construction.

The "slime" which they used was formed from the decomposition of animal and vegetable substances. It is found some times in the form of a solid fossil, and at other times in a liquified state on the surface of lakes and in wells. Cf. Gen. 14: 10. Some writers say that the bitumen and naphtha were often boiled together in order to form a superior cement; and that it was of such tenacious quality in those ancient places, that when it was disinterred in modern times, it was almost impossible to detach a brick from the entire mass.

And they said. *Come, lei us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name: lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.* So far as we know, this was the first time that the idea of a universal empire with a mighty city as its capital was proposed. "And the beginning of his | Nimrod's | kingdom was Babel." (Gen. 10: 10.) This, apparently was the same Babel, and may have been the forerunner of Babylon. Dr. William Smith says concerning the proposal now before us, "In the blindness of their pride, they fancied that, when thus banded together, they might defy God himself and defeat his wise design of dispersing them over the earth. . . . God saw the danger of their scheme, and willed that no such power should be established. The attempt has since been made thrice on that very spot, by Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, and Alexander. It has

been repeated in the empire of the Romans, and in its attempted revival by Charlemagne and Napoleon; but in each case God has come down to confound the scheme." (*History of the Bible*, p. 47.)

The twofold motive which they assigned for building the city and the tower were (1) to make them a name; (2) to keep them from being scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. This, however, did not please God, as we shall see later. Bible students are not agreed as to the purpose of the tower. Some think that it was for idol worship, others, for the study of astronomy, while still others are of the opinion that it was to serve as a kind of landmark to enable any who might be lost to find their way back home. Josephus, in speaking of the motive behind their proposal, says that God had commanded them to send out colonies for the thorough peopling of the earth, but they, imagining the prosperity they enjoyed was not derived from the favor of God, but supposing that their own power was the cause of the plentiful condition they were in, did not obey him. And not only that, but they also entertained the suspicion that the reason they were being ordered out was to weaken them, so that it would be easier for them to be oppressed. This Jewish historian continues:

"Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as it were through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence on his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach; and that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers!" (Ant. 1: 4, 2.)

Divine Reaction

And Jehovah came down to see the

city and the tower, which the children of men builded. This is another example of the anthropomorphism which so frequently characterizes the Book of Genesis. God is represented as feeling and acting like a man. The description of his attitude here is both striking and simple—"Jehovah came down to see." Man in his sin was attempting to go up, while God in his judgment comes down. It is well to keep before us the fact of Divine scrutiny and examination. Jehovah is never willing to be indifferent toward the attitude which his people manifest toward him. The result of this examination was that God anticipated what the people meant to do, and restrained them.

And Jehovah said. Behold, then are one people, and they have all one language; and this is what they begin to do; and now nothing will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do. The multitudes which were assembled in the plain of Shinar formed an organized society, and began to lay the foundations for one universal empire. Unity in councils gave them power, and this was augmented by their ability to communicate their ideas easily and freely in a language which was everywhere understood. Bold and daring men might, under these circumstances, attempt anything which might enter their minds. What they were then attempting would only be the beginning of their wickedness. It was necessary therefore for the Lord to deal with this problem summarily.

Come, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. The means by which their design was thwarted was a confusion of tongues. The obvious and natural meaning of these words is, that by some extraordinary act of Divine providence their common speech was so changed as to make it impossible for them to understand one another. The immediate result of this confusion of tongues is stated in the next verse.

So Jehovah scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off building the city. The inspired record does not give any of the specific details of the

confusion of their speech, that is, we are not told in what the confusion consisted, nor just what part, if any, of the original speech the various groups carried away with them in their dispersion. Dr. Smith observes that it seems to be implied that some of the most striking differences which mark the various families of languages were then suddenly brought about by the immediate act of God, and that the builders separated because they could no longer understand each other; but it does not follow, continues this noted authority, that languages were then formed as they exist now.

Bible students and linguists are not agreed regarding all the questions which arise in this connection, but it is worthy of note that both history and archaeology bear clear testimony to the fact of a confusion of tongues or languages. Lange's commentary quotes one scholar as saying that "comparative philology would have been compelled to set forth as a postulate the supposition of some such division of languages in Asia, especially on the ground of the relation of the Egyptian language to the Shemitic, even if the Bible had not assured us of the truth of this great historical event. It is truly wonderful, it is a matter of astonishment, that something so purely historical, something so conformable to reason, is here related to us out of the oldest primeval period, and which now, for the first time, through the new science of philology, has become capable of being historically and philosophically explained."

Therefore was the name of it called Babel; because Jehovah did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did Jehovah scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth. This city received its name (Babel) from the confusion of tongues and was later known as Babylon. Thus the memorial of their confusion remained in the city which they had attempted to build, and from this time forward Babel or Babylon occupies a definite, and to some extent a prominent, part in the inspired record; until at length it is finally and completely overthrown in the Book of Revelation.

It has already been pointed out in this lesson that it was evidently Je-

Jehovah's purpose for the people to occupy the whole earth, and this appears to have been his method of bringing that condition about. But this separation from each other does not imply that it was necessary for them to be divided in their relation to God.

W. H. Griffith Thomas, in discussing the blessedness of true unity, has this to say: "There are three pictures in God's Word which ought; 1-ways to be considered together. The confusion of tongues in Genesis 11: the real unity amid diversities of tongues as the result of the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2; and the magnificent picture of 'all nations, and kindreds, and tongues' in Revelation 7 as they stand before the throne. With the Babel of earth we set in contrast the

Jerusalem that is above. To the city of man we oppose the city of God. True unity is always primarily the result of an organism, and only secondarily of an organization. It is based upon God and upon spiritual life in him. 'There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all. and in all.' (Eph. 4: 4-6.)"

Life without God is always in constant danger of disaster and destruction. That has been demonstrated in the Bible over and over again. "Except Jehovah build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except Jehovah keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." (Psalm 127: 1.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?
Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Give the setting of this lesson and explain fully your reasons.

What is the chief value of the tenth chapter of Genesis for us?

What was the shame and prophecy of Noah? and why was the prophecy given?

What can you say about the fulfillment of his predictions regarding his descendants?

How long after the flood before the time of this lesson? How do you know?

What division of the earth was made in the days of Peleg?

When did Moses record the event of Genesis? and what was his purpose?

What was Paul's comment regarding the relation of all men?

The Unity of the Race

What was the original status of all the people of the earth?

What was evidently God's plan for them? Give reasons for your answer.

What may have been the original language of the earth? Why do you say so?

Where did the events of this lesson take place? and how did the people come to be there?

What is now known about the plain of Shinar?

Humanity Asserts Itself

What proposal did the people in Shinar make?

What type of building material did they have? and why?

Describe their probable method of brick-making.

What was "slime," and how was it produced?

Why did they want to build a city and a tower?

Who probably took the lead in this enterprise?

Who else apparently tried the same plan?

What twofold motive did the people have for their building?

What was the probable purpose in their minds for the tower?

Divine Reaction

In what sense did Jehovah come down to see their work?

Why would he be interested in that which they were doing?

What did the Lord say about that which he saw?

What gave strength to their undertaking?

How did God propose to deal with the people?

What was meant by "confound" their language?

What was the immediate result?

Do you think that the confusing of the languages was immediate or gradual?

Give reasons for your answer.

What is the probable relation between the confusing of their speech and the subsequent languages of the world?

What effect has this inspired history had on modern philology?

Why was their city called "Babel"? and what is its later name?

How has the confusion of tongues been memorialized?

Why did Jehovah want the people scattered throughout the world?

Does geographical differences necessarily cause differences in people's attitude toward Jehovah? Give reasons for your answer.

What always happens when people try to live without God?

Lesson IX—March 1, 1959

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM

Lesson Text

Gen. 12: 1-9

1 Now Je-ho'-vah said unto Abram. Get the 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.

6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of She'-chem, unto the oak of Mó'-reh. And the Ca'-naan-ite was then in the land.

7 And Je-ho'-vah appeared unto Abram, and said. Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto Je-ho'-vah, who appeared unto him.

8 And he removed from thence unto the mountain on the east of Beth -el. and pitched his tent, having Beth -el on the west, and A'-i on the east: and there he builded an altar unto Je-ho'-vah. and called upon the name of Je-ho'-vah.

9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.

Golden Text.—*"The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran."* (Acts 7: 2b.)

Devotional Reading.—Heb. 11: 8-10.

Daily Bible Readings

February 23. M.
February 24. T.
February 25. W.
February 26. T.
February 27. F.
February 28. S.
March 1. S.

Abram's Birthplace (Gen. 11: 28-31)
Abram's Ancestry (Luke 3: 34-38)
Abram's Wife (Gen. 11: 29; 1 Pet. 3: 1-6)
Abram's Faith (Heb. 11: 8-19)
Abram's Deeds (Heb. 7: 1-9)
Abram's Father (Josh. 24: 1-3)
Abram's Obedience (Acts 7: 1-7)

Time.—2083 A.M., or 1921 B.C.

Place.—Haran and Canaan.

Persons.—Jehovah. Abram, Sarai, Lot. and Abram's servants.

Introduction

The second grand division of the Book of Genesis begins with 11: 10 and ends with 25: 18. This section is largely devoted to the account of Abraham, and it is easy to see that with this portion of the history the Book of Genesis takes a new and very distinct turn. The first division dealt with the race as a whole, but in this one the central emphasis is on an individual and his family or descendants. It has already been pointed out in these studies that the aim of the inspired writer was to trace the central facts of the scheme of human redemption, rather than

to write a general history of mankind.

Following the fall in the garden of Eden. God promised that this redemption would be wrought through the seed of the woman (Gen. 3: 15). and the fulfillment of that promise is the chief work which is described throughout the Sacred Scriptures. The earlier part of the Bible shows the need for redemption, and now we are to see something of the method by which God accomplished his purpose and redeemed the lost through one man, his family, and his nation. This is the reason why the

history of Abraham is so important. The call of Abraham was the most significant religious event since the fall of man, and it may be considered as a new beginning point for genuine religion.

We have already seen something of the terrible wickedness of the race, following the defection of Adam and Cain, wickedness which was so great as to cause God to destroy the whole race, save one family; and then following the new start after the flood, it was not long until rebellion was again the dominant factor in human

life. Jehovah, however, had promised not to destroy the earth again by a flood, but in order to preserve truth and purity he chose Abraham and deposited with him his truth and the hopes of the race until the coming of the promised Redeemer. God also selected as the home of this chosen family the land of Canaan which was the geographical center of the ancient world, and any revelation which would be made there would soon be known to all the other peoples of the earth.

The Golden Text

"The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran." This portion of scripture is taken from the beginning of Stephen's address before the Jewish Sanhedrin. The "God of glory" was a magnificent appellation, designed at the very beginning of his defense, to rivet the devout attention of his audience upon the subject he wished to discuss. This address was of the highest authority and was based upon great scriptural learning. It would, indeed, be difficult to get more historical information into the same space.

Stephen says that Jehovah appeared unto Abraham while he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran. Haran itself was in Mesopotamia, as may be seen by reading Gen. 24: 10; 28: 10; 29: 4. In the broad sense of the term, "Mesopotamia" was the country between the rivers, that is, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. See map. That country is now known as Iraq. The northern part of Mesopotamia was also known as Paddan-aram, or "Aram of the two rivers." See Gen. 24: 10, margin; cf. 25: 20; 28: 2. 6. It appears that the lower part of Mesopotamia was also called Baby-

lonia or Chaldea. It seems that this latter country was on both sides of the Euphrates river.

The appearance of Jehovah to Abraham which Stephen referred to was obviously not the one mentioned in Gen. 12: 1ff; for it was "before he dwelt in Haran." Many Bible students are of the opinion that the first appearance took place in Ur of the Chaldees. See Gen. 11: 28. 31: 15: 7; Neh. 9: 7. If the location of Ur on the map is correct, it was not in Mesopotamia proper, that is, it was not between the rivers, but on the south side of the Euphrates. If the first appearance took place in Ur on that side of the river, then one of two things must have been true.

(1) The whole of Babylonia or Chaldea must have also been called Mesopotamia, or (2) God, having called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. 15: 7), appeared to him as he was passing through Mesopotamia, before he reached Haran. In view of the fact that Ur appears to have been the birthplace and family home of Abraham (Gen. 24: 7), and Stephen's statement in Acts 7: 3—"Get thee out of thy land, and from thy kindred." the first view is perhaps the more reasonable.

The Text Explained

A Command Given and a Promise Made (Gen. 12: 1-3)

Now Jehovah 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: "Abram" was the original name of this patriarch, and it meant

exalted father. Later on his name was changed to "Abraham," the father of a multitude. See Gen. 17: 1-5. It has already been pointed out in this lesson that this was the second call which came to Abram; but, so far as the record goes, there was one important difference between the two calls. In the second instance he

was told to leave his "father's house," but nothing was said about that requirement in the first.

We gather from Josh. 24: 2 that Terah and his family were idol worshippers, and that was doubtless the reason for commanding Abram to leave that environment. Many have supposed that Jehovah intended for Abram to leave his father in Ur of the Chaldees, but in the absence of a direct statement to that effect, we cannot be absolutely certain about it. A man's house is his family, and it appears that Abram did leave his father's family—at least that is what Abraham himself said about it: "Jehovah, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house, and from the land of my nativity." (Gen. 24: 7a.) After Terah passed away, Jehovah told Abram to leave his father's house, and that certainly did not include Terah. Abram may have felt responsible for Lot after the death of the latter's father and grandfather, and that could account for his going with Abram.

But whatever may have been the truth concerning these matters. God intended for Abram to go into the land of Canaan when he left Ur of the Chaldees. They stopped, however, in Haran and remained there until after the death of his father Terah. It was then that the second command came to Abram. A look at the map will show that it was necessary for the caravan to go in a northwesterly course, in the direction of Haran, in order to reach Canaan. The great Syrian desert lay between Ur and Canaan, and it would have been impossible for Abram and his company to cross that great sea of sand. This entire journey, so far as Abram was concerned, was one of faith; for we are told that "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." (Heb. 11: 8.)

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great: and be thou a blessing: The first part of this promise was fulfilled in the nation of fleshly Israel, but when the promise was first made nothing could have been more improbable. "And Sarai was barren; she had no child." (Gen. 11: 30.) Yet, in the providence of

God, numerous posterity issued forth from this couple: and when we take into consideration Hagar, and the Jews, the Edomites, and the Arabs. But it was with particular reference to the Jews that this promise was made. No other fleshly nation has ever had so great an influence on the moral and religious interests of the world as did the nation of Israel during the Old Testament period.

The many special tokens of divine favor, both temporal and spiritual, which are recorded in the personal history of Abraham bear eloquent testimony to the fulfillment of God's promise to bless Abram. No other man has been distinguished by so many high honors as has Abraham, and this, of course, is proof that his name was made great. He is the only man whom God called his friend. See Isa. 41: 8: 2 Chron. 20: 7: James 2: 23. He was revered by the Jews as the founder of their race: he is looked up to by Christians as the father of the faithful; he is honored by the Arabs as their progenitor; and, while of no special credit, if there is anything moral in the religion of the Moslems it is traceable to the precepts and example of Abraham. This will give some idea of the extensive fame of this great man. All true religious blessings are traceable to Abraham.

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. This teaches that whatever treatment was accorded Abram, Jehovah would consider it as being accorded to him. This same principle is emphasized by Jesus in Matt. 25: 40. 45. J. W. McGarvey pointed out that the principle of this promise has held true even in modern times. God, of course, shows no favor to the Jews, above any one else, when it comes to the matter of salvation (Acts 10: 34, 35); but the history of the world shows in a remarkable manner that no nation has prospered for long which has persecuted the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob; and in a similar way, those countries which have been kind to the Jews have themselves been high in the scale of nations.

It is worthy of notice that those who bless Abraham are referred to

in the plural, while the opposite is in the singular—"them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee." If there is any significance here, it is probably in this, namely, the majority of mankind would bless, while only a relatively small number would curse.

The clause, "and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed," has direct reference to Christ and the salvation which he provides. "Ye are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham. And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Servant, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities." (Acts 3: 25. 26.) "Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed. . . .

"Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not. And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." (Gal. 3: 7, 8. 16.)

From Haran to Canaan

(Gen. 12: 4, 5)

So Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him: and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. The Bible does not say so in so many words, but it is generally thought by Bible students that the sojourn in Haran was about five years. Terah passed away during the stay there, and now Jehovah commands Abram to resume his journey to Canaan. It is well to note that "Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him." When this statement is read in the light of Gen. 24: 7 and Heb. 11: 8, it does not seem that any one is justified in saying that Abraham did not fully obey the Lord when Terah and Lot accompanied him. There does not appear to be any hint that Jehovah was displeased with Abram.

We are told plainly here that Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran for Canaan. This date and those given in the closing part of chapter 11 have led some

Bible students to become confused regarding the ages of Terah and Abram. "And Terah lived seventh years, and begat Abram. Nahor. and Haran." (Gen. 11: 26.) "And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran." (Gen. 11: 32.) This is followed by the command to Abram to get out of Haran and go to Canaan; and we are told that Abram was seventy-five years old at that time.

The whole trouble starts with the false assumption that Abram was the oldest of Terah's sons because he is mentioned first. But when we stop and consider what is recorded, we know that Abram was not the oldest, but, in all probability, the youngest. One of the sons was born when Terah was seventy years old; but since Abram was only seventy-five when Terah died at the age of two hundred and five, it follows that Terah was one hundred and thirty when Abram was born. There were, then, sixty years difference between the ages of Abram and the firstborn. But since the wife of Nahor was the daughter of his brother Haran (Gen. 11: 29), it is reasonable to suppose that Haran was older than Nahor: and the wide difference between the ages of Haran and Abram would certainly leave room for the birth of Nahor somewhere between their birthdays.

The order in which the sons are named is not the order of their ages, but probably the order of their prominence or dignity. A similar situation obtains in the case of Noah's sons. Shem was listed first, but it is certain that he was not the oldest. Noah was five hundred years old when he first became a father (Gen. 5: 32). He was six hundred years old when the flood came (7: 11): but Shem was not one hundred years old until two years after the flood (11: 10): it follows therefore that Shem was only ninety-eight when the flood came. The son who was born in the five hundredth year of Noah's life was either Ham or Japheth; but since Ham is called the "youngest," or, younger, margin (9: 24), Japheth was the oldest. (Cf. Gen. 10: 21, margin.) Prominence or dignity rather than age was given priority in naming these two sets of sons.

And Abram took Sarai his wife,

and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. This was no small caravan, and it must have been an impressive sight to watch this great crowd of people and animals move along the way, first across the fords of the Euphrates, and then on down into Syria, possibly stopping at Damascus where Abram may have obtained his trusted servant Eliezer of Damascus (15: 2). Cf. Gen. 33. They had, at the commandment of God, set out for the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

Abram Surveys the Land

(Gen. 12: 6-9)

And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the oak of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. Abram and his company must have entered the land of Canaan and passed on through the great plain of Esdraelon before descending into the pastoral valley between mount Gerizim and mount Ebal, described by some as the most beautiful part of Palestine. That was the section where Jacob first stopped after returning to Canaan from Paddan-aram, and where he bought the parcel of ground, which he gave to Joseph, and wherein was Jacob's well. See Gen. 33: 18-20; John 4: 5, 6. The "oak of Moreh" was probably a grove of oak trees, whose inviting shade caused Abram to select it for a camping place. It has been suggested that "Moreh" may have been the name of an influential native chief, similar to Mamre (13: 18; 14: 13). The land, at the time Abram entered, was occupied by the Canaanite (10: 19).

And Jehovah appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him. We are not told in what way Jehovah appeared unto Abram, but it is worthy of note that he was the first man to whom the Bible says that God appeared. The promise of the land as an inheritance was not to Abram personally (Acts 7: 2, 5), but with a view to the future ages. His offspring were to occupy it for centuries as a peculiar and

separated people (Num. 23: 9), and there sow the seed of divine knowledge for the benefit of all mankind. The strategic location of the land of Canaan should never be lost sight of; it was, in Bible times, in the center of the world's population. See map.

It is worthy of note that wherever Abram stopped, there he erected an altar. Adam Clarke observes that "where Abram has a *tent*, there God must have an ALTAR, as he well knows there is no safety but under the Divine protection. How few who build houses ever think on the propriety and necessity of building an altar to their Maker! The house in which the worship of God is not established cannot be considered as under the Divine protection."

And he removed from thence unto the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Ai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto Jehovah, and called upon the name of Jehovah. According to their mode of travel, we are told that the distance between Bethel and Ai was about a forty-five-minute ride. This place of encampment was about a day's journey south from Shechem. The road passes over a ridge, on the top of which is a plateau, stony but fertile, when compared with the rocky wilderness around.

The whereabouts of Abram can easily be ascertained by the smoke from the altars which he erected unto Jehovah. By this solemn act of devotion, that grand old patriarch made an open profession of his religion, established the worship of the true God, and declared his faith in the promises which Jehovah had made to him.

And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South. The marginal reading for "South" is Negeb, the southern tract of Judah. This large dry and undulating tract of country separated the central part of Canaan from Egypt. By a series of steps or slightly inclined slopes the land drops from the Judaeen highlands down to the Arabian desert. The ridges run east and west in such a way as to make a series of natural barriers against traffic in a northerly or southerly direction. The term "South" is frequently found in Old Testament passages. Cf. Gen. 13: 1,

3; 20: 1; 24: 62. This explanation will help us to understand what was meant. It appears that Abram's first journey through Canaan was one of exploration, and it was probably

made within a relatively short time. The usual route to the south was not through, but west and south of the Negeb. That section today is a part of the state of Israel.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

In what part of the Book of Genesis is this lesson found? and how is it related to the first part of the book?

What change in emphasis is made in the two parts?

How is this lesson related to the scheme of human redemption?

Tell something of God's purpose in selecting Abraham and in choosing Canaan as his home.

The Golden Text

Give general setting of this part of our lesson.

Why speak of Jehovah as the "God of glory"?

In what sense did Jehovah appear to Abraham in "Mesopotamia," before he dwelt in Haran?

When and where was this appearance made?

A Command Given and a Promise Made

What was the command and what was the promise?

What difference is noted in the name of this patriarch? and why?

What important difference is seen in the two appearances to Abram?

What was the general environment in which Abram lived in Ur of the Chaldees?

What did leaving his father's house imply?

Why did they go via Haran?

What chief principle guided Abram in making this journey?

Discuss the different elements of the first part of the promise.

What evidence do we have of their fulfillment?

How did Jehovah say that he would deal with people regarding Abram?

In what way would all the families of the earth be blessed through Abraham?

From Haran to Canaan

When and under what circumstances did Abram and his party leave Haran?

How old was Abraham at this time?

How old was Terah at the time of Abram's birth? Give reasons for your answer.

Trace the general course of the journey from Haran to Canaan.

Abram Surveys the Land

Give the possible route of the entrance into the land to the first stopping place

What promise did Jehovah make to Abraham when he appeared to him there?

What did Abram always do when he stopped at a place? and what did it imply.

Where was his next camping site?

What was meant by the "South"?

Give a general description of that area of Canaan?

What was Abram's possible purpose in covering so much territory?

To what political government does the "South" now belong?

Lesson X—March 8, 1959

ABRAM AND LOT

Lesson Text

Gen. 13: 5-15

5 And Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.

6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

7 And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle: and the Ca'-naan-ite and the Per'-iz-zite dwelt then in the land.

8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen: for we are brethren.

9 Is not the whole land before

thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if *thou wilt take* the left hand, then I will go to the right: or if *thou take* the right hand, then I will go to the left.

10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the Plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before Je-ho'-vah destroyed Sod'-om and Go-mor'-rah, like the garden of Je-ho'-vah, like the land of E'-gypt. as thou goest unto Zo'-ar.

11 So Lot chose him all the Plain of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

12 Abram dwelt in the land of Ca'-naan, and Lot dwelt in the cities

of the Plain, and moved his tent as far as Sod'-om.

13 Now the men of Sod'-om were wicked and sinners against Je-ho'-vah exceedingly.

14 And Je-ho'-vah said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated

from him. Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward:

15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

Golden Text.—*"The Blessing of Jehovah, it maketh rich: . . ." (Prov. 10: 22a.)*

Devotional Reading.—Gen. 13: 1-4.

Daily Bible Readings

March 2. M.....	Lot's Greed (Gen. 13: 10-13)
March 3. T.....	Abram's Portion (Gen. 13: 14-18)
March 4. W.....	Suffering Wrong (Matt. 5: 38-48)
March 5. T.....	Brotherly Love (Psalm 133)
March 6. F.....	Living Peaceably with All (Rom. 12: 18-21)
March 7. S.....	Walk in Love (Eph. 5: 1, 2)
March 8. S.....	Abram, a Good Man (Gen. 18: 17-21)

Time.—Probably about 2086 A.M. or 1918 B.C.

Place.—Bethel in Canaan and Sodom in the Plain of the Jordan.

Persons.—Abram and Lot.

Introduction

Our last lesson closed with Abram's journeying through the land of Canaan, "going on still toward the South." A famine developed in the land, and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there because of it. It was while he was in the land of the Pharaohs that his faith failed him temporarily, and he involved his wife in a situation which would have taken her from him to be the wife of the monarch of Egypt, had not God intervened. When Sarai's true relation to Abram was made known to Pharaoh, he, in alarm, called in Abram, rebuked him, restored to him his wife, and asked him to go his way. Read Gen. 12: 10-20.

After the incident with Pharaoh. Abram, Sarai, and Lot left Egypt and returned to the South. "And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journeys from the South even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of Jehovah." (Gen. 13: 2-4.) We can imagine something of Abram's feelings as his caravan slowly wound its way from Egypt

back into the land of Canaan. It is inspiring to note that, although possessed of great wealth, he returned to the last altar which he had erected before going into a foreign land, and there "called on the name of Jehovah."

We read of no such altar or prayer in Egypt; and, so far as the record goes. Abram appears to have been out of communion with God while he was away from the land into which God had led him. Abram had been concerned with the circumstances about him, rather than with his trust in God. He saw only the famine, not the faithfulness of God. But when he returned from Egypt, he did the right thing—he returned to his altar and the simple worship of his earlier days in Canaan. Abram no doubt had learned that Jehovah was essential to his every step, and that nothing is profitable apart from him. This great man must have returned to his homeland with a deepened idea of God and a louder call for simple, absolute, and continuous trust in him. He is now no doubt better prepared to deal with the vexing problem which is soon to confront him.

The Golden Text

"The blessing of Jehovah, it maketh rich; . . . the lesson today presents the first instance in the Bible

involving the problem of wealth in the life of a child of God. And this is a good time to ask the question.

What does the Word of God teach regarding the subject of riches as possessed by the children? This lesson can be made valuable to us today, if we are willing to listen to the testimony of the Scriptures: and it will be especially impressive as we see it acted out in the lives of those who put their trust in God. Cf. Rom. 15: 4.

An over-all view of the teaching of the Bible on the question of material possession does not seem to indicate that it is wrong for a child of God to be wealthy, provided the riches have been honorably obtained and are regarded as belonging to God, and are being used as God would have them used. But at the same time no thoughtful man will deny that the possession of riches very seriously increases the responsibility of a child of God, and can very easily result in sin, if he does not hold firmly to the scripture teaching of stewardship. Cf. Luke 16: 1-13.

When the blessings of Jehovah rest upon that which we do, the result is gratifying—"it maketh rich." This is especially true with regard to material wealth. Riches from God are without the sorrow of ill-gotten gain. When people are governed by the principles of righteousness, they can always trust God to bless their efforts and multiply their gain. Cf. Matt. 6: 24, 33. And then when the wealth is in their possession, they will have no trouble in learning how the Lord expects them to regard it. "Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not high-minded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed." (1 Tim. 6: 17-19.)

The Text Explained

A Serious Problem and a Deplorable Strife (Gen. 13: 5-7)

And Lot also, who went up with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. It is generally supposed that both Abram and Lot came into possession of much of their wealth while they were in the land of Egypt. But regardless of the source of their wealth, they were both very rich when they returned to Canaan. Abram turned instinctively to the altar at which he had worshipped in the days before such prosperity was his, but we have no word about Lot's attitude in that respect. Abram doubtless knew some of the perils which lurk in prosperity: how wealth may destroy the finer feelings of the soul, alienate man from God, and estrange him from his brethren. Happy is the man who knows these things and is prepared in heart and mind before he is involved in the many problems which wealth is heir to.

And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. This is further implication that these men obtained much of their wealth while in Egypt; for they had no such

problem before their sojourn in that country. But now the possession of such flocks and herds prevented Abram and Lot from continuing to dwell together. The increasing need of pasturage and water must have been great, and that, of course, resulted in a problem which they had not had before; but it was a problem which would have to be met.

And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land.—It appears that the strife which arose over the situation now before us originated with and was confined to the two sets of herdsmen; but it is obvious that it would eventually spread to the owners of the cattle if something was not done about it. Strife like fire, if allowed to smolder, is in constant danger of bursting forth into a flame. Cf. Eph. 4: 3, 32.

The difficulty which the herdsmen of Abram's and Lot's cattle were having was further emphasized by the fact that there were other people then dwelling in the land. We saw in our last lesson that the Canaanite was already in the land when Abram arrived (12: 6). Both they and the Perizzite were two of the tribes

which Jehovah promised to drive out of the land so that Abram's seed could dwell there. See Ex. 33: 1.

2. The mention of these two tribes was probably made to show another reason why Abram and Lot could not continue to dwell together: land would also be needed for the Canaanite and the Perizzite. And then, too, it is very probable that Abram realized the danger which would result to them if these strangers were allowed to know of the strife which had arisen. And so, both the honor of God and their own protection demanded that the strife not be allowed to continue.

A Generous Offer and a Selfish Choice

(Gen. 13: 8-13)

And Abram said unto Lot. Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we are brethren. Abraham who had befriended Lot and had made it possible for him to be in the land of Canaan, waived his right to tell his nephew what to do, and begged that there be no strife between them. He no doubt realized that it would be an easy matter for the dispute between the herdsmen to spread to the extent that it would involve both of them, and so he urged that the matter be settled at once. The basis of Abram's appeal to Lot for the avoidance of strife was the fact that they were brethren. They were of the same family, worshipped the same God in the same way, and were enjoying the same blessings which he provided. Why, then, should there be strife between them? This is a lesson which is sorely needed by strife-torn congregations and alienated brethren all over the country. Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 24.

Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right: or if thou take the right hand, then I will go to the left. Abram's conduct here was not only disinterested and Peaceable, but generous and condescending to an extraordinary degree. His faith thoroughly sustained him in this emergency. He had learned from his experience in Egypt that no one needs to descend to deceit in order to obtain his desires. The

true child of God can afford to be magnanimous; for God has promised to bless him. When it comes to the place that strife is unavoidable in a given situation, then let the situation be changed at once; for no secular gain can compensate for the loss of peace. Cf. Matt. 5: 9; Heb. 12: 14.

Abram therefore, feeling sure that God would keep his promises, called on Lot to take his choice of the land before them, and to leave him in peace, if they could not live together in harmony. This magnanimous proposal of Abraham exemplified in the starlight age of the world many of the principles which are enjoined upon us who are living in the light of the Sun of righteousness. "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6: 33.) "Doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others." (Phil. 2: 3, 4.)

And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the Plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of Jehovah. like the land of Egypt, as thou goest unto Zoar. As we think of the relationship which had existed between Abram and Lot since they left Ur of the Chaldees some years before and meditate upon the experiences which had characterized them, both in Canaan and the land of Egypt, we naturally would expect better things of Lot. The high-mindedness of Abraham should have been met with equal magnanimity on the part of Lot; but it does not always follow that generosity meets its own likeness in others. The selfish sometimes even take advantage of it, call it weakness, and fall to lower depths in its presence. This was a crucial moment in the life of Lot, and he was unequal to the occasion; his character was supremely tested, and the result has been for ever stamped upon the pages of history.

The place where Abram and Lot were living at the time of this incident was between Bethel and Ai, and they could therefore look westward upon the rugged hills of Ju-

daea, and then eastward upon the fertile plain of the Jordan. The contrast must have been impressive, sufficiently so to sway the judgment of Lot, and bring him under the power of selfishness. The description of the plain has, it appears, been somewhat obscured by the rendering of the text as we have it. Adam Clarke quotes a version which puts it this way: "But before the Lord had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, it was, as thou goest to Zoar. well watered, like the garden of the Lord, and like the land of Egypt." The Jordan watered the plain about it, just as the four neighboring rivers watered the garden of Eden (Gen. 2: 10), and the Nile overflowed the land of Egypt. Zoar was a town east of the Jordan, and could hardly be seen from where Abram and Lot were. See map.

So Lot chose him all the Plain of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. The reason why Lot failed to meet Abram's generosity with equal highmindedness is obvious; the world had taken possession of his heart. Egypt, which had been a discipline to Abram, had been a temptation to Lot. His imagination, while in that land, had evidently been inflamed by the sight of wealth beyond a mere dream. His soul had been taken captive by the desire to be rich, and now he has the opportunity to gratify that desire. No wonder Jesus taught his disciples to pray that they not be led into temptation!

Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the Plain, and moved his tent as far as Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners against Jehovah exceedingly. Abraham relied upon the righteousness of God and remained where Jehovah had led him, but Lot, influenced by the ways of the world, moved on closer and closer to wickedness. But the material blessings which he sought were soon to be accompanied by moral blight. It is easy for us today to see the mistakes of Lot, but it is not so easy for us to see that his actions have many moral counterparts. There are professed Christians today who often choose their homes in localities simply for the scenery, society, or other material

advantages, without once inquiring about the spiritual opportunities which they must have if they are to please God. The result which usually follows such considerations is the loss of their children to worldliness and polite indifference.

Lot could not have been wholly ignorant of the reputation of Sodom, or if he was, he could easily have inquired about the place before making his choice to go there. But he was in no mood for that; worldly advantages were uppermost in his mind, and he was in no frame of mind to minimize them. He saw the fertile plain of the Jordan and the magnificent opportunities for material increase which it afforded; and he conveniently overlooked the character of its inhabitants. He had a keen eye for material interests, but a rather dim vision regarding his spiritual needs. Peter tells us that these things later became the means of trying his soul. "And delivered righteous Lot, sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds)." (2 Pet. 2: 7, 8.) Lot's case was a demonstration of the truth that men must reap that which they sow. See Gal. 6: 7, 8.

The Reward of the Righteous

(Gen. 13: 14, 15)

And Jehovah said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him. Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. It is of course, impossible for us to know the thoughts which passed through the mind of Abraham after Lot left him, and especially since he chose Sodom as his future home. There is no reason to think that Abram had any doubt in his own mind regarding the proposal he made to his nephew, that is, in giving him the opportunity to make his own choice; but looking at the matter from the human point of view, it sometimes happens, after a great moral decision has been made, that the one making it is tempted to review the events leading up to it, and to ask himself if he did the right thing.

But whatever may have been the thoughts of Abram following Lot's departure, Jehovah came to him with Divine assurance and blessed compensation. Lot had fixed his eyes in only one direction, but Jehovah bids Abram look in all directions. This implies that the prospects of Abraham were not only wider than those of Lot, but infinitely more glorious; for the word of God was behind them.

It is evident from Acts 7: 5 that the promise to give the land to Abram was meant in the sense that his seed would possess it, and not

Abraham personally. And furthermore, it is evident from the Scriptures that their continual possession of the land as an inheritance was conditioned upon their faithfulness. See Deut. 30: 17, 18; Josh 23: 16; 1 Kings 9: 6, 7; 2 Kings 21: 8. When God makes a promise, it will be fulfilled: and we, accordingly, as we study the Bible, will have the opportunity of seeing Abraham's seed enter the land of promise, although they refused to enter when they were first urged to do so. See Deut. 1: 19-26.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?
Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, persons.

Introduction

Recite the principal facts in the narrative between the last lesson and this one.

Where did Abram and his company go after leaving Egypt? and why?

What commendable thing is recorded about him after his return to Canaan?

What lesson must have been impressed upon Abram's mind by his experiences in Egypt?

The Golden Text

What new problem is presented in today's lesson?

How can a discussion of this issue benefit us?

What is the over-all teaching of the Bible on this subject?

What is the essential idea of the golden text?

What instruction has been given to wealthy Christians?

A Serious Problem and a Deplorable Strife

What problem is here set forth? and what likely brought it on?

Give reasons for and against the idea that much of their wealth was obtained while they were in Egypt.

How and where did the strife arise? and what were its dangers?

How was this difficulty further emphasized?

What was the probable purpose in mentioning the Canaanite and the Perizite?

A Generous Offer and a Selfish Choice

How did Abram attempt to settle the strife? and upon what basis?

What application does this principle have upon people today?

What offer did Abram make?

How do you account for the difference in the attitude of the two men?

Why didn't Lot respond in like to Abram's generosity?

Where were Abram and Lot at this time? and what could they see?

How is the Plain of the Jordan described in the text?

With the facts of Lot's attitude in mind, what prayer should Christians pray continuously?

Why do the same set of circumstances often have a different effect on different people?

Upon what did Abram rely? and with what result?

What principle guided Lot in the selection of his home?

How do you account for the fact that we can see Lot's mistake, but can't always see ours?

What usually happens when people follow the course pursued by Lot?

What effect did the environment of Sodom have on Lot in later years?

What great truth did his action in choosing Sodom illustrate?

The Reward of the Righteous

What was the probable effect of Lot's choice upon Abram after Lot left?

What usually happens to people after they make a great moral decision, especially if it adversely affects someone else?

What did Jehovah do for Abram after Lot departed from him?

When did the descendants of Abram actually inherit the land of Canaan?

Lesson XI—March 15, 1959

ABRAM DELIVERS LOT

Lesson Text

Gen. 14: 13-24

13 And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew:

now he dwelt by the oaks of Mam'-re, the Am'-or-ite, brother of Esh'-col,

and brother of A'-ner; and these were confederate with Abram.

14 And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he led

forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued as far as Dan.

15 And he divided himself against them by night, he and his servants, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hó'-bah, which is on the left hand of Da-mas'-cus.

16 And he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.

17 And the king of Sod-om went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Ched-or-la'-omer and the kings that were with him. at the vale of Sha'-veh (the same is the King's Vale).

18 And Mel-chiz'-e-dek king of Sa'-lem brought forth bread and wine: and he was priest of God Most High.

19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth:

20 And blessed be God Most High who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him a tenth of all.

21 And the king of Sod'-om said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

22 And Abram said to the king of Sod'-om, I have lifted up my hand unto Je-ho-vah, God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth,

23 That I will not take a thread nor a shoe latchet nor ought that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

24 Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men that went with me, A'-ner. Esh'-col, and Mam'-re: let them take their portion.

Golden Text.—*"I will not take a thread nor a shoe-latchet nor ought that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich."* (Gen. 14: 23.)

Devotional Reading.—Gen. 14: 1-12.

Daily Bible Readings

March 9. M.

March 10. T.

March 11. W.

March 12. T.

March 13. F.

March 14. S.

March 15. S.

Abram Meets Melchizedek (Gen. 14: 19-24)

Melchizedek's Greatness (Heb. 7: 1-17)

Melchizedek, a Type of Christ (Heb. 5: 1-10)

Christ Our High Priest (Heb. 7: 18-28)

Christ, Our Redeemer (Isa. 61: 1-6)

Conquerors Through Christ (Rom. 8: 31-39)

Victory Through Faith (1 John 3: 1-5)

Time.—Probably about 2091 A.M., or 1913 B.C.

Place.—Oaks of Mamre. Dan Hobah, and Sodom.

Persons.—Abram, Lot, the king of Sodom, Melchizedek, and the confederates of Abram.

Introduction

After Lot separated himself from Abram, the record says that "Abram mewed his tent, and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built there an altar unto Jehovah." (Gen. 13: 18.) But Lot, as we saw in our last lesson, "moved his tent as far as Sodom," one of the famous five "cities of the Plain." The other four of these cities were Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (also called Zoar). Each of these cities had its own king, but for the purposes of defense they formed an alliance or confederacy.

But the league which the five cities formed was not sufficiently strong as to make them independent: for they were tributary to a great empire in Western Asia which was ruled over by Chedorlaomer, king of

Elam. It appears that this king also exercised a power over both Assyria and Babylon. It was to his advantage, of course, to keep the trade route to Egypt open; and inasmuch as the route necessarily passed through the Jordan valley, it was vital to his interest to keep the kings of the five cities of the Plain under his subjection.

Chedorlaomer was successful in this domination for twelve years, but "in the thirteenth year they rebelled." The following year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him made an attack in the area surrounding the cities of the Plain. As the invaders came closer, the five kings and their armies went out to meet them, and the battle was set in array, "four kings against the

five." The result was the utter defeat of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. "And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way.

The Golden Text

This portion of the text will be considered in the main body of the

lesson. And they took Lot. Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed." Thus Lot, identified with Sodom, was compelled to suffer the consequences.

The Pursuit, the Battle, and the Rescue

(Gen. 14: 13-16)

And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew: note he dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner; and these were confederate with Abram. The battle between the four kings and the five kings was fought in the vale of Siddim which, in the light of verse 3, was the present site of the Dead Sea. "Now the vail of Siddim was full of slime pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell there, and they that remained fled to the mountain." (Gen. 14: 10.) The "slime pits" were the sources of bitumen or asphalt. Adam Clarke notes that this was "a bad place to maintain a fight, or to be obliged to run through in order to escape." We do not know how many died nor how many escaped; but one who did escape came to Abram and told him what had happened, including the capture of his nephew Lot.

Abram is here called "the Hebrew," probably to distinguish him from his confederates who were "Amorites." This is the first time in the Scriptures that the term "Hebrew" is applied to any man, and Bible students have never been able to agree as to its origin. Some have thought that Abram was called a Hebrew because he was descended from "Eber" (cf. Gen. 10: 21; 11: 14-26), but this is very unlikely. The expression is rendered in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament by a term which means the "crosser over," that

one who had crossed over the Euphrates or one who had lived "beyond the River" (Josh. 24: 2). This view is much more reasonable. If this view is correct, Abram was doubtless called "the Hebrew" to distinguish him from his three Amorite confederates, Mamre, Eshcol, and

Aner, three chieftains who lived in that vicinity. The place where Abram lived is called "the oaks of Mamre" probably because Mamre owned the land on which they grew.

And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued as far as Dan. If Abram had been merely a man of the world, he probably would have felt that he was under no obligation to Lot. But if Lot did not measure up to the high standards of his uncle when the opportunity for making that kind of a choice was given to him, Abram was not at liberty to step down to the lower level of Lot. Cf. Gal. 6: 1, 2; James 5: 19, 20. As soon as Abram heard that Lot was in trouble, he took immediate steps to go to his rescue.

The fact that Abram could take three hundred and eighteen of his trained servants in an effort to rescue Lot, and still leave a sufficient number at home to look after his flocks and herds, is enough to give some idea of the greatness of his house. We are not informed as to the number of men Abram's three confederates took with them. The pursuit of the victorious armies continued as far as Dan, that is, to the northern extremity of the land of Canaan.

And he divided himself against them by night, he and his servants, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. Damascus was the capital of Syria, and was about forty miles east of Dan. The armies which had invaded Canaan, sacked Sodom and Gomorrah, and had taken Lot captive, were on their way back to their homes in the east. Abram and his company demonstrated their courage and skill in pursuing and attacking the armies of four victorious kings. Jamieson says that the

plan followed by Abram is exactly the same as that practiced by Arab chiefs to this day. "When a defeated party resolves to pursue the enemy, they wait till these are fast asleep; then, as they have no idea of posting sentinels, they rush upon them from different directions, striking down the tent poles—if there is any fight at all it is the fray of a tumultuous mob—a panic commonly ensues, and the whole contest is ended with little or no loss on either side." This explains why Abram divided his forces by night and then made the attack. Hobah was north of Damascus. See marginal reading.

And he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people. This statement gives some idea of the success of Abram's undertaking. Adam Clarke observes that the remark about the rescue of the women is brought in by the sacred historian with peculiar interest and tenderness. Thoughtful people who read this account are deeply stirred as they contemplate the fate of the wives and daughters who fell into the hands of the ferocious, licentious, and victorious soldiers. Men of this type might be willing to leave other spoils behind, while making a desperate effort to carry with them their female captives. but Abram had planned his attack so well, and had executed it so promptly, that not only was he able to recover the goods, but "the women also, and the people."

The Returning Victor Is Met by Two Kings

(Gen. 14: 17-20)

And the king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him. at the vale of Shaveh (the same is the King's Vale). The name of the king of Sodom who led his army into the battle with Chedorlaomer and his allies was *Bera*. Verse 10 of the chapter now before us implies that both he and the king of Gomorrah (Birsha) were killed in the vale of Siddim. This king therefore must have been the one who succeeded Bera. The term "slaughter" implies the destruction of the four kings. See Heb. 7: 1. The place where the king of Sodom met Abram is called

Shaveh, or the King's Vale. This was probably the place near Jerusalem which was later called the "king's dale." See 2 Sam. 18: 18.

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was priest of God Most High. Melchizedek apparently came to Abram about the same time and in the same place in which the king of Sodom met him. There is very little in the Bible regarding Melchizedek. Paul, however, gives some additional information about him. "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham divided a tenth part of all (being first, by interpretation. King of righteousness, and then also King of Salem, which is, King of peace: without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God), abideth a priest continually." (Heb. 7: 1-3.)

If the term "Salem" referred to a geographical location, as most Bible scholars think that it did, then Jerusalem was probably meant. See Psalm 76: 2 where Zion (Jerusalem) and Salem are used interchangeably. If this view is correct, then Melchizedek was king of the city which later became Jerusalem: and he, in all probability, was one of the few, if not the only one, of the rulers in Canaan who worshipped God acceptably.

The victory which was won by Abram conferred a public benefit on that part of the country, and it seems that Melchizedek came forward as the representative of God to make a public recognition of it and to honor the man who led the attack. It is possible, of course, that the bread and wine were intended only for refreshments, but more probably they were meant as a public and formal tribute of thanksgiving, to acknowledge the goodness of God in the rescue of the people and the services which had been performed by Abram as his minister. But whatever may have been the meaning then, Melchizedek was made to typify Christ who would come as the promised seed of Abram. See Heb. 7: 1-10.

And he blessed him, and said. Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be God Most High, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. A priest is one who stands between God and man, and is particularly man's spokesman to God. It was a part of his duty to bless, that is, speak well. In the case now before us, Melchizedek blessed both Abram and God, that is, he spoke good to Abram, and he spoke good of Jehovah. We do not, of course, know the specific phraseology which he used if more was said than is here recorded, but we do have the form of words which Aaron and his sons were to use for such purposes. "And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying. Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel: ye shall say unto them, Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee: Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. So shall they put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them." (Num. 6: 22-27.)

And he gave him a tenth of all. This is the first mention in the Bible of anyone's giving the tithe as was done here. This, however, does not imply that it was not done before, but this is the first record we have of the practice. Cf. Gen. 28: 20-22. Whether or not the giving of the tenth by Abram was the result of a command which he had on the subject, or whether or not he gave it more or less voluntarily, is not the important question; the thing that counts is that it was pleasing to God. and the significance of it was made a part of the New Testament record. See Heb. 7: 1-10.

A King's Offer Rejected (Gen. 14: 21-24)

And the king of Sodom said unto Abram. Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. It was, it seems, and still is the custom among Arab tribes to allow the victor to retain the goods which he recovered from the enemy; and it was therefore but natural for the king of Sodom to make the proposal which he did to Abram. The king was also greatly indebted to Abram, and it was his obvious duty to show his

gratitude and appreciation for the service which had been rendered to his people.

And Abram said to the king of Sodom. I have lifted up my hand unto Jehovah, God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth that I will not take a thread nor a shoe-latchet nor ought that is thine. lest thou shouldest say. I have made Abram rich: save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men that went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre: let them take their portion. The lifting up of the hand to God was a kind of oath, or a method of appealing to Jehovah and calling him to witness the particular transaction in question. The manner in which Abram replied to the king of Sodom indicates that he had anticipated that this or some similar proposal would be presented to him, and he had therefore decided in advance what his course of action would be. Having already determined the matter in God's sight. Abram had no cause to hesitate about what to do in the king's sight. It is always of great spiritual value, whenever we have the opportunity, to face probable contingencies before they happen, and decide in the sight of the Lord just what should be done if and when they actually come to pass.

Jehovah had led Abram into the land of Canaan, and he was not willing to form any entangling alliances with any of the corrupt leaders of the country; and furthermore, he did not want to be under a semblance of obligation to any of them. Such relations would only serve as a basis for exactions in the future. And, too. Abram did not want to leave the appearance that anything but the noblest motives had caused him to enter into the conflict with the invading kings. The whole attitude of Abram showed not only noble independence. but also faithfulness to Jehovah.

As already observed, Abram had been brought into the land of Canaan by Jehovah, and he was his representative among people who were largely given to wickedness and idolatry. To accept a proposal from one of these alien rulers would, in effect, be to compromise the honor of Jehovah's name. He had won the battle by the blessings of God, and

he would not share its honors with wicked men. He could well afford to be their benefactor, but he could not afford to be their partner, or the recipient, even in appearance, of favors from their hands.

There is a valuable lesson here for us. How often, and in how many ways, is Christian integrity tainted by actions and associations which bring the Lord's people under the power of the world, with the result that the voice of truth is smothered in consequence! This ancient champion of the right, with his noble disdain of the spoils of victory, and his lofty faith in Jehovah, teaches us to be true to our religious principles, and avoid all complications with the world of unbelief and ungodliness.

The only qualification which Abram made was with reference to the food which the young men, evidently his own servants, had eaten, which was unavoidable, and the portion of his confederates. Abram, of course, had no right to prescribe the same liberal conduct for Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, which characterized him, and he left them therefore to claim their share of the recaptured goods. Whether or not they claimed this right the record does not say: but they must have realized that they had a man of extraordinary principles as their confederate.

This lesson should not close without calling attention to the difference in Abram's attitude toward the two kings who met him on his return from his victory over the late invaders. To the king of Salem he acknowledged his dependence: but to the king of Sodom he asserted his independence. To the king of Salem he admitted his inferiority; but to the king of Sodom he assumed the attitude of equality. To the king of Salem he showed the spirit of humility: but to the king of Sodom he manifested the attitude of dignity. Indeed, in all things and in all ways Abram was able to maintain a perfect balance of qualities. This, of course, was the result of his great faith in Jehovah.

The faith of Abram enabled him to distinguish between spiritual position and serious peril; to resist strong pressure and rest on special provision. The offer of the spoils was as nothing to Abram in comparison with Jehovah's promise of the land and the accompanying blessings. Abram therefore could wait for the Lord, and his faith expressed itself in patience, as he put him first. "Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart. And lean not upon thine own understanding: In all thy ways acknowledge him. And he will direct thy paths." (Prov. 3: 5, 6.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What did Abram do after Lot left him?
Tell something of the setting of Lot's new home.
What was the general political situation in that area? and why?
What brought on the conflict between the two sets of kings? and with what result?

The Pursuit, the Battle, and the Rescue

Where was the "battle of the kings" fought?
Tell something of that battle field.
Why was Abram called "the Hebrew"?
Who were his confederates?
What trait of character did Abram manifest when he heard of Lot's capture?
How may this lesson be applied to us?
What indication do we have as to the greatness of Abram's house?
How far did he and his company pursue the enemy?
What type of strategy did Abram employ? and why?
How successful was Abram in his effort to rescue Lot?

What particular interest and tenderness is shown in the inspired record?

The Returning Victor Is Met by Two Kings

Who was the first king who met Abram on his return? and where did the meeting take place?
Who was the second king? and what is known of him?
What and where was Salem?
Why did Melchizedek come out to meet Abram?
What use does Paul make of this incident?
What is a priest and what are some of his principal duties?
What does the term "bless" mean? and how can man bless God?
In what way were the priests of the law of Moses told to bless the people?
Why did Abram give Melchizedek a tenth of all?
Is there any lesson here for us? Give reasons for your answer.

A King's Offer Rejected

What proposal did the king of Sodom make to Abram? and why?
What reply did Abram make to him?
What is meant by lifting up his hand unto Jehovah? and what does that imply?

What lesson does this suggest for us?
 Why was Abram unwilling to accept anything from the king of Sodom?
 How would such action affect his relation with Jehovah?
 What should be our attitude under such conditions?

What exception did Abram make? and why?
 Discuss the difference in Abram's attitude toward the two kings who met him?
 What was the basis of his action? and what did his faith do for him?

Lesson XII—March 22, 1959

GOD S COVENANT WITH ABRAM

Lesson Text

Gen. 15: 5-18

5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

6 And he believed in Je-ho'-vah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness.

7 And he said unto him, I am Je-ho'-vah that brought thee out of Ur of the Chal'-dees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

8 And he said, O Lord Je-ho'-vah, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

9 And he said unto him, Take me a heifer three years old, and a she-goat three years old, and a ram three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon.

10 And he took him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each half over against the other: but the birds divided he not.

11 And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.

12 And when the sun was going

down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram: and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him.

13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years:

14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

15 But thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

16 And in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Am'-or-ite is not yet full.

17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces.

18 In that day Je-ho'-vah made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of E'-gypt unto the great river, the river Eu-phra'-tes.

Golden Text.—"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised." (Heb. 10: 23.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gen. 15: 1-4.

Daily Bible Readings

March 16. M.	God's First Promise to Abram (Gen. 12: 1-3)
March 17. T.	Second and Third Promises (Gen. 12: 7; 13: 14-17)
March 18. W.	Fourth Promise (Gen. 15: 1, 5, 6, 18, 19)
March 19. T.	Fifth Promise (Gen. 17: 1-10)
March 20. F.	Sixth Promise (Gen. 8: 18-19)
March 21. S.	Seventh Promise (Gen. 21: 1-12)
March 22. S.,	Eighth Promise (Gen. 22: 16-18)

TIME.—Probably about 2093 A.M., or 1911 B.C.

PLACE.—Presumably at the oaks of Mamre.

PERSONS.—Jehovah and Abram.

Introduction

It is fair to assume that Abram returned to his home by the oaks of Mamre, in Hebron, after the meeting with the king of Sodom and Melchizedek at the vale of Shaveh. The events in connection with the rescue of Lot had brought about a new, and altogether different, situation in his life. If we may judge by the implications of the first part of the chapter from which our lesson today is taken, Abram must have felt somewhat as Elijah did after his eventful and critical day on mount Carmel. See 1 Kings 19: 1-14. Times of spiritual reaction, in fact, are not uncommon among the people of God, as any thoughtful observer knows, both from the testimony of the Scriptures and his own experience.

The manifestation of Jehovah to Abram on the occasion of this lesson is the fifth out of a series of nine, but with this one there is a new feature introduced, namely, "the word of Jehovah came" unto Abram. This, according to the text, was in the form of a vision. It appears that prior to this Jehovah had spoken to Abram directly, or at least through an intermediary. The reason for this vision was to encourage Abram. The exhortation "Fear not" implies that he

had some fear which, no doubt, resulted from his experience in delivering Lot from his captors. This is the first time Jehovah bade his servant not to fear, but the exhortation is found frequently in the Scriptures after this.

The assurance which was given to Abram at this time was, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Jehovah would himself shield Abram from any dangers which might confront him as a result of his military activities, and he would also see that his servant would not regret having refused the spoil of Sodom. God would be his exceeding great reward. The human response to God's gracious promise is expressed in these words, "O Lord Jehovah, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and he that shall be possessor of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir." It was then that Jehovah promised him a son of his own flesh and blood: "And, behold, the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying. This man shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir."

The Golden Text

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised" This text is a part of a general exhortation to greater diligence, purity, constancy, and fidelity in the worship and service of God, which Paul addressed to the Hebrews of his day. The idea is, "Let us hold fast to the faith which we have confessed and cling to the hope which it ministers." As long as God's people are in the flesh they are but pilgrims, and it is always necessary for them to keep their faces toward the goal toward which they are going. No one is saved eternally in this life; and he must therefore ever persevere if he expects to be with God for ever in the world which is to come.

The exhortation to steadfastness is enforced by the clause, "for he is faithful that promised." This was true in the case of Abram, the father of the faithful, and it is just as true in our case. No promise of God has

ever been broken. Peter says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness: but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3:9.) God's promises make up a large part of the gospel, and one of the greatest needs of our day is for men to learn to trust in those promises. See 2 Pet. 1:4.

The faithfulness of God is emphasized throughout the Bible. "Know therefore that Jehovah thy God, he is God, the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and lovingkindness with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations." (Deut. 7:9.) "Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it." (1 Thess. 5:24.) "But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and guard you from the evil one." (2 Thess. 3:3.) "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.) This is the kind of faith which characterized Abraham and Sarah. See Rom. 4: 16-21; Heb. 11:11.

The Text Explained

The Sweep of God's Promise to Abram

(Gen. 15: 5, 6)

And he brought him forth abroad, and said. Look now toward heaven, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. In seeking to enable Abram to grasp something of the magnitude of his posterity, Jehovah used three metaphors, namely (1) the dust of the earth. 13: 16; (2) the stars of the heaven. 15:5; and (3) the sand upon the seashore, 22: 17. In the case now before us. Abram had just expressed his concern for an heir, and this was God's response to him. It had been some years since Jehovah had first promised to make of Abram a great nation (12: 1-3), and Abram must be taught that when Jehovah makes a promise it will be fulfilled. The original promise to Abram not only required an heir; it also required a numerous posterity; and the starry heavens became a sensible sign to support the patriarch's faith.

And he believed in Jehovah: and he reckoned it to him for righteousness. Adam Clarke calls this one of the most important passages in the whole Old Testament; and when we take into consideration Paul's and James' estimate of it, it will have to be admitted that the great commentator was not very far wrong. The word "believed" is used in the sense of trust. Abram, as it were, leaned upon the arm of Jehovah so completely, as to enable God to lead him progressively into the acceptance of anything and everything he said to him.

Some people have concluded that the fourth chapter of Romans teaches that Abram was characterized by faith only; but when James' comment is considered, it will be seen that such was not the case. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect: and the scripture was fulfilled which

saith. And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God." (James 2:21-23.)

It is interesting to note that the term "righteousness" occurs in the Scriptures here for the first time. The practical meaning of the term, as it was applied to Abram and to others in similar situations, is that God ascribed to him or imputed to him a state or condition which was acceptable to God. This was not the result of any meritorious work which he did, but as a result of his faith—a faith which led him to believe anything which God said, regardless of the circumstances under which it was spoken, and which caused him to endeavor to do everything that God commanded, regardless of the cost or difficulty in doing it. Cf. Rom. 4:16-25. This is the only possible way by which any one can become righteous today; his righteousness must be imputed, not earned. Cf. Rom. 4: 1-15.

The Basis of and Preparation for the Covenant (Gen. 15: 7-11)

And he said unto him, I am Jehovah that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. This entire statement may be looked upon as the basis for the covenant. The first thing to notice is that it sprang from God's character and revelation. The covenant was the result of the unchanging and unchangeable nature of Jehovah, and that which he had already done for Abram. God had a purpose in mind when he brought Abram out of the land of his nativity; and that purpose would issue forth in a covenant. Jehovah is Sovereign over the earth, nations, and individuals, and it is, of course, within his power to deal with any or all of them as he chooses. Jehovah therefore could and would make a covenant with Abraham.

And he said, O Lord Jehovah, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? This question, in the light of verse 6, did not indicate a lack of

faith on the part of Abram, but rather a desire for confirmation. There is a vast difference in asking for information and in asking out of doubt. This can be seen when we contrast the attitude of Mary (Luke 1:34-38) with that of Zacharias (Luke 1: 18-20). When one has the right attitude toward a question, further information will strengthen his faith. That was true of Abram.

And he said unto him, Take me a heifer three years old, and a she-goat three years old, and a ram three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon. All of these animals and birds were later used in the sacrifices under the law of Moses. We have no way of knowing just what kind of a sign Abram expected to receive from Jehovah to show him that he was to inherit the land, but it came in the form of preparation for a sacrifice. Three year old animals would be in their prime, and therefore best for sacrificial purposes. At least that is the general opinion of this specification. Adam Clarke cites a statement from a Jewish rabbi which compared the three animals to the idolatrous nations, while Israel was likened to the birds. See Psalm 22: 12, 13; Dan. 8:20, 21; Song of Solomon 2: 14.

And he took him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each half over against the other: but the birds divided he not. According to the authority cited by Clarke, this signified that the heathen nations would be divided and exterminated, while the Israelites would abide for ever. This interpretation, of course, is possible, but it seems more probable, in the light of the Scriptures themselves, that Abram was simply following the established order of making a covenant, that is, Jehovah instructed him to follow the usual course in such transactions. This may be seen by reading the following passage.

"And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, that have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before me, when they cut the calf in twain and passed between the parts thereof; the princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, that passed between the parts of the calf; I will even give them into the

hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for food unto the birds of the heavens, and to the beasts of the earth." (Jer. 34: 18-20.)

And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away. It has been thought that these birds of prey were symbols of the affliction of Abram's descendants, particularly in Egypt. If this is true, then their being driven away probably foreshadowed the delay in the affliction, or possibly their deliverance from it. It could, of course, mean nothing more than that they were not allowed to pollute or devour that which had been consecrated to God.

The Message and Scope of the Covenant

(Gen. 15: 12-18)

And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him. This was probably the same kind of sleep which fell upon Adam when Eve was made (Gen. 2: 21), since the same original term is used in both instances. Nothing is said regarding the reason for this sleep, but it is fair to suppose that it was intended to shut him in from the things of sense, and enable him to be concerned wholly with the things involved in the covenant. The "horror of great darkness" apparently prefigured the affliction which his people would suffer in the land of Egypt. This experience came to Abram "when the sun was going down;" and as he was called on to "number the stars, if thou be able to number them," seemingly that same day. it is fair to assume that the latter scene took place early that morning, while it was yet dark.

And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years: and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance. Abram is here given a detailed view of the fortunes of his people for four hundred years. Their privation would be characterized by exile, bondage, and affliction; but at

the end of the specified period, the nation which had enslaved and afflicted them would itself be judged of God, and the children of Abram would leave that country with great substance. All of this was literally fulfilled in the land of Egypt, as may be seen by reading the first part of the Book of Exodus.

The expression "four hundred years" was apparently used as a round number for "four hundred and thirty years." See Acts 7:6; cf. Ex. 12:40; Gal. 3:17. It is possible, of course, that the "four hundred years" included the period of affliction, rather than the "four hundred and thirty years," which was the time from the promises of Gen. 12: 1-3. Some Bible students date the period of suffering from the persecution of Isaac by Ishmael. See Gen. 21: 9; Gal. 2: 29. Israel, of course, was not in Egypt during the entire period of either four hundred and four hundred and thirty years, as may be seen from the genealogical tables of Genesis and Exodus.

But thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. This is the first intimation that Abram himself would not personally inherit the promised land as his possession; and it is also the first time that death is spoken of as going to one's fathers. It should be observed that going to one's fathers, or being gathered to one's people, is not an expression synonymous with being buried. Abraham was buried in the cave of Machpelah, but none of his ancestors had been interred there. The reunion with his fathers was in the intermediate state, rather than in the tomb. If Abram's "fathers" were his immediate ancestors, then Terah renounced the gods which he served beyond the River, in favor of Jehovah; for we know that Abraham, when he left this world, went into the realm of the redeemed. See Luke 13: 28; 20:37, 38. A reunion in Hades can take place in only one side of the great gulf which divides the righteous from the wicked. See Luke 16:26. Abraham was one hundred and seventy-five years old when he died. See Gen. 25: 7, 8.

And in the fourth generation they

shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full. In Bible times people counted time by generations. Cf. Matt. 1: 17. But even then, a generation was not always of the same length, as may be seen by comparing the length of life among the antediluvians with those who lived in later years. It appears that a "generation" in Job's day was thirty-five or forty years. See Job 42: 16. If the four generations of the verse now before us equaled the four hundred years of the people's affliction, then a generation was evidently one hundred years. The reference to the Amorites seems to imply that there is a degree of iniquity to which nations are permitted to go before they are destroyed.

And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces. This was in keeping with the manner in which covenants were ratified then, namely, the passing of the principals between the parts of the sacrificial animals. The smoking furnace may have symbolized the suffering of Abram's descendants. Cf. Deut. 4: 20; Isa. 48: 10. The flaming torch symbolized the Divine Presence who would deliver them. Cf. Isa. 62: 1; Zech. 12:6. Jehovah thus condescended to enter into the covenant with Abraham and bound himself. The patriarch was not bound and did not himself pass between the parts of the animals.

In that day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: Adam Clarke notes that the river of Egypt was "not the Nile, but the river called *Sichor*., which was *before* or on the *border* of Egypt, near to the isthmus of Suez; see Josh. 13:3; though some think that by this a branch of the Nile is meant. This promise was fully accomplished in the days of David and Solomon." In speaking of the reign of Solomon, 2 Chron. 9: 26 says, "And he ruled over all the kings from the River even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt." Cf. 2 Sam. 8: 3.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction
What were the probable feelings of Abram at the time of this lesson? and why?

Why do people sometimes experience spiritual reaction following triumph?

Into what new situation did the rescue of Lot bring Abram?

What difference is noted in this appearance of Jehovah to him from other appearances in the past?

What was the probable purpose of this appearance?

Why the exhortation "Fear not"?

What assurance did Jehovah give to Abram?

What was Abram's response to this encouragement?

What promise did the Lord then make to him?

The Golden Text

What is the confession of our hope?

Why is it necessary for us to hold it fast?

How is this exhortation enforced?

How are God's promises related to the gospel?

What are some of the things in which God is said to be faithful?

What effect should all of this have upon our lives?

The Sweep of God's Promise to Abram

How did Jehovah illustrate the magnitude of Abram's coming posterity?

What was the occasion for asking him to look at the stars at the time of this lesson?

What effect did this have upon Abram?

In what sense did he believe in Jehovah?

How do we know that Abram's was not faith only?

What is the meaning of the terms "reckoned" and "righteousness"?

How can people become righteous today?

The Basis of and Preparation for the Covenant

What was the basis of this covenant?

When Abram asked about how he should know regarding the inheritance of the land, what was his motive behind the question?

How did Jehovah answer him?

Why were the animals divided?

What happened after the animals and birds were prepared as Abram was instructed?

The Message and Scope of the Covenant

What happened to Abram as the sun was going down?

What was then revealed to Abram?

What three things would characterize the privation of his posterity?

How and when was all this fulfilled?

What did the "four hundred years" include?

What personal revelation was made to Abram?

What was meant by the expression "go to thy fathers in peace"?

What implication is seen here regarding Terah?

How old was Abram when he died?

What was the significance of the "fourth generation"?

In what way would the iniquity of the Amorite become full?

What took place when it was dark? and why?

Why didn't Abram pass between the parts of the animals?

What covenant was made that day?

Was the promise fulfilled? Give reasons for your answer.

Lesson XIII—March 29, 1959

BIRTH OF ISHMAEL

Lesson Text

Gen. 16: 1-16

1 Now Sa'-rai, Abram's wife, bare him no children: and she had a handmaid, an E-gyp-tian, whose name was Ha'-gar.

2 And Sa'-rai said unto Abram, Behold now, Je-ho'-vah hath restrained me from bearing; go in, I pray thee, unto my handmaid; it may be that I shall obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sa'-rai.

3 And Sa'-rai, Abram's wife, took Ha'-gar the E-gyp-tian, her handmaid, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Ca'-naan, and gave her to Abram her husband to be his wife.

4 And he went in unto Ha'-gar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

5 And Sa'-rai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I gave my handmaid into thy bosom; and when she

saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: Je-ho'-vah judge between me and thee.

6 But Abram said unto Sa'-rai. Behold, thy maid is in thy hand: do to her that which is good in thine eyes. And Sa'-rai dealt hardly with her, and she fled from her face.

7 And the angel of Je-ho'-vah found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

8 And he said, Ha'-gar, Sa'-rai's handmaid, whence earnest thou? and whither goest thou? And she said, I am fleeing from the face of my mistress Sa'-rai.

9 And the angel of Je-ho'-vah said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

10 And the angel of Je-ho'-vah said unto her, I will greatly multiply thy seed, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

11 And the angel of Je-ho'-vah said onto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son; and thou shalt call his name Ish'-ma-el, because Je-ho'-vah hath heard thy affliction.

12 And he shall be as a wild ass among men; his hand *shall be* against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell over against all his brethren.

13 And she called the name of Je-ho'-vah that spake unto her. Thou art

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*And thou shalt call hath heard thy affliction.*” (Gen. 16: 11b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gen. 15: 1-3.

a God that seeth: for she said, Have I even here looked after him that seeth me?

14 Wherefore the well was called Be'-er-la-hai'-roi; behold, it is between Ka'-desh and Be'-red.

15 And Ha'-gar bare Abram a son: and Abram called the name of his son, whom Ha'-gar bare, Ish'-ma-el.

16 And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Ha'-gar bare Ish'-ma-el to Abram.

his name Ishmael, because Jehovah

Daily Bible Readings

March 23. M.....	An Allegory (Gal. 4: 21-31)
March 24. T.....	Attitude of Ishmael (Gen. 16: 12-14)
March 25. W.....	Ishmaelites from Gilead (Gen. 37: 25-28)
March 26. T.....	Ishmaelites and Their Ear-rings (Judges 9: 22-28)
March 27. F.....	Ishmael Mocks Isaac (Gen. 21: 8-21)
March 28. S.....	Generations of Ishmael (Gen. 25: 12-18)
March 29. S.....	Jehovah our Keeper (Psalm 121)

TIME.—2092-94 A.M., or 1912-10 B.C.

PLACE.—Oaks of Mamre and Beer-lahai-roi.

PERSONS.—The angel of Jehovah, Abram, Sarai, Hagar, and Ishmael.

Introduction

The thoughtful reader of the Bible would naturally think that Abram, alter the experiences of the preceding lesson, would have little trouble in remaining in the pathway of righteousness. He had witnessed, under Divine guidance, the actual demonstrations of covenant-making, and had been assured of God that the promises which had been made to him would be fulfilled. But even the faithful servant was still human, and as such, he was subject to error. This is a valuable lesson which we should learn well from the life of this great hero of faith. As long as we are in the flesh it will be necessary for us to make every effort to remain in the way which has been marked out for us.

The lesson before us today illustrates how easy it is for otherwise good people to rely upon human reason in their efforts to claim the promises which God has made to them. It is difficult for some to wait for the Lord. The life which pleases God is a life of faith, and faith must, as indeed it always does, rely upon that which God says. Cf. Rom. 10: 17. Schemes of human wisdom have no place in the divine order. Anything which depends upon faith

must be accomplished as the result of that which is revealed in the message of God; and it is a well known fact that patience is frequently needed in order to reach the full measure of God's promises to his people.

But it is only fair to say in behalf of Abraham, that when once he understood that he and Sarah were to be the parents of the promised seed, he had no further trouble in keeping his trust completely in God. "And without being weakened in faith he considered his own body now as good as dead (he being about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, 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." (Rom. 4: 19-22; cf. Heb. 11: 11, 12.)

Although the birth of Ishmael was clearly not according to the divine arrangement, there are, nevertheless, some valuable lessons to learn from the Biblical account of his life. Paul

used the incident of his birth and early childhood as a part of his great allegorical teaching regarding the difference between the law and the gospel. See Gal. 4: 21-31. This allegorical interpretation of the story of Sarah and Hagar presents the testimony of the law against itself

in the strongest terms. But notwithstanding the valuable lesson which grew out of Abram's taking Hagar to be his wife, it must be remembered that the blunder caused trouble in his family, and resulted in a hostile race which continued to be a hindrance to the divine plan.

The Golden Text

This part of the lesson will be

treated in the discussion of the main text.

The Text Explained

A Human Plan Which Miscarried (Gen. 16: 1-6)

Now Sarai. Abram's wife, bare him no children: and she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. The reason for Sarai's failure to become the mother of children is stated in Gen. 11: 30: "And Sarai was barren: she had no child." This fact, coupled with the additional fact that it had not been made plain to Sarai that she personally would be the mother of the promised seed of Abram, along with the custom of the day, apparently accounts, in part at least, for the plan which Sarai suggested here. Her impatience was also probably a factor in this situation too. It appears that the whole idea was conceived by Sarai, but she seemingly had little, if any, trouble in convincing Abram of its possible merits.

The name "Hagar" is of Hebrew rather than Egyptian origin, and it is very probable that the handmaid received it after she entered the household of Abram. The fact that she was an Egyptian has led Bible students to suppose that she was probably one of the maid-servants which were obtained during their sojourn in Egypt. See Gen. 12: 16. The text states that Hagar belonged to Sarai, and that fact seems to be recognized throughout the narrative concerning her. Cf. verse 6.

And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, Jehovah hath restrained me from bearing; go in, I pray thee, unto my handmaid; it may be that I shall obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. It must be kept in mind that Hagar was the absolute property of Sarai, and the mistress, according to the custom of that day, had absolute authority over her. Hagar was the

personal property of Sarai and any fruit which might result from the handmaid's efforts would be considered as belonging to her mistress. It was therefore within the rights of Sarai to give her to her husband to be his wife, that is, it was her right according to the custom of that time.

The plan and purpose of Sarai in giving Hagar to Abram to be his wife do not seem to be entirely without faith on her part. She believed that Abram was to be the father of the promised seed, and she had no doubt that a child would be born unto him. Her action therefore, not only indicates something of her faith, but also suggests genuine self-denial on her part. Her hopes of giving birth to the promised seed had no doubt vanished with increasing age; and now, concluding that the honor could not come to her personally, she proposed the plan whereby she could enjoy by proxy the happy consummation which to all appearance had been denied her.

And Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to Abram her husband to be his wife. Notwithstanding the fact that Sarai's motive, on the whole, seems to have been good and genuine, and indicating, as already observed, great personal sacrifice on her part, it remains true that the scheme was ill-advised and wrong from every point of view. It showed, in the first place, a lack of complete faith in God. He had given his word that the child would be born (Gen. 15: 4); and in the absence of any definite word from him as to how the birth would be accomplished, they should have been willing to await further instruction from Jehovah. They had no right to

presume that they could prescribe the method of obtaining the end in view. This is an important lesson to keep in mind.

And too, it was unfair to Abram, in that it led him out of the pathway of patient waiting for the fulfillment of God's promise to him. But, as already noted, Abram was not entirely without fault in this matter. He could have refused the suggestion and taught Sarai to have more confidence in God's word. Cf. 1 Pet. 3: 5, 6. The scheme was also wrong against Hagar, in that her individuality and rights were entirely ignored. And, finally it was wrong so far as Sarai herself was concerned. If the plan had been allowed to stand it would have robbed her of the high privilege of becoming the mother of a great race and would have left her in disobedience to God. But when once Sarai understood the matter, her faith arose to the occasion. See Heb. 11: 11.

And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress teas despised in her eyes. Here we see the beginning of the sorrowful results of this human effort to bring about the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. Sarai was the first to reap the bitter fruits of her device. With human nature as it is, Hagar's attitude was only natural. The prospects of becoming a mother caused her to act in such a manner as to make Sarai feel keenly her own sterility, with the result that domestic peace was soon banished from the habitation of Abram.

And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I gave my handmaid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: Jehovah judge between me and thee. Not only was Sarai's pride deeply hurt; she also 'vas filled with jealousy, and blamed Abram with an unfair attitude. The expression "My wrong be upon thee" seems to indicate that Sarai blamed Abram for the wrong which she was suffering, that is, she charged that the insolence which she was enduring was on his account—from her earnest and disinterested wish to gratify him with a son and heir—; or it may be that she meant to say that she was looking to him to undertake her cause and redress her

wrongs. When Sarai said, "Jehovah judge between me and thee," she seemed to imply that Abram, rather than she, was responsible for this unfortunate domestic situation. Matthew Henry thinks that she should have said, "What a fool I was to give you my handmaid!"

But Abram said unto Sarai. Behold,, thy maid is in thy hand: do to her that which is good in thine eyes. And Sarai dealt hardly with her, and she fled from her face. This is the second time that we have seen Abram in the role of a peacemaker. The first was in the case of Lot (13: 8f). If Sarai thinks that he has been more affectionate to Hagar than to her, then, in order to remove all suspicion, he will return Hagar into her hand, and remove himself entirely from the scene. He, of course, had both the right and the duty to protect his concubine: but since she was given to him by his wife, he would return her to her mistress, to prevent further jealousy and uneasiness.

And Sarai, when left by Abram to her discretion, exerted her full authority; she "dealt hardly with her, and she fled from her face." The term used here, according to Clarke, implies stripes and hard usage, to bring down the body and humble the mind. If Hagar had done something to merit this kind of treatment, then Sarai was not entirely without blame; for it was the latter who had brought the slave into the situation in "which it was natural for her to value herself beyond her mistress."

Divine Interposition (Gen. 16: 7-14)

And the angel of Jehovah found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. One of the things which makes this lesson especially interesting is the fact that it presents a picture of real life. Man in all ages is often seen blundering, sinning, and suffering, and then God intervenes with his overruling providence, wisdom, and love. It was the "angel of Jehovah" who found Hagar after she had fled from Sarai. The place where she was found was "in the way to Shur," which, according to our present maps, was on or near the caravan route from Canaan to Egypt. She probably started out to return to her former home and fam-

ily in the land of the Pharaohs.

And he said, Hagar, Sarai's hand-maid, whence earnest thou? and whither goest thou? And she said, I am fleeing from the face of my mistress Sarai. Jamieson observes that nothing but pride, passion, and sullen obstinacy could have driven any solitary person to brave the dangers of such an inhospitable wild; and she probably would have died, had not the angel recalled her to reflection and duty. Jehovah had not overlooked that which had happened in the family of Abram, and he now intervened in order to bring about the best possible results after the sins had been committed. The angel who spoke to Hagar was not seeking information as to her whereabouts, but to show her that she was known to him and to remind her that she belonged to Sarai.

And the angel of Jehovah said unto her. Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. This implies, of course, that Hagar had not done the right thing, and now she must learn again the meaning of submission. This has always been true of people who receive the blessings of God. This principle is beautifully illustrated by the return of the runaway slave Onesimus to his master Philemon, as set forth in Paul's letter to the latter. If we have made mistakes which have led us away from God, the first condition of restoration is complete submission to his revealed will, whatever that may involve.

And the angel of Jehovah said unto her, I will greatly multiply thy seed, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. Later on, when it was revealed to Abraham that Isaac would be his heir, Jehovah said regarding Ishmael, "And as for Ishmael. I have heard thee: behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation." (Gen. 17: 20.) The names of these twelve princes, the sons of Ishmael, are given, along with the location of their homes, in Gen. 25:

12-18. Their descendants are the modern Arabs, and although still maintaining their migratory character, the twelve "nations of Ishmael exist to this day as distinct, independent tribes."

And the angel of Jehovah said unto her. Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son: and thou shalt call his name Ishmael, because Jehovah hath heard thy affliction. The very name of her son—Ishmael: God heareth—would always remind Hagar of the merciful interposition of Jehovah in her behalf; and it would also remind Ishmael that he was an object of God's gracious and providential care. Adam Clarke notes that afflictions and distresses have a voice in the ears of God, even when prayer is restrained; but how much more powerfully do they speak when endured in meekness of spirit, and with confidence in and supplication to the Lord!

And he shall be as a wild ass among men: his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him: and he shall dwell over against all his brethren. Inasmuch as these Bedouins and nomadic Arabs are compared to the wild ass, we can have a better idea of their nature if we read God's description of the wild ass. "Who hath sent out the wild ass free? Or who hath loosed the bonds of the swift ass? Whose home I have made the wilderness, and the salt land his dwelling place? He scorneth the tumult of the city. Neither heareth he the shoutings of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture. And he searcheth after every green thing." (Job 39: 5-8.)

Just as he did the wild ass, God himself has sent out these wandering people into the freedom of the wilderness, and has loosed them from all political restraint. They have scorned the city, and no other people could live as they do—with no fixed dwelling places. They may be said to have no lands, and yet the range of the mountains is their pasture. They pitch their tents and feed their flocks wherever they please: and they search after every green thing.

The fact that these people have continued for centuries to dwell in the presence of their brethren, and have been surrounded by polished and luxurious nations, has not changed their nature. They are still wild, unsubdued, and unchangeable. Adam Clarke says that "had the Pentateuch no other argument to evince

its divine origin, the account of Ishmael and the prophecy concerning his descendants, collated with their history and manner of life during a period of nearly four thousand years, would be sufficient. Indeed the argument is so absolutely demonstrative, that the man who would attempt its refutation, in the sight of reason and common sense would stand convicted of the most ridiculous presumption and folly." The land of Arabia is said to be one of the least explored regions of the world. "You can get an idea of the size of this largest of peninsulas from the fact that the distance from its tip on the east to the Mediterranean Sea on the northwest is about the same as from New York City to Denver."

And she called the name of Jehovah that spake unto her. Thou art a God that seeth: for she said. Have I even here looked after him that seeth me? Wherefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi: behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered. The interposition of the angel of Jehovah had its immediate and beneficial effect upon Hagar. It led to a realization of the presence of God, and it

prompted a memorial of his promise. "The well of the living one who seeth me" seems to be the well where life is preserved after seeing God. The well was located in the southern part of Palestine, but the exact site is somewhat in doubt. See map.

The Birth of Abram's First Son

(Gen. 16: 15, 16)

And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bare, Ishmael. This implies that Hagar obeyed the voice of the angel and returned to her mistress, and it further implies that she believed the promise which was made to her regarding the child. Abram must have learned from Hagar the facts concerning her visit with the angel; for he gave the child the name which had been divinely selected. This was the first instance of a name being chosen for one before his birth, although several occurred in later times, as the Bible shows.

And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram. This was one of the important dates in the life of the great patriarch.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, persons.

Introduction

How do you explain the action of Abram in yielding to Sarai's suggestion to take Hagar for his wife?

Why do people frequently rely upon human reason in seeking to claim God's promises?

What was Abram's later attitude regarding God's promise of a son?

What are some of the lessons we may learn from the birth of Ishmael?

A Human Plan Which Miscarried

Who were the two principal women in this lesson and what was their status?

What is implied by the name "Hagar"?

Why did Sarai want Abram to take Hagar to be his wife?

Could faith have played any part in her actions? Give reasons for your answer.

How long had they been in Canaan when this incident occurred?

What are some of the reasons for thinking Sarai's scheme wrong?

Was Abram blameworthy regarding it? Give reasons for your answer.

What happened after Hagar saw that she was to become a mother?

Sarai resent her actions?

What was Sarai's attitude toward Abram at this time?

What did she mean by saying, "My wrong be upon thee"?

1 s. ay. "Jehovah judge between me and thee?"

How did Abram deal with the matter?

What did Sarai do when Hagar was returned to her?

Divine Interposition

Why is this lesson so interesting to us?

What is implied by saying that the angel of Jehovah found Hagar?

Where was she found? and what possible reason did she have for being there?

What did the angel say to her? and why?

What did he bid Hagar do? and why?

How did Paul illustrate this principle?

What promise did the angel make to Hagar?

What promise did Jehovah make to Abram regarding Ishmael?

Why was Hagar's son named "Ishmael"? and what effect would the name have both on her and him?

How is the nature of Ishmael's descendants described?

Who are the people today who have descended from Ishmael?

What effect has modern civilization had on them?

How does their history confirm the divine origin of the Bible?

In what part of the world do they live?

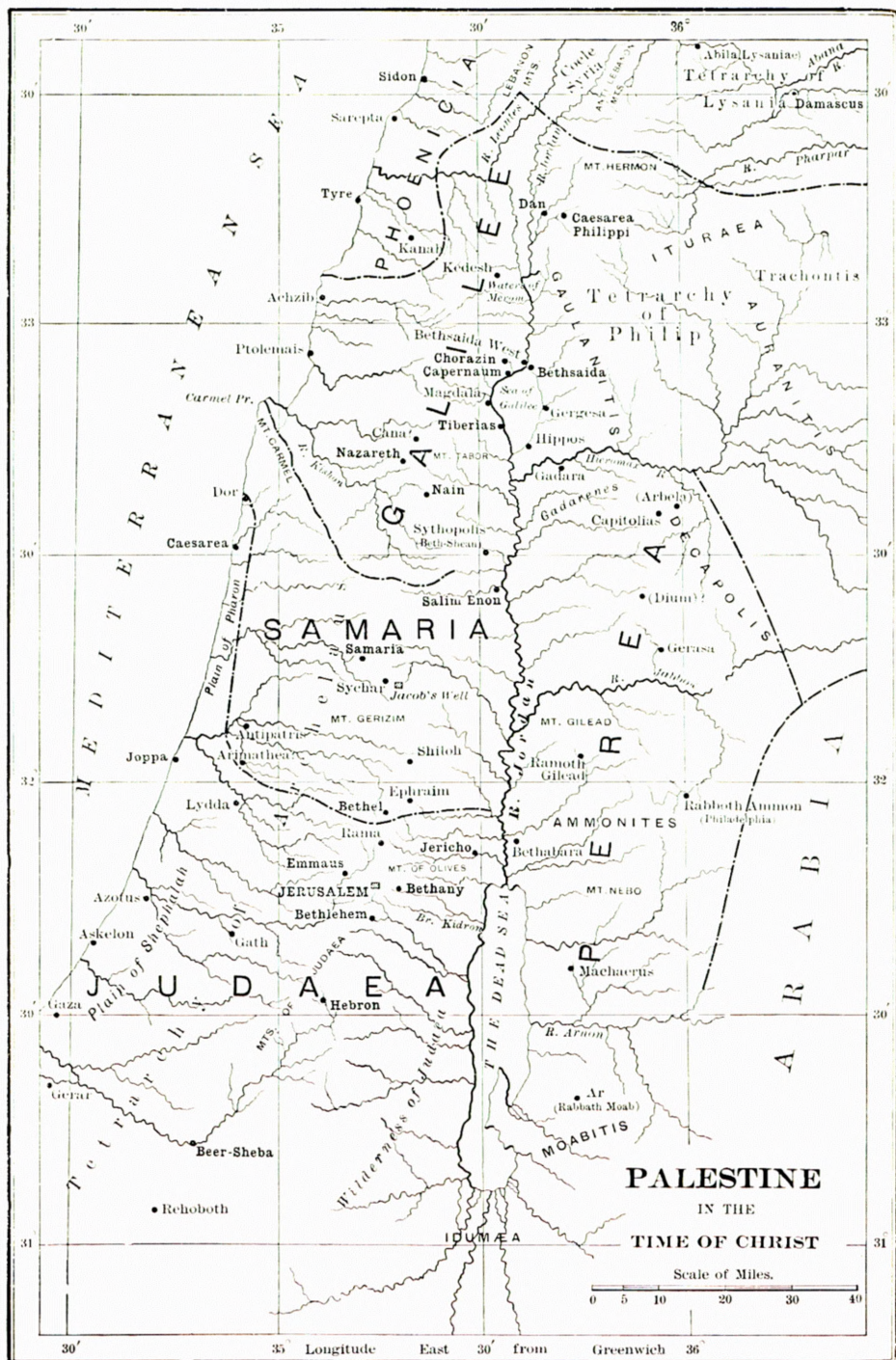
What are some of the effects which the appearance of the angel had on Hagar?

The Birth of Abram's First Son

What is implied by the statement regarding his birth?

Why did Abram call the child "Ishmael"?

How old was Abram at this time?



SECOND QUARTER

STUDIES IN MATTHEW

Aim.—To study in detail the gospel according to Matthew, to realize its true Messianic content, and to receive its message of salvation for us today

Lesson I for Sunday, April 5, 1959

BIRTH OF JESUS

Lesson Text

Matt. 1: 17-25

17 So all the generations from Abraham unto David are fourteen generations; and from David unto the carrying away to Bab'-y-lon fourteen generations; and from the carrying away to Bab'-y-lon unto the Christ fourteen generations.

18 Now the birth of Je'-sus Christ was on this wise: When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

20 But when he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

21 And she shall bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name JE-SUS: for it is he that shall save his people from their sins.

22 Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying,

23 Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son,

And they shall call his name Im-man'-u-el; which is, being interpreted, God with us.

24 And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took unto him his wife;

25 And knew her not till she had brought forth a son: and he called his name JE'-SUS.

Golden Text.—“And thou shalt call his name JESUS: for it is he that shall save his people from their sins.” (Matt. 1: 21b.)

Devotional Reading.—Luke 2: 1-20.

Daily Bible Readings

March	30.	M.....	A Child Promised (Isa. 9: 1-7)
March	31.	T.....	Birth and Reign of Christ (Isa. 11: 1-9)
April	1.	W.....	The Virgin Birth (Isa. 7: 1-14)
April	2.	T.....	Seed of David (2 Sam. 7: 12-17)
April	3.	F.....	Jehovah's Anointed (Psalm 2)
April	4.	S.....	Word Made Flesh (John 1: 1-14)
April	5.	S.....	The Place of Birth (Micah 5: 2-9)

Time.—Probably about 4 B.C.

Place.—Nazareth and Bethlehem.

Persons.—The angel of the Lord, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus.

Introduction

Inasmuch as the chronology of the Bible, insofar as our practical use of it is concerned, is reckoned from the birth of Jesus, a few words regarding that question should be said before we begin our study of Matthew. Students who use various commen-

taries and other reference works will notice that different dates are given for the birth of Jesus, and this, of course, is confusing until the matter is better understood. The most common dates which are preferred by modern Bible scholars are from 7 to

4 B.C. But if the dates are reckoned from the birth of Jesus, why is it that the date of his birth is given as 7-4 B.C.? The following quotation from *The Concise Bible Dictionary*, included in some editions of the American Standard Version of the Bible, is a brief but satisfactory explanation.

"The date of the birth of Jesus Christ, the central event in the world's history, was first fixed, in the sixth century A.D., by Dionysius Exiguus, a Roman monk, in the year 753 after the building of Rome (A. U. C., *Anno urbis conditoe*). That this was not the exact year of our Lord's birth has been abundantly proved; but the use of the date all over Christendom is too firmly established to be changed. It is certain from St. Matthew that our Lord was born before the death of Herod the Great (spring of 750 A.U.C.). The Nativity can scarcely be placed later

than the autumn of 749 A.U.C. (5-4 B.C.). For the date December 25, there is no direct evidence whatever."

The Book of Matthew is the first in the order of arrangement, as our New Testament now stands, but that does not necessarily mean that it was written first, although it may have been. Most modern Bible students are of the opinion that Mark was the first of the four evangelists to write his account of Jesus. But whether that is correct or not, it does remain a fact that if Mark is carefully considered first, it will be found that the study of Matthew will take on a new significance. But regardless of which was written first, either book can be studied alone, with both pleasure and profit; and that is what we anticipate as we begin our journey through the book which Matthew wrote.

The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson will be considered in the main text.

The Text Explained

The Preceding Generation

(Matt. 1; 17)

"So all the generations from Abraham unto David are fourteen generations: and from David unto the carrying away to Babylon fourteen generations: and from the carrying away to Babylon unto the Christ fourteen generations. Matthew begins his gospel record with these words: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." The marginal reading is, "The genealogy of Jesus Christ." The purpose of the genealogical table which follows (verses 2-16) is to show that Jesus descended from both Abraham and David. Jehovah had promised both of these ancient worthies that the Christ would descend from them, and it was Matthew's aim to show that that was exactly what happened.

There is another genealogical table in Luke 3 which traces the ancestry of Jesus back through David and Abraham, and on to Adam and Jehovah, but there is a marked difference between that list and the one before us here. Matthew begins with Abraham and goes to Christ, whereas,

Luke begins with Christ and goes back to God. The two tables contain the same names from Abraham to David, but at that point the line divides, Matthew going through Solomon, while Luke goes through Nathan, both sons of David. The lines cross in Shealtiel and Zerubbabel, if they are the same persons in both lists, and it appears that they are. It is generally understood that Matthew gives the *legal* ancestry of Jesus, while Luke gives his *natural* lineage. Cf. Luke 3: 23. The genealogy is traced through David to Joseph by Matthew, while Luke traces the lineage from Mary back to David. It appears that Joseph was the son-in-law of Heli. See again Luke 3: 23.

Matthew divides his list into three parts, each having fourteen generations. The first begins with Abraham who received the promise of the Christ (Gal. 3: 16), and ends with David to whom the promise was renewed with greater clearness. The second list begins with the builder of the temple, and ends with its destruction. The third list was characterized by the temporal deliverance

from Babylon, and issues forth in the spiritual deliverance which Christ came to offer. The first list was made up of patriarchs: the second, of reigning kings: while all the third group were heirs of David's throne, but only Jesus was seated upon it, where he is still reigning today.

If one takes the time to compare the list of generations which Matthew records with those found in the Old Testament, he will see that the list from Abraham actually contains more than forty-two names. But for his purpose, and without any effort to deceive, Matthew could and did divide the entire list into three fourteens, each embracing one distinct era, and each beginning and ending with a notable event, in the history of the Israelites. This threefold division was evidently intended as an aid to the memory, and there was nothing unusual in omitting some names in order to make the three groups come out even. The list of priests found in Ezra 7: 1-5 omits several of those found in 1 Chron. 6: 1-15. It was not necessary to list every name in order to show that Jesus descended from Abraham and David.

"The manner in which Matthew counts fourteen in each division is somewhat singular. The first actually contains fourteen names. The second is made to contain fourteen, as we have seen above, by omitting four names. The third contains only thirteen new names, but is made to count fourteen by repeating, as the first of this division, the name of Jechoniah, which was the last of the second division. This is apparent to anyone who will take the trouble to count. It deceives no one, because it lies on the very surface of the text; but it shows once more how careful Matthew was to have an even count in the divisions of his list. This circumstance also shows that there are no omissions in the last division; for if the actual number of generations had been fourteen or more, there would have been no occasion to repeat the name of Jechoniah." (J. W. McGarvey.)

An Unusual Situation Explained (Matt. 1: 18-21)

*"Now the birth of Jesus Christ
leas on this wise: When his mother*

Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Spirit." One of the first things which Bible students should learn is something about the elliptical nature of the gospel records. Seldom does one learn all the facts about any given subject from any one of the four biographical writers. In the case now before us the entire account of the angel's visit, during which time Mary learned that she was to become the mother of Jesus, along with her journey from Galilee to Judea, where she remained three months with Elisabeth, who was to become the mother of John the Baptist, are passed over by Matthew in his account of the birth of Jesus. See Luke 1: 26-56. It is evident from Matthew's account that Joseph did not know of the angel's visit with and his message to Mary when he discovered that she was pregnant. The expression "she was found with child of the Holy Spirit" is Matthew's explanation of the matter.

"And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily." A betrothal (engagement or contract to marry) among the Jews was a valid marriage, and the only way it could be broken was by a divorce. Therefore, when Joseph discovered that his intended wife was to become a mother, he was greatly disturbed, and felt that he would have to divorce her. He could not, being a righteous man, condone her supposed unfaithfulness, and being a merciful man he did not want to make a public example of her. A public exposure of adultery would have subjected Mary to the death penalty. (Deut. 22: 23, 24), but a simple divorce would permit Joseph to put her away privily (Deut. 24: 1). Both his own reputation and that of Mary were at stake, and Joseph sought to protect both to the extent of his ability; and with that in mind, he wanted to act justly toward his own, and mercifully, toward Mary's. That is a wonderful trait of character, and should be imitated by every one today.

"But when he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, say-

ing. Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." Joseph did not act from impulse; he paused and used his reasoning powers in an effort to determine the right course to pursue; and it was then that divine aid was given to him. Cf. 1 Cor. 10: 13; James 1: 5-8. The angel addressed Joseph as the son of David, probably to awaken in him the heroic mood. The title confirms the view that Matthew's genealogy is that of Joseph's; and he is here summoned to a supreme act of faith, similar to those performed by David and other great heroes of the Bible, who by faith made their lives sublime. It is fair to assume that Mary had offered Joseph an explanation of her condition, by relating the message of the angel; but it is also fair to assume that Joseph would regard such an explanation as being incredible. But here the angel confirms Mary's story, and Joseph is urged to accept her as his chaste wife.

"And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." Joseph, in this disclosure, is made to understand three things about the birth of Jesus: (1) it would be supernatural—"that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit;" (2) the son would therefore be a divine being; and (3) his mission would be remedial—he "shall save his people from their sins." The name "Jesus" means "Salvation of Jehovah," or "Jehovah is the Saviour." Jesus in the Greek is the same as Joshua in the Hebrew. Cf. Heb. 4: 8.

There is no salvation which does not depend upon a right relation to God, and a right inward state consequent upon that. This is what Jesus gives to the weary and longing soul. He delivers from sin in every form—from its guilt, its stain, its tyranny, and its awful power to shut us out from fellowship with God. No one has ever turned to him as he directs who has not received this kind of salvation. Part of his salvation is finished here and we can enjoy it in this life; but part of it is yet to come and cannot be ours eternally until we have reached the other side. There is much to be done before we are completely delivered from sin; but

whether a present enjoyment or a future heritage, everything which is called salvation in the true sense of the word comes from Jesus.

The message which the angel gave to Joseph was a command in the form of a prediction; an encouragement to enter into the plan of God for the redemption of the world. It was meant to help Joseph out of his doubts into a mood of heroic, resolute action. Instead of engaging in anxious thought and brooding over that which he thought was a sinful situation, he is called upon to think of the child to be born as destined to be the Saviour of the world. Thus the source of Joseph's distress became to him the greatest blessing which he ever knew.

A Prophecy Fulfilled (Matt. 1: 22-25)

"Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying. Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, And they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us." The words which Matthew quoted from the prophet are from Isa. 7: 14. They were a part of a prediction which was addressed to the frightened king of Judah, namely, Ahaz. The land of Judah had been threatened with an invasion by the combined armies of Syria and Israel. Isaiah came to Ahaz, promised him divine aid, and requested him to seek a sign from Jehovah to confirm the promise which the prophet had just made. But Ahaz refused to ask for the sign saying, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt Jehovah." This refusal was followed by these words; "And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David: Is it a small thing for you to weary men, that ye will weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Read Isa. 7: 1-8: 4.)

McGarvey and Pendleton call attention to the fact that prophecies are fulfilled in four ways, namely, 1. When something which was clearly predicted comes to pass. 2. When something which has been pictured in type and shadow is at last showed forth in substance and reality. 3.

When an event which was described in language more elevated and elaborate that the event demanded is followed by another similar event to which that language is more perfectly suited. 4. When parabolic and figurative language may be applied to some subsequent event.

The fulfillment of the prophecy now before us was evidently in the third of these four senses. All of the prediction which was made to Ahaz was fulfilled within a few years after it was spoken, except that which was said regarding a son being born to the virgin. This part of the prophecy was thereby singled out and was, of course, reserved for a later fulfillment. If the people of Isaiah's day and those of succeeding generations had recognized this fact, and had continued to pass it on to their children, the people of the Saviour's day would have been in a better frame of mind and heart to accept the story of his birth, as it was made known by divine revelation. Cf. Luke 2: 8-20.

It will be observed that Matthew uses the definite article before the term "virgin" in his narrative. It is also in the marginal reading of Isa. 7: 14. The demonstrative force of the article is entirely in place; it points to a particular person—not merely some virgin or other; but a definite person who would have this unparalleled distinction. That virgin was Mary. Her son was to be called *Immanuel*, which Matthew interprets to mean "God with us." Cf. Matt.

"And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took unto him his wife; and knew her not till she had brought forth a son: and he called his name JESUS." This is a remarkable statement in view of Joseph's previous feelings toward Mary. See verse 19. He had evidently refused to accept Mary's explanation of her pregnancy, for he was minded to divorce her; but now he comes forward with the proposal for an immediate marriage, and he offers as an explanation of the reversal of his attitude the same type of evidence which Mary had at first presented, namely, an angel had appeared to him. But this was a God-fearing couple and he saw to it that they had the evidence which they needed to enable them to know that they were doing exactly as God would have them do; and they did not hesitate to obey him. when once they knew his will.

In the statement that Joseph "knew her not till she had brought forth a son" the word "till" should be emphasized. They did not live together as man and wife *till* Jesus was born, but after that they had their natural and normal relationship. Such is the force of the statement now before us. Cf. Matt. 13: 55, 56. The papal doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary is entirely without scriptural foundation. Mary's first-born son was called JESUS, that is, that was his personal name.

Questions for Discussion

What is the general subject for this quarter?
What should we learn from the Book of Matthew?
What is the subject of this lesson?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Why is there confusion regarding the date of Jesus' birth?
When was he born?
Why was Matthew placed first in the books of the New Testament?

The Preceding Generations

How does Matthew begin his record of the gospel? Why?
How does his genealogical table compare with that by Luke?
Why are the tables through different sons of David?
How does Matthew divide his list? and why?

What type of men does each list contain?
Were there just forty-two generations from Abraham to Christ?
Why, then, were some names omitted?

An Unusual Situation Explained

What is meant by the elliptical nature of the gospel records?
Why didn't each writer give all the facts regarding any given situation?
How and when did Mary learn that she was to be the mother of God's Son?
What effect did this have on Joseph when he first heard of it?
What did he propose to do about it? and why?
How could he divorce Mary before they were actually married?
Why didn't he want to make her a public example?
What did Joseph do before taking any action?
What help was given to him?
Why address him as the son of David?
What effect did the angel's message have on Joseph?
What was said regarding the birth of Jesus?
Why was the name JESUS given to the child?
What other great person bore a name which had the same meaning?

How is salvation related to Jesus?
 How and when do people come into possession of this salvation?
 What was Joseph encouraged to think about the child who was to be born?

A Prophecy Fulfilled

What was this prophecy?
 Under what circumstances was it originally spoken?
 How are prophecies fulfilled?
 How was this particular prophecy fulfilled?
 What circumstance gave prominence to this phase of the original prophecy?

What should have been the people's attitude toward it?
 How did Matthew refer to the woman who was to be the mother of Jesus?
 Why was the child to be called Immanuel?
 Why did Joseph change his mind regarding Mary? and on what evidence?
 How could he expect her to believe him, if he had not believed her?
 What does the New Testament teach regarding the virginity of Mary?
 What is the significance of the term "til" in verse 25?
 Were other children born to Joseph and Mary following the birth of Jesus?

Lesson II for Sunday, April 12, 1959

HEROD SEEKS THE DEATH OF JESUS

Lesson Text

Matt. 2: 1-12

1 Now when Je'-sus was born in Beth'-le-hem of Ju-da?'-a in the days of Her'-od the king, behold, Wisemen from the east came to Je-ru'-sa-lem, saying,

2 Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

3 And when Her'-od the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Je-ru'-sa-lem with him.

4 And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ should be born.

5 And they said unto him. In Beth'-le-hem of Ju-dae'-'a: for thus it is written through the prophet,

6 And thou Beth'-le-hem, land of Ju'-dah,
 Art in no wise least among the princes of Ju'-dah:
 For out of thee shall come forth a governor,
 Who shall be shepherd of my people Is'-ra-el.

7 Then Her'-od privily called the Wisemen, and learned of them exactly what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Beth'-le-hem, and said, Go and search out exactly concerning the young child: and when ye have found *him*, bring me word, that I also may come and worship him.

9 And they, having heard the king, went their way: and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary his mother: and they fell down and worshipped him: and opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

12 And being warned *of God* in a dream that they should not return to Her'-od, they departed into their own country another way.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"They are dead that sought the young child's life."* (Matt. 2: 20b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 9: 2-7.

Daily Bible Readings

April 6. M.....

April 7. T.

April 8. W.....

April 9. T.

April 10. F.

April 11. S. ...

April 12. S.....

The Mother of Jesus (Matt. 1: 18-26)

Flight into Egypt (Matt. 2: 13-18)

Return to Nazareth (Matt. 2: 19-23)

Jesus as a Child (Luke 2: 41-51)

Blessings Promised (Jer. 31: 15-20)

King of Peace (Isa. 11: 1-9)

Jesus Blesses Children (Mark 10: 13-16)

TIME.—Probably about 4 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

PERSONS.—The Wisemen. Herod, the priests and scribes, Mary, and Jesus.

Introduction

The section of Matthew's narrative which serves as the basis of our lesson for today is known to all readers of the Bible; and while the name "Herod" is familiar to them, the background of this notorious king is not so well understood. Although he was the king of the Jews, he was not himself a Jew, but a descendant of Esau. These people were called "Edomites," and they had occupied the district of Idumaea, in the southern part of Palestine since the Babylonian Exile. Idumaea was captured by John Hyrcanus, a Macabean ruler and known as Hyrcanus I. about a century before the birth of Jesus. Following his conquest, and at his direction, these Edomites received the rite of circumcision and embraced the Jewish religion. The Jews, however, did not fully accept them, but continued to regard them with suspicion and prejudice.

One of the last governors of Idumaea to be appointed by the Macabean rulers was a man by the name of Antipater, an Edomite, or Idumaeen, as they were also called. This man was the father of the Herod of our text, usually known as "Herod the Great." The term *Herod* was the family name of a line of rulers among the Jews during the time of Christ and the apostles. Herod the Great was the founder of the family

of Herods. Herod the Great was appointed king of Judaea in 40 B.C. by the Roman senate, at the suggestion of Antony and with the consent of Octavius. The Jews greatly opposed this move, but Herod at length overcame this opposition and took possession of the kingdom in 37 B.C.; and after the battle of Actium, he was confirmed in it by Octavius, whose favor he ever after enjoyed.

Thayer says concerning Herod that "he was brave and skilled in war, learned and sagacious; but also extremely suspicious and cruel. Hence he destroyed the entire royal family of the Hasmonaeans, put to death many of the Jews that opposed his government, and proceeded to kill even his dearly beloved wife Mariamne of the Hasmonaeen line and the two sons she had borne him. By these acts of bloodshed, and especially his love and imitation of Roman customs and institutions and by the burdensome taxes imposed upon his subjects, he so alienated the Jews that he was unable to regain their favor by his splendid restoration of the temple and other acts of munificences." With this kind of attitude and background, no one is surprised at his effort to kill God's son, and the slaughter of all male children in Bethlehem and its borders.

The Golden Text

□ *They are dead that sought the young child's life.*" These words were spoken to Joseph in Egypt in a dream by an angel of the Lord following the death of Herod. God knew what Herod would do when the Wise-men failed to return to him and report the whereabouts of the newly-born Jesus, and "an angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I tell thee: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him." (Matt. 2: 13.) Joseph obeyed promptly, and the three were soon safe in Egypt.

The terrible slaughter of the children of Bethlehem will forever be a black blot on the character of Herod; it can never be removed. Matthew's words concerning that heinous crime are as follows: "Then Herod, when

he saw that he was mocked of the Wise-men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the male children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had exactly learned of the Wise-men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, saying,

A voice was heard in Ramah,
Weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children:
And she would not be comforted,
because they are not.

Josephus describes the terrible disease and suffering of Herod during his last days; but even with that he did not seem to have any better disposition; for he had his own son killed, and even tried to kill himself.

Josephus tells of the latter in these words: "He called for an apple and a knife; for it was his custom formerly to pare the apple himself, and soon afterwards to cut it, and eat it. When he got the knife, he looked about, and had a mind to stab himself with it; and he had done it. had

not his first cousin. Achiabus. prevented him, and held his hand, and cried out loudly." Herod died at an advanced age "the fifth day after he had caused Antipater [his son] to be slain." some thirty-seven years after he had been declared king of Judaea by the Romans.

The Text Explained

The Wise-men Arrived and Herod Is Troubled

(Matt. 2: 1-6)

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, Wise-men from the east came to Jerusalem."

The manner in which Matthew states these facts shows that his aim in writing was not to give the biographic details of the supernatural birth of Jesus, but rather to show something of the reception which he received as he entered the world. There was homage from afar, but hostility at home; and whether by design or not, this reception foreshadowed the fortunes of the faith which Christ came to establish, namely, rejection by the Gentiles, but rejection by his own people. Cf. John 1: 11; Eph. 2: 17; Acts 2: 39. The men who came in search of the 'King of the Jews' were called "Wise-men," probably because they were members of an order of astrologers or astronomers, similar to those mentioned in the Book of Daniel. The marginal reading is "Magi." Daniel himself was the head of such an order. See Dan. 2: 48. It was natural for the Wise-men to go to Jerusalem in search of the King, for that was the capital of the land of the Jews.

"Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him." These words would certainly startle Herod and strike consternation to his heart. This record indicates that the star was first seen in the east, but we are not informed as to the exact manner in which they recognized it as "his star." It is possible that these Wise-men were familiar with the prediction made by Balaam (Num. 24; 17), and they may have been conversant with the prophecies of Micah and Isaiah regarding the coming of Christ. It appears that God communicated with them in a dream while they were still in

Bethlehem: and it is very probable that Jehovah in some way revealed the facts concerning the star to them while they were yet in their homeland. Moffatt's rendering is. "We saw his star when it rose." The term "worship," according to the marginal reading, denotes an act of reverence whether paid to a creature (see 4: 9; 18: 26), or to the Creator (see 4: 10).

"And when Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." If one will read Josephus' account of Herod, he will readily understand the meaning of these words. Both Herod and the people of the city were troubled, but for different reasons. He was concerned about a possible rival to the throne, but the people were upset because they knew all too well what would likely happen when Herod went into a rage over the possibility that something was going to be done which was contrary to his own plans.

"And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ should be born." This seems to have been an informal gathering of religious leaders, rather than the Sanhedrin as a whole. It is altogether possible that Herod had some knowledge of the expectation of this King, and he was willing, for the time being, to swallow his pride in order to prepare himself to defeat the hopes of the people of Israel. Herod, it seems, manifested a common but strange mixture of regard and contempt for the word of God which makes men anxious to know its predictions so that they can form their plans to defeat them. But when man proposes, it is God who disposes.

"And they said unto him. In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written through the prophet,

*And thou Bethlehem, land of
Judah,*

Art in no wise least among the

*princes of Judah:
For out of thee shall come forth
a governor,
Who shall be shepherd of my
people Israel.—"*

This quotation is from Micah 5: 2, and the promptness with which the Jewish leaders answered Herod's request shows that the matter of the coming of Christ was well understood by them. Situated on its high ridge overlooking the Judean wilderness, the little town of Bethlehem never had much part in the eager life of the Hebrew people, and yet age after age some event, notable in history, some death or birth, or some prophetic word drew the eyes of Israel to it in affection or in hope; and to us the Saviour's birth there has so distinguished it that each incident in the field or at the gate seems charged with predictive meaning, and each reference in psalm or prophecy has a tender significance. For centuries there was suspense, and then over the quiet plain below the city the voice of the angel was heard as he spoke to the lowly shepherds these words: "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2: 10, 11.)

From Jerusalem to Bethlehem (Matt. 2: 7-10)

"Then Herod privily called the Wise-men, and learned of them exactly what time the star appeared." Herod evidently had not told the Jewish leaders of his concern regarding the new-born King, and as he returns to the Wise-men it is very apparent that he also conceals his motives from them. His purpose in inquiring about the time of the star's appearance was to learn within what age-range to seek for the child whom he had purposed in his heart to destroy.

"And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search out exactly concerning the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word, that I also may come and worship him." This was the essence of hypocrisy. When Herod said that I also may come and worship him. he meant that I also may come and

murder him! This unscrupulous monarch took all possible means to obtain the most accurate information regarding the Christ-child, so that he could be sure of destroying him. His actions here show that he had already conceived the diabolic plan which he later attempted to execute.

"And they, having heard the king, went their way; and lo. the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was." The Wise-men from the east had a definite goal before them, and they refused to be satisfied until they had reached it. They were seeking the newly-born king of the Jews, and they did not relax their efforts until they found him. These men from the east may be regarded as the perpetual symbol of the moral and spiritual adventure which believes in the future. They are always finding stars of expectation where other men with eyes cast downward see only the dull, brown earth beneath their feet. The stars which these leaders of men see may be described as stars of hope, and without them there can be no progress. When expectation dies, progress ceases; and when hope enters the tomb, creative and noble activity soon follows. Looking for stars of hope is a superb service.

It is interesting to observe the means which these Wise-men employed in their efforts to reach their goal. The first thing they did was to follow the star which they had seen in their homeland—the place where they were when they decided upon their quest. They used their natural reason in going to the capital city of the Jews, and they took hold of the opportunity which presented itself to them there to make inquiry concerning the whereabouts of the babe they were seeking. When they had exhausted their resources in Jerusalem, they "went their way; and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was."

The attitude of the Wise-men in this whole experience illustrates the principles which should always guide people in their search for the Christ, namely, they should start with what light they have; use whatever natural

ability they possess; seek additional light wherever they can find it; and then, in the final analysis, trust in the Lord for his providential and continuous guidance. Cf. Matt. 13: 12; John 7: 17.

"And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." This seems to indicate that the star disappeared before they reached Jerusalem, or while they were in that city; and now it reappears. Its purpose now was to guide them, not to Bethlehem itself, but to the place where the young child was. This enabled them to find the child without making such inquiries in Bethlehem as would have directed public attention to him, and which would have hindered his escape from a danger which was soon to arise, but which they did not foresee.

Gifts for the King and a Warning from God (Matt. 2: 11, 12)

"And they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary his mother: and they fell down and worshipped him: and opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh." Inasmuch as mention is made here of a "house" in which Jesus and Mary were, it is thought by some that they had been moved from the stable where he had been born. The city had possibly been emptied of its overflow of strangers, with the result that more room was now available. McGarvey suggests that the homage which the Wise-men paid to the child was something more than that which was due to royalty: for the miraculous manner in which they had been guided to him must have taught them that the child was more than mortal.

The treasures of the Wise-men consisted in gold and frankincense and myrrh, and they were kept in caskets or receptacles designed for that purpose. The fact that there were three different kinds of valuables has led some people to conclude that there were three of the Wise-

men: but there is, of course, no evidence that that conclusion is correct. Frankincense was a costly and fragrant gum which was distilled from a tree which grew in India and Arabia, while myrrh was an aromatic gum which was obtained from a thorn-bush which grew in Arabia and Ethiopia.

The providence of God is seen in this devotion of the Wise-men, since it is very probable that these gifts provided the means which were necessary for the flight into Egypt, and to sustain the family while they were sojourning there. No gift which is offered to Jesus in the right manner and prompted by the right motive is ever in vain. Giving has been described as the soul of Christianity; for apart from giving Christianity could not exist. Cf. John 3: 16; 2 Cor. 8: 9; Matt. 20: 28; Acts 20: 35. The religion of Christ has nothing in common with niggardliness; for its glory is in generosity and it teaches that giving is the secret of all true living.

"And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way." Their pious mission had been fulfilled, and they were ready to return to their homes; but there was a serious question which confronted them, namely. Should they return to Herod? They no doubt had learned something of his wicked disposition, and they probably surmised, if they were not actually told, that he would try to kill the infant Jesus. At any rate, they needed divine help in deciding what was the best thing for them to do. Vincent notes that the verb "being warned" means to give a response to one who asks or consults. While Bruce observes that divine guidance comes only to prepare hearts, that is, to people who feel the need of it and desire it. The word therefore implies that the Wise-men had sought the counsel of God: and it was true then, as it always is, that they who seek shall find. Cf. Matt. 7: 7-11.

Questions for Discussion

What is our subject for today?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction
Who was the Herod of our text?
What was his religious background?

How did he become king of Judah? and how did the Jews regard him?
Tell something of his general character.

The Golden Text
To whom and under what circumstances were these words spoken?

What is known of the last days of Herod?

The Wise-men Arrive and Herod
Is Troubled

What was the apparent purpose of Mat-
thew in writing this narrative?

Who were the Wise-men? and from where
did they come?

Why would they first go to Jerusalem?

How did they recognize the star as "his
star"?

What effect did their inquiry have on
Herod? and why?

Why were the people of the city also
troubled?

What did Herod do? and why?

What answer did the Jewish leaders give
him?

What proof did they offer for their reply?

What place did Bethlehem occupy in the
life of the Jewish people?

From Jerusalem to Bethlehem

What information did Herod obtain from
the Wise-men? and why?

What request did he then make of them?

What did he intend to do when he learned
the facts regarding Jesus?

Why were the Wise-men so persistent in
their efforts to find the newly-born King
of the Jews?

What does their spirit symbolize? and how
does it fit into our life today?

Discuss fully the means which the Wise-
men employed in finding Jesus.

How can the principles which they used
benefit us today?

In addition to guiding the Wise-men to
the place where Jesus was, what else
did the star do for them?

Gifts for the King and a
Warning from God

What is suggested by the term "house" in
this passage?

What is implied by the worship of the
Wise-men?

What treasures did they offer Jesus?

Why have people concluded that there
were three of the Wise-men?

What were frankincense and myrrh?

What probable use was made of these
gifts?

How is giving related to Christianity?

What divine warning did they receive in
Bethlehem? and why?

What has the Lord always been willing to
do for those who seek his help?

What specific teaching did Jesus himself
give regarding this question?

Lesson III for Sunday, April 19, 1959

JOHN, THE FORERUNNER OF JESUS

Lesson Text

Matt. 3: 1-6

1 And in those days cometh John the
Bap'tist, preaching in the wil-
derness of Ju-dae'-a, saying.

2 Repent ye; for the kingdom of
heaven is at hand.

3 For this is he that was spoken of
through i-sa-iah the prophet, saying.

The voice of one crying in the
wilderness,

Make ye ready the way of the
Lord,

Make his paths straight.

4 Now John himself had his rai-
ment of camel's hair, and a leathern
girdle about his loins; and his food
was locusts and wild honey.

5 Then went out unto him Je-ru'-
sa-lem, and all Ju-dae'-a, and all the
region round about the Jordan;

6 And they were baptized of him
in the river Jordan, confessing their
sins.

Golden Text.—*"From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Re-
pent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* (Matt. 4: 17.)

Devotional Reading.—Mai. 3: 1-6.

Daily Bible Readings

April 13. M.

April 14. T.

April 15. W.

April 16. T.

April 17. F.

April 18. S. .

April 19. S.

John. Messenger of Jesus (Mai. 3: 1-6)

Work of John (Mark 1: 1-8)

Announcing the King (Matt. 3: 1-6)

Preparing for the King (Matt. 3: 7-12)

Baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3: 13-17)

John's Witness to Christ (John 1: 19-28)

Message of Reformation (Luke 3: 7-9)

Time.—Probably about A.D. 26.

Place.—The wilderness of Judaea.

Persons.—John the Baptist and the people of Jerusalem, Judaea, and the
region round about the Jordan.

Introduction

Some knowledge of the mission of John the Baptist is necessary to an understanding of the plan and purpose of the New Testament itself. The coming of Christ was the end toward which the Old Testament pointed, but even that great advent would not have the desired effect without due preparation. The world, including God's chosen people, was so engrossed in sin as to make at least a partial reformation essential before any appreciable number would be willing to receive the Redeemer whom God was sending to rescue men from eternal doom.

John the Baptist occupied a unique position in the scheme of human redemption. His conception and birth were miraculous, as may be seen by reading the first chapter of Luke. Being a Jew, he lived under the law of Moses, but the particular work which he came to do was not authorized by the Old Testament Scriptures. His was a special dispensation, and it was authorized by God himself. "There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light; that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light." (John 1: 6-8.)

It is interesting to note that the plan of salvation which John preached was identical, so far as its major steps were concerned, with the plan which was later authorized by Jesus. The passage just quoted shows that John presented testimony which

was calculated to produce faith. Faith, then, was a necessary condition for remission of sins under John's preaching. See Acts 19: 4. They were required to believe on one who was coming, while people after Pentecost must believe on the one who had already come. Cf. John 1:

7. Repentance was also required (Matt. 3: 1, 2), as was baptism "unto remission of sins" (Mark 1: 4). Repentance and baptism, of course, were not in the name of Christ, as they must be now. See Acts 2: 37, 38.

Faith, repentance, and baptism unto the remission of sins were effective for that purpose then, because they were ordained of God; and all of this will explain why those who received John's baptism while it was still in force did not have to be baptized again in order to enter the kingdom of Christ when it was established. Cf. the apostles and others on the day of Pentecost who had already been baptized by John's authority. See Luke 7: 29, 30. In the statement, "They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls," the phrase "unto them" is not in the original. The meaning is that when those who were baptized on the day of Pentecost were added to those who had already been baptized by John's authority, the total was about three thousand souls. It was only after John's baptism went out of date that those who received it were required to be rebaptized. See Acts 19: 1-7.

The Golden Text

"From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say. Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The kind of teaching referred to here was in the nature of a proclamation, rather than continuous instruction in the contents of the message. John the Baptist had been delivered up to prison, and Jesus took up the work of a herald which John had been performing. All of the preaching which John, Jesus, the twelve, and the seventy did prior to the death of Jesus had one principal aim, namely, that of heralding the approaching kingdom.

The event of this golden text marks the beginning of one of the well-defined periods in the life of Jesus. Prior to this time Jesus had been *teaching*, but with the imprisonment of John, Jesus not only changed the type of work he was doing, but also the place of his residence. "Now when he heard that John was delivered up, he withdrew into Galilee: and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun

and the land of Naphtali, Toward the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, The people that sat in darkness Saw a great light. And to them that sat in the region and shadow of death, To them did light spring up.

From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 4: 12-17.)

A casual reading of Matthew alone indicates that the time of the beginning of Jesus' preaching was immediately following the completion of his

temptation. But when the lull narrative of the life of Christ, as presented by the four gospel writers, is considered, it will be seen that the events of the first three chapters of John and a part of the fourth chapter (1: 19-4: 3) took place between the eleventh and twelfth verses of Matt. 4. and that the time which those events covered was about one year. This means, then, that the time when Jesus began to preach was near the beginning of the second year of his ministry. See any good *Harmony of the Gospels*.

The Text Explained

The Harbinger and His Message

(Matt. 3: 1-3)

"In those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea." Speaking only of Matthew's narrative, the part which begins with this verse, and ends with the Lord's temptation (Matt. 3: 1-4:

11), may be regarded as a kind of prelude to the public ministry of Jesus. The time referred to is indefinite, so far as Matthew is concerned; but if we read the third chapter of Luke, and especially verses 1-6, it will be seen that the time of John's appearance was both definite and well known. Matthew's use of the expression "in those days" is in the sense of in that general period. By referring to Luke 3: 23, it will be seen that some twenty-eight years had intervened between the second and third chapters of Matthew. It was not Matthew's purpose to give a strictly chronological record.

It appears that the greater part of John's preaching was done in the rural and open areas of Palestine, but it is certain that he experienced no difficulty in getting an audience to hear his message. The term "wilderness" is not used in the sense of complete barrenness, but rather of an unappropriated territory which afforded free range for shepherds and their flocks. It will be remembered that Moses kept the flocks of Jethro in the wilderness of Midian. See Ex. 3: 1; Acts 7: 29, 30.

John is called *the Baptist* because of the particular type of work which he did, and because he was, under God, the originator of the baptism which he administered and which others administered by the same au-

thority. There is no record of any practice comparable to this in any previous age. The washings which were authorized by Moses were not "baptisms" which were administered by others for the benefit of the ones who were being washed.

"Saying. Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The call to repentance was the dominant message of John. He had come to prepare a people for the reception of Christ, and a change in their attitude and lives was essential to that preparation. The basic meaning of the word "repent" is to change one's mind, to have another mind, to think differently or afterwards. Repentance is not forsaking sin; that is the result of repentance. It is, rather, to have another mind regarding sin. to think differently about it. to reconsider. It implies a true knowledge of sin. a conviction of sin, with its guilt, condemnation, and terrible consequences. It means that the sinner changes his thoughts regarding sins, and his attitude toward sin. Repentance is produced by godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7: 10), and results in a reformation of life (Matt. 3: 8).

The motive assigned for this call to repentance is, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The kingdom of Christ is the rule of Christ. Christianity is not a subject for mere intellectual study and belief. It means that those who are in the kingdom will be ruled over by Christ. The truth of God, which is the basis of that rule, must have sway over the reason, heart, and conscience of man. This, of course, implies that a reformation is necessary before such subjugation is possible. When one takes

into consideration that which is involved in bringing about this change, it will be easier to see something of the magnitude of John's ministry.

"For this is he that was spoken of through Isaiah the prophet, saying,

The voice of one crying in the wilderness.

Make ye ready the way of the Lord,

Make his paths straight.—"

This quotation is from Isa. 40: 3. The prophet's entire statement is as follows: "The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah; make level in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the uneven shall be made level, and the rough places a plain: and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it." (Isa. 40: 3-5.)

This statement by Isaiah was apparently fashioned after a well known practice among oriental monarchs. It was their custom, when they were about to travel through any part of their dominion, to send heralds before them to announce their coming, and to see that the highways over which they were to pass were in order. Any obstacle which might be in the way had to be removed, and all rough places had to be made smooth. If no highway existed in that part of the country, then one would have to be made, even if it required the tilling up of valleys and other low places, and the cutting down of mountains and hills. This was a striking illustration of the levelling influence which John came to exert.

It will be observed that John is referred to as a "voice" crying in the wilderness. This implies that his personality was thrown into the shadow of Christ. Head John 3: 22-30. Someone has asked, "What would be the duty of a purely human teacher of the highest moral aim, entrusted with a great spiritual mission and lesson for the benefit of mankind?" The answer to this question is given in these words: "The example of John the Baptist is an answer to this inquiry. Such a teacher would represent himself as a mere 'voice,' crying aloud in the

moral wilderness around him, and anxious, beyond aught else, to shroud his own insignificant person beneath the majesty of his message." This is the way that Paul felt about his ministry. Cf. 1 Cor. 2: 1-5.

John's Way of Life (Matt. 3: 4)

"Now John himself had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins: and his food was locusts and wild honey." John's appearance must have been very striking. There is, of course, no detailed account of his physical features. Hastings' description of him in *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible* should give us a general idea of the life and habits of this great man. "His hair was long and unkempt, and his features were tanned with the sun and the air of the desert. Probably they were thinned, too, by austerity; for his habitual food was of the simplest order, consisting only of locusts and wild honey. Locusts, dried and preserved, form still, at the present day, an article of food in the East, but only among the very poor; people in the least degree luxurious or scrupulous would not look at it. Wild honey, formed by hives of bees in the crevices of rocks or in rifted trees, abounds in the desert-places of Palestine. and may be gathered by anyone who wanders there.

"The raiment of the Baptist corresponded with his food, consisting of a garment of the very coarsest and cheapest cloth, made of camel's hair. The girdle of the Oriental is an article of clothing on which a great deal of taste and expense is laid out, being frequently of fine material and gay coloring, with the added adornment of elaborate needlework: but the girdle with which John's garment was confined was no more than a rough band of leather. Everything, in short, about his external appearance denoted one who had reduced the claims of the body to the lowest possible terms, that he might devote himself entirely to the life of the spirit."

John's personal habits were entirely consistent with the work which he came to do. Nothing could have been more appropriate in the preacher of repentance than that he should himself set an example of austere self-denial.

The Response to John's Preaching (Matt. 3: 5, 6)

"Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about the Jordan:" John's remarkable appearance, his ringing message, which he knew to be backed by divine authority, and his moral intensity, made a profound impression upon the people. This was the first divinely authorized message which had come to them in approximately four hundred years; but alluring that long period of divine silence, they had not ceased to look for the fulfillment of the predictions of the prophets regarding the "coming One." John's proclamation regarding the coming kingdom appealed to their common Messianic hope, and it is not surprising that they took John for a prophet (Mat. 21: 26; Luke 1: 76-79).

John's preaching, for the most part at least, as has already been noted, was done in the wilderness and away from the urban areas, but he never lacked for an audience. The attendance may have begun on a small scale, but if so, it steadily grew until it reached colossal dimensions. The term "all" in this passage is not to be understood in the sense of every individual in the areas named, but, according to a Hebrew idiom, it stood for the greater part. Cf. Matt. 21: 23-26; Luke 7: 29, 30. Some have estimated that, all in all, a million people may have heard John preach.

"And they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins." Some one had said that John would not want occupation, baptizing such a crowd. Inasmuch as John's baptism was for the remission of sins (Mark 1: 4), it was altogether proper that it be preceded by a confession of sins. A confession, that is, an acknowledgment of sins is also essential to repentance (which John demanded); for no one will

repent of a sin which he does not acknowledge or admit. Cf. 1 John 1: 8, 9; Acts 8: 20-24.

Everything which we are told about John the Baptist is unique. The ascetic nature of his life in the wilderness, the startling message with which he broke the prophetic silence of four hundred years, the incorruptible sincerity of his humility, out of which no allurements could bribe him, the fearless honesty of his words, and the tragic horror of his death—all combine to give him a peculiar and distinctive place in the Sacred History. He came in the spirit and power of Elijah, and his dress and manner of living are not the only things which remind us of that great prophet of Israel; but even Elijah did not have the privilege of preparing the way for the coming Messiah.

John stood between the Jewish and Christian dispensations; he had much which connected him with both, but he did not belong exclusively to either. He had more knowledge of the nature of the person and work of the Christ than any of his predecessors among the prophets, and yet "he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (Matt. 11: 11). In fact, according to the Lord's evaluation of him, no one had arisen among them that are born of women who was greater than John the Baptist, but the fact that this greatness would be surpassed by those in the kingdom when it came shows how important that kingdom is. The Old Testament closes with these ringing words regarding John: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." (Mal. 4: 5, 6.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is a knowledge of John's mission essential to an understanding of the Bible?
In what way was John related to the law of Moses?
In what way was his mission related to the rest of the Scriptures?

What were the terms of salvation, as preached by John?
Did those who received his baptism while it was in force have to be rebaptized before entering the kingdom of Christ?
Give reasons for your answer.

The Golden Text

What kind of preaching did Jesus do, as indicated here?
When did he begin this type of work? and why?

How long was this after his baptism and temptation? Give reasons for your answer.

The Harbinger and His Message

In what days did John begin his preaching?

How much time elapsed between the second and third chapters of Matthew?

How do you know this?

Where did John do the most of his preaching?

What was meant by the term "wilderness"?

Why was John called the Baptist?

When did baptism as we know it originate?

What was the dominant message of John?

What is the meaning of repentance? Discuss fully.

What motive did John give for their repentance?

What is meant by the kingdom of heaven?

Why was repentance necessary before they could enter the kingdom?

What prediction was made regarding John's coming? and by whom?

What suggested this particular type of work for John?

Why was the harbinger referred to as a "voice"?

Could such an application be made people today? Why?

John's Way of Life

What is said regarding the life and habits of John?

How would such a life fit into his ministry?

The Response to John's Preaching

What kind of impression did John make upon the people?

Why would they be influenced in this way?

How did they regard John? and were they correct in their estimation? Give reasons for your answer.

In what sense did "all" the people go out to hear John?

What did they do when they were baptized?

Why was a confession necessary?

Why can't people repent of sins unless they confess them?

Discuss John's unique position in Biblical history.

What did Jesus say regarding him?

Why are those in the kingdom greater than John?

Lesson IV for Sunday, April 26, 1959

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Lesson Text

Matt. 4: 1-11

1 Then was Je'-sus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterward hungered.

3 And the tempter came and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.

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

5 Then the devil taketh him into the holy city: and he set him on the pinnacle of the temple,

6 And saith unto him. If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written,

He shall give his angels charge concerning thee:

and.

On their hands they shall bear thee up.

Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.

7 Je'-sus said unto him, Again it is written, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God.

8 Again, the devil taketh him unto an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them:

9 And he said unto him. All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

10 Then saith Je'-sus unto him. Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

11 Then the devil leaveth him: and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren* (Heb. 2: 17a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Heb. 2: 11-18.

Daily Bible Readings

April 20. M.

April 21. T.

April 22. W.

The Temptation (Luke 4: 1-15)

Jesus Understands the Tempted (Heb. 4: 12-16)

How to Meet Temptation (Matt. 26: 33-46)

April 23. T.
 April 24. F.
 April 25. S.
 April 26. S.

Way to Victory (James 4: 1-10)
 Course of Temptation (James 1: 12-18)
 Christ Helps the Tempted (Heb. 2: 11-18)
 Intercession for the Tempted (Luke 22: 31-38)

TIME.—Probably about A.D. 26.

PLACE.—The wilderness, the holy city, and an exceeding high mountain.

PERSONS.—The Spirit, Jesus, Satan, and the ministering angels.

Introduction

We gather from Mark's record that the temptation of Jesus followed immediately after his baptism. "And straightway the Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him." (Mark 1: 12, 13.) This is all that Mark says about the temptation of Jesus, while John does not mention it at all. Matthew and Luke have about the same amount of information regarding the subject, but they differ slightly as to the order of the temptations. There is, however, no disagreement between them regarding their nature and details. These two accounts should be read before beginning the study of the Lord's great trials on this occasion.

The Scriptures do not tell us exactly where the temptation of Jesus took place, but Farrar says that tradition "fixes the scene of temptation at a mountain to the south of Jericho, which from this circumstance has received the name of Quarantania." The place is described as "naked and arid like a mountain of malediction," and as a region where the "owls dwell and the satyrs dance." Ledlow notes that in bold contrast with the Mount of

Beatitudes which faced the beautiful and lovely lake of Galilee, the Mount of Temptation gazed at the "sluggish, bituminous waters of the Sodomitic Sea." The natural scenery and the general environment harmonized with the experiences which Jesus was destined to undergo.

Both the time and the place of the temptation of Jesus suggest the idea of loneliness. His baptism stood squarely between his life as a private citizen of Nazareth and his public ministry as the Son of God; and now, ready to begin a work which would directly challenge the devil, the Spirit leads him into direct conflict with the evil one. The place of this struggle, as we have already seen, was the wilderness where "he was with the wild beasts;" and the time was immediately after he had left his home and friends in Galilee, and before he had chosen his disciples. The Providence of God and the direct leading of the Spirit brought Jesus into a situation where he could demonstrate his ability to withstand the devil and resist evil from any direction. The magnitude of the temptation is seen from a statement by Luke: "And when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him for a season." (4: 13; cf. Heb. 4: 15; 1 John 2: 16.)

The Golden Text

"Where it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren." This shows that the temptation of Jesus had a divine purpose. He had come into the world to lead men out of sin, to enable them to bear the temptations which are common to this life; and it was necessary for him therefore to identify himself with them in their struggles. The writer of the Hebrew letter explains the reason for all this in the closing part of chapter 2, the place from which the golden text is taken. "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself

in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily not to angels doth he give help, but he giveth help to the seed of Abraham. Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suf-

ferred being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." (Heb. 2:14-18.)

If Jesus had not known anything about the nature and trials of the people whom he came to save, he not only could not have sympathized with them; he could not have been an example unto them. But when he became like the people who were in need of a Saviour and entered into

all the temptations which are common to man, he demonstrated his ability to deliver them from Satan and lead them back to God. In an earlier statement in Heb. 2. Paul said, "For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (Verse 10.)

The Text Explained

The Setting for the Temptation

(Matt. 4: 1, 2)

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." The fact that Jesus was tempted shows that he was subject to temptation. Paul says that he was tempted in all points like we are, yet without sin. But the New Testament just as clearly teaches that he did not go into the temptation voluntarily; for he was led or driven of the Spirit into the wilderness where the temptation took place. If the nature of Jesus had been such that temptation could not appeal to him, the proposals which Satan made to him would have been useless, and "temptation" in that case would have been entirely worthless both to him and to us. But being endowed with human desires, appetites, and passions, temptation appealed to him, just as it does to men; but being divine as well as human, he had the power to meet and resist temptation as no man could possibly do. Jesus met his temptations as a man, and thereby set the world an example. If he had met them as God, then no man could have followed his example.

Temptation implies moral excitement. Nothing can be a temptation to any person which does not enter his soul, and touch certain susceptibilities there. This is why something may be a temptation to one person and not to another; or which might be a temptation to a man at one point in his life, and not at another. Sin does not consist in the possession of a thought, but in its entertainment. James says, "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: each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and

enticed." (James 1: 13. 14.) Unregulated desire always results in sin.

The devil is the arch enemy of mankind. His every desire, beginning with Eve in the garden of Eden, has been to turn men away from God; and he has left no stone unturned in his effort to do just that. Peter exhorts, "Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5: 8.) But the devil is a coward and can be defeated by the least of God's children, if he will avail himself of God's help. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4: 7b.) "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.) This is the plan which Jesus followed, as we shall see further on in this study; and that is his example to us.

"And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterward hungered." This was no perfunctory ceremonial fast, but the result of communion with the Father in complete abstention from food, as in the case of Moses during a comparable period of time. See Ex. 34: 28. There probably was no food in the place where Jesus was, but that was not the reason for his fast; he did not desire food because of his mental preoccupation. This is the true spirit of the fasting which is pleasing to God. Cf. Matt. 6: 16-18; 9: 14. 15.

The expression "he afterward hungered" implies that the period of fasting (forty days and forty nights) preceded the sense of hunger. Cf. Luke 4: 2b; 1 Kings 19: 1-8. The fact that Jesus did not feel the pangs

of hunger until the close of the forty days suggests his complete absorption. The torture of his soul was so terrible that he did not notice the passing of time or the lack of food until he approached the point of complete physical exhaustion.

The question as to the time of the Lord's temptations should not be overlooked. Was he tempted during the entire forty days, or only at the end of them? The answer to these questions is not clearly stated by Matthew, but one gathers from Mark and Luke that he was tempted during the entire period of the forty days. "And he was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan." (Mark 1: 13a.) "And was led in the Spirit in the wilderness during forty days, being tempted of the devil." (Luke 4: 1b, 2a.) These passages suggest continual tempting throughout the whole period of the forty days. Luke says, as already noted, that when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him for a season. It is fair to assume that the first of the recorded temptations did not come until the sense of hunger was felt at the close of the forty days, and it is very probable that the three which are mentioned by Matthew and Luke came as a dramatic climax to the whole period of temptation.

The difference in the order of the temptations, as seen in the records of Matthew and Luke, may cause some to wonder if there is a contradiction in the divine record: but since neither writer lays claim to a chronological arrangement, there is, of course, no contradiction. Luke probably presents a geographical arrangement, placing together the two which took place in the wilderness, and then the one on the temple; while Matthew probably presents them in the order of their actual occurrence, that is, in their chronological order.

The Three Recorded Temptations (Matt. 4: 3-10)

"And the tempter came and said unto him, If thou art the son of God, command that these stones become bread." McGarvey points out that before we can properly estimate the temptation of Jesus, a standard must be erected by which to judge the force of temptation. James, as he points out, tells us that all tempta-

tion results from the excitement of some lust or desire (James 1: 14). It follows, then, that the more intense the desire excited, all other things being equal, and the more cunningly the sinfulness of the wrong act is disguised, the more easily one is induced to commit it. These facts should enable us to grasp something of the force of the Lord's temptation.

The word "if" which introduces the first diabolical suggestion implies doubt, and raised the problem of the Lord's divinity. The devil may have referred to the testimony of God in Matt. 3: 17. At any rate, Satan appears to have challenged, if not actually questioned, the divine Sonship of Jesus, and called upon him to perform a miracle to demonstrate it. But if Jesus had responded to the devil's suggestion to turn the stones into bread, it would not have changed the challenger's mind, nor have accomplished any good; for that is not the way in which the moral world is governed. Furthermore, to supply his food miraculously could not have benefited humanity; for no one could have followed his example. He must meet the temptation as a man, and not as God.

"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Jesus appealed to God's word in meeting this temptation. Cf. Psalm 119: 11. The scripture which he cited was taken from Deut. 8: 3, and his purpose was this: As Jehovah led Israel in the wilderness to show that they were to depend upon him rather than upon bread, so Jesus accepts the Spirit's leading here. It would have shown a lack of trust in God and his purpose concerning his Son, had he endeavored to satisfy his hunger by supernatural means. Jesus was tempted as a man and he quoted a passage from the divine record which was addressed to man. Men today have access to God's word, and they have a right to use it as a protection against sin. This is the only way to overcome temptation successfully.

"Then the devil taketh him into the holy city; and he set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written,

He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and,

On their hands they shall bear thee up,

Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone." It appears that the devil was permitted to have the person of Jesus at his disposal during these temptations. Cf. Job 2: 6. The "pinnacle" was a *wing* of the temple, see margin, but it is not known which wing or what its height was. Some have thought that reference may have been to Herod's royal portico which overhung the Kedron valley and looked down several hundred feet. But whatever part it was, a leap from there would have been fatal without divine protection.

In addition to the scornful "if" which was also used in this temptation, the tempter proceeded to quote the Scripture too in his effort to encourage Jesus to yield to his suggestion. This was a challenge to the display spirit and a dare to Jesus to test his power. But had Christ yielded, no one would have benefited from it, and no one could have followed his example. The devil, in quoting this scripture, not only left out a clause, but also misinterpreted its intent. Furthermore, if Satan believed the Bible and urged others to rely upon its promises, why didn't he do it himself? But instead he tried to get Jesus to tempt Jehovah by trusting the angels to protect him in an unnecessary leap from the dizzy heights of the temple—a demonstration of over-confidence in God.

"Again, the devil taketh him unto an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them: and he said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Luke says that this was done "in a moment of time." This wonderful panorama was undoubtedly partially mental and imaginative, since the devil caused "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them" to pass in review before Jesus in that short period of time. But this does not prove that all phases of the temptation were subjective without any objective presence of Satan. This temptation was evidently both subjective and objective.

It has always been a debatable question as to whether or not Satan actually possessed the power which he claimed regarding the kingdoms, but it is a noticeable fact that Jesus did not deny the devil's hold on the world of men. Luke reports Satan as saying, "For it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it." From the practical viewpoint, Satan had at least usurped the kingdoms of the world, but Christ as God's Son had come into the world to turn men back to God and not to do homage to the evil one. Sin is a personal matter and it can be destroyed only as men renounce it and accept righteousness.

"Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." This quotation is from Deut. 6: 13. God will not accept a divided service (cf. Matt. 6: 24). Robertson notes that the devil as the lord of the evil world continually tries to win men to the service of the world and God. This, he continues, is his chief camouflage for destroying a preacher's power for God.

The Results Which Followed (Matt. 4: 11)

"Then the devil leaveth him; and behold, angels came and ministered unto him." Every effort had been made to woo Christ away from God, but Satan had met with failure at every turn. He now leaves him for a season, but will soon renew the attack in the person of hostile Pharisees and unfaithful disciples. It is possible that the angels brought food and drink to Jesus. See again 1 Kings 19: 1-8; cf. Heb. 1: 14.

In meeting these temptations, Jesus thoroughly tested his own character and his ability to meet and resist all opposition; and he also tested the means which are at the hands of men for the purpose of guiding and protecting moral and religious life. These temptations were such as any human being is likely to encounter, embracing as they did the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vain-glory of life. See 1 John 2: 15-17.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

When did the temptation take place, that is, in relation to Christ's baptism?
Where was the probable place of the temptations? and what of its fitness?

The Golden Text

What is the significance of the term 'be-hooved'?
Why was it necessary for Christ to be tempted?

The Setting for the Temptation

What is shown by the fact that Christ was tempted?
How did he come to enter the temptations of this lesson?
Why was it necessary for him to meet temptation as a man?
What does temptation imply? and how is it brought about?
What is the devil's motive in all temptation?
What does the Bible teach regarding the Christian's ability to meet and overcome the evil one?
Why did Jesus fast? and for how long?
Does God expect Christians to fast today? Give reason for your answer.
When did Jesus feel the pangs of hunger?
Was Jesus tempted during the entire forty-day period? Give reasons for your answer.
When did the recorded temptations take place?
Why do Matthew and Luke give a differ-

ent order of the second and third temptations?

The Three Recorded Temptations

What is necessary in order to give a proper evaluation of temptation?
What was the first recorded temptation?
What is the force of the word 'if'?
How did Jesus meet this temptation?
Why would turning stones into bread be sinful?
What is the benefit of the Lord's example here to us?
What was the second temptation and where did it take place?
Why did the devil quote scripture in this one?
What would have been wrong in leaping from the temple?
Why did Jesus refuse to yield to this temptation?
What was the third temptation and where did it take place?
How could the devil show Jesus all the kingdoms from a single mountain?
Did Satan actually control all of the kingdoms? Give reasons for your answer.
Why didn't Jesus yield to this temptation?
Why won't God accept divided service?
Why does Satan want people to engage in divided service?

The Results Which Followed

Why did the devil leave Jesus?
Did he ever return to tempt him? If so, in what way?
In what manner did the angels probably minister to Jesus?
What did Jesus demonstrate in meeting these temptations?

Lesson V for Sunday, May 3, 1959

SUBJECTS OF THE KINGDOM

Lesson Text

Matt. 5: 1-12, 43-48

1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into the mountain: and when he had sat down, his disciples came unto him:

2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying,

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.

10 Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.

43 Ye have heard that it was said. Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy:

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you;

45 That ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the

good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.

46 For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

Golden Text.—*“Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”* (Matt. 5: 16.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalm 24: 1-6.

Daily Bible Readings

April 27.	M.	Standards of the Kingdom (Matt. 5: 17-26)
April 28.	T.	The “Golden Rule” (Luke 6: 27-38)
April 29.	W.	True Greatness (Matt. 20: 20-28)
April 30.	T.	Approved Subjects (Psalm 1: 1-6)
May 1.	F.	Charitable Subjects (Psalm 41: 1-13)
May 2.	S.	Security and Protection (Psalm 34: 1-10)
May 3.	S.	A Subject of Zion (Psalm 15: 1-5)

Time.—During the Galilean ministry (4: 23), probably in A.D. 27, or shortly thereafter.

Place.—Possibly Mount Hattin, or some mountain in that vicinity.

Persons.—Jesus, his disciples, and the multitudes (4: 25).

Introduction

The Sermon on the Mount is generally regarded as the greatest statement of moral and religious principles to be found in the annals of history. Even those who are unwilling to follow Jesus as a religious leader are practically united in their acclaim of the sermon’s loftiness and sublimity. Few people are willing to dispute its moral excellence. It is true that there have been some people who have not been favorably impressed with the Sermon on the Mount; but even those who have criticized it have, as a rule, registered their objections to it, not on the basis of its lack of nobility, but rather upon its impracticability. Its very idealism, they contend, is its most damaging feature; it is, they say, on a plane too exalted for everyday living.

There are even among so-called Christian people many who do not take the Sermon on the Mount seriously. They feel that its demands are beyond their ability to reach, and as a result they “find themselves with a divided conscience, if not a besetting hypocrisy.” Such people

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others?* do not even the Gen’tiles the same?

48 Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

have no fault to find with the sermon’s teaching; they simply feel that it is beyond their reach and more or less unrelated to the immediate problems of the average man in the workaday world.

But the teaching which is found in this sermon has been put into practice, both by Jesus himself and by others who have endeavored to follow him. The Lord’s message in the Sermon on the Mount can therefore be understood and put into practice by his followers; and it is valid and useful, apart from the historical, literary, and exegetical questions concerning it, which are receiving so much attention today, and which tend to overshadow the real significance and power of the Lord’s teaching. The words of Jesus in this sermon present an ideal for human life, founded upon religious truth and moral principles, which has been and still is recognized as the highest standard of life yet conceived; and it is further regarded as the ultimate standard to which mankind can and must attain.

The Golden Text

“Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” When Jesus said to his disciples, “Ye are the light of

the world,” he was not talking to statesmen, scholars, or the socially powerful, but to people who did not have any brilliance, so far as the world counts brilliance. They were

plain provincial men and women, and yet Jesus said to them, "Ye are the light of the world."

A great amount of light had been shed in the world up to the time when Jesus addressed his disciples on the occasion now before us; for some of the greatest men and women of history had lived before that time. It would be difficult, indeed, to find a greater contribution to law and order than that which was made by the Romans. Then, too, some of the world's greatest literature had been produced before that time; and the architecture of the preceding ages is still among the finest in the world. And yet in the face of all this brilliance Jesus told his disciples that they are the light of the world; and as we look back from our present position we can plainly see, in the light of history and philosophy, that his words have proved to be absolutely true.

This truth, of course, involves the Lord's followers in a tremendous responsibility; and many people seem to think that if they cannot show forth an unusual light, they will send out none at all. The story is told of a storm which occurred one night,

during which a great ocean liner was in danger of being lost. The entire crew was at work in an effort to save the ship. One of the sailors fell and injured himself to the extent that he could render no further service. However, he was still willing to try, but when it was seen that he could do nothing more, his captain ordered him to his stateroom. When he got there he was depressed because he had done so little to save the gallant ship. While thus meditating he heard a cry, "A man overboard." He was instantly aroused by a noble spirit; and, lighting his little lamp, he held it at the porthole. The feeble rays of that light fell on the waters, with the result that the other sailors were able to see the drowning man and rescue him from death. That is what Jesus wants everyone of us to do. Our individual efforts may not seem to count for much, but much good may be done if they are faithfully exercised.

Let the lower lights be burning!

Send a gleam across the wave!

Some poor fainting, struggling seaman

You may rescue, you may save.

The Text Explained

The Setting for the Sermon

(Matt. 5: 1, 2)

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into the mountain:" The multitudes were apparently those referred to in Matt. 4: 25: "And there followed him great multitudes from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judaea and from beyond the Jordan." Jesus had begun his great Galilean ministry, and crowds were coming to him from every side. The time, as already indicated, was about a year after his baptism and temptation.

The identity of the mountain upon which Jesus spoke is not definitely known, but many Bible students suppose that it was Mount Hattin, known also as the "Horns of Hattin," a saddle shaped, twin-peak elevation overlooking the Sea of Galilee and the Plain of Gennesaret, between Cana and Tiberias. It is sometimes referred to as the "Mount of Beatitudes" and has been called the "Sinai of the New Testament," since the fundamental principles of the two

dispensations were announced from these two mountains.

"And when he had sat down, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying," Sitting was the common posture of Jewish teachers, and it suited Jesus on this occasion, inasmuch as his instruction was didactic rather than oratorical. Jesus had begun to assemble around him some disciples, and it appears from Luke 6: 12ff. that he has just selected the twelve from among them. If we take this verse alone, it would seem that the teaching which Christ gave was intended only for his disciples; but if we read Matt. 7: 28, 29, it is plain that he taught the multitudes too.

The Beatitudes

(Matt. 5: 3-12)

Few parts of the New Testament are better known than the Beatitudes which form the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount. These eight statements do not refer to eight different classes of people—some poor,

others meek, etc.; they all describe the character of the citizen of the kingdom of heaven in its psychological development. Each beatitude presents a specific idea; but when they are considered as a whole, it will be seen that they are not mutually exclusive. They are all bound together in organic unity. Like so many facets of a diamond, they present the ideal life in eight different aspects, and indicate the several characteristics which make up the whole.

These beatitudes reveal a beautiful order of arrangement, which may be listed under the following head: (1) the beginning of faith; (2) the progress of faith; (3) the perfection of faith; and (4) the trial of faith. The first and the last beatitudes mention the kingdom, while the others describe its nature and its blessings. Cf. Rom. 14: 17. Thus, according to Jesus, the kingdom of heaven is the beginning and the end of blessedness; and it includes all spiritual blessings. See Eph. 1: 3. It is also well to note that each individual beatitude consists of three parts, namely, (1) the *ascription* of blessedness; (2) the *description* of character; and (3) the *description* of blessedness.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit:" The term "blessed" means happy, and that is the rendering in some versions. Robertson notes that Jesus takes this word "happy" and puts it in this rich environment; and it is a pity that we have not kept the word on the same high plane. It is one of the words which have been transformed and ennobled by New Testament use, and it has become the express symbol of happiness which is identified with pure character. Those who recognize this significance are aware that sin is the fountain-head of all misery, and that holiness is the final and effectual cure for every woe.

When we say that a man is poor in purse, we mean that he has no money or financial resources; and when a man is poor in spirit it must mean that he is without spiritual strength or resources. Such a man is utterly destitute of all ability to make himself better, and must depend upon God and his mercy if he is ever saved. A person like this sees himself as he really is in God's sight, and is willing to accept spiri-

tual help from him on his own terms. Cf. Isa. 66: 2.

"For theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of heaven is theirs because they will seek it, that is, they will ask for and will meet the conditions of entrance into and membership in the kingdom. Cf. John 3: 5; Acts 2: 37, 38; Col. 1: 13.

"Blessed are they that mourn:" The reference here is not to all mourners, but to those who mourn with regard to sin. Their sorrow is on account of sin; not because of the consequences of sin. The saddest thing in the world is not the soul that sorrows, but one who is so dull that he is incapable of feeling grief at all—a heart so selfish that nothing but that which touches its comfort and ease moves it to a twinge of feeling. A man once accidentally spilled some boiling water on his foot, and felt no pain; and it was not until then that he discovered, to his dismay, that he was a leper. The original word for "mourn" indicates a sorrow which begins in the heart, takes possession of the whole person, and is outwardly manifested—too deep for concealment.

"For they shall be comforted." This is a strong word and carries with it the idea of bracing, rather than soothing, and denotes strength which comes from companionship with the Lord, or "fortitude in alliance with someone."

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." The primary meaning of the term "meek" is mild, gentle; and it carries with it the idea of gentleness of strength, patience in the reception of injuries; believing that God will vindicate. Cf. Rom. 12: 19, 20. As used in this passage it seems to refer to that humility of spirit which results from self-righteousness and the confession of sin. Such people will enjoy the earth more fully here; and if 2 Pet. 3: 8-13 is to be understood literally, it shall be a part of their final inheritance.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." These words picture to us a man longing for that which God has to offer, just as one ravenous with hunger and parched and panting with thirst longs for that which will satisfy his natural desires for food and drink for the body. Right-

eousness refers to a condition which is acceptable to God, or a state which he approves. Cf. Rom. 1: 16, 17; 10: 1-4. It involves purity of life and correctness in thinking, feeling, and acting. Cf. Deut. 6: 25.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." Mercy has two aspects: (1) the alleviation of suffering, and (2) forgiveness of wrongs, or the proper attitude toward the sinner. Jesus is not speaking of sin, but of the sinner. Our danger is to import into our attitude toward the sinner the hatred we feel for his sin. Christ's interest is always in the man—how is he to be cured. The exercise of mercy tends to elicit mercy from others, both from God and man. See James 2: 13; Psalm 18: 25.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." The pure in heart are those who are free from evil desires and purposes. This condition is possible only by the absolute enthronement of God in the affections. This has been called "The Beatific Vision," and it comes only to the pure in heart; for no other can see the King. Those whose hearts are pure see him by faith here; and they shall see him face to face in heaven.

Face to face shall I behold him.

Far beyond the starry sky;

Face to face in all his glory,

I shall see him by and by!

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God." The reference here is not merely to peaceable men, but rather to the active promoters of peace. Such people not only keep the peace themselves; they also seek to bring men into harmony with each other and with God. God is a God of peace, and those who are like him in this respect shall be called his sons. Read James 3: 13-18.

"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you." In the introduction of our study of the beatitudes we noted that these eight beatitudes reveal a beau-

tiful order or arrangement, namely, the beginning, progress, perfection, and trial of faith. The trial of faith is never pleasant from the human viewpoint, of course, but that is the only way which reveals the strength of one's faith; and inasmuch as none but the faithful can please God, it is to our advantage that our faith be subjected to an adequate test. "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing." (James 1: 2-4.) The trial of faith manifests itself in three ways: (1) reproach; (2) persecute; and (3) say all manner of evil falsely, for Christ's sake. Such people have done no wrong, but suffer as Christians. It is easier to rejoice at such treatment when we look at the reward. Cf. Heb. 12: 2.

The Law of Love (Matt. 5: 43-48)

If one will read the entire fifth chapter of Matthew he will see that Jesus used five illustrations to show the difference between the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and the righteousness which he requires in his disciples. The law of love is the fifth of these illustrations.

"Ye have heard that it was said. Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy:" The law of Moses plainly enjoined love for one's neighbor (Lev. 19: 18), but the sentiment "hate thine enemy" is nowhere found in that law; but since the Jews were forbidden to make peace with certain nations around them (Ex. 34: 11-16; Deut. 7: 1-5; 23: 6), and were commanded to fight many bloody battles with them, it is not difficult to see how they came to feel as they did toward them. Verse 43 was the way the scribes and Pharisees taught.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you:" This, in contrast with their views, is what Jesus teaches. This is not a sentimental love, but is based on moral choice. Its practical meaning is to be kindly disposed toward one's enemies, wish them well, and have a desire to make them better. Love is an active principle, and this means that the "lover" will

do something about it.

"That ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." This is the motive for the action which Christ requires.

"For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye

salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." God, and not the world, is our example. A love therefore which has for its object one's friends only is incomplete; his enemies must also be embraced, if his love is to be made perfect. Cf. Phil. 3: 15, 16; 1 Cor. 2: 6.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, persons.

Introduction

What is the general impression regarding the Sermon on the Mount? Why?

What are the usual objections to it?

Why do some professed Christians feel that way about it?

What proof can you offer to show that the teaching is practical?

The Golden Text

In what way are Christians the light of the world?

Why is their light brighter than that of others?

Show the practical manner in which Christians should let their light shine.

The Setting for the Sermon

What multitudes did Jesus see?

Upon what mountain was the sermon delivered?

Why did Jesus occupy the sitting posture?

The Beatitudes

What are "beatitudes" and why were they spoken?

What order of arrangement do these beatitudes reveal?

What does each beatitude contain?

What is the meaning of the term "blessed"?

What does it mean to be poor in spirit?

Why is the kingdom of heaven theirs?

Who are the "mourners"? and how shall they be comforted?

What is it to be meek? and how shall they inherit the earth?

What does it mean to hunger and thirst after righteousness? and how will such be filled?

What are the two aspects of mercy? and why will the merciful receive mercy?

How does one's heart become pure? and in what sense does he see God?

Who is a peacemaker and how does he go about it?

Why are peacemakers called the sons of God?

Why is the trial of one's faith essential?

In what three ways is the trial manifested?

The Law of Love

What five illustrations did Jesus use to show the difference between two types of righteousness?

Why did the scribes and Pharisees teach that God's people should hate their enemies?

What does Jesus teach in contrast to them?

What does it mean to love one's enemy?

What motive did Jesus give for this?

How can Christians rise above the ways of the world?

Why must we do more than others?

How can the Lord's people be "perfect"?

What can you say regarding the value of a lesson like this? Discuss fully.

Lesson VI for Sunday, May 10, 1959

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Lesson Text

Matt. 6: 19-34

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 For where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also.

22 The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy

whole body shall be full of light.

23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

25 Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall

eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment?

26 Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?

27 And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life?

28 And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

29 Yet I say unto you, that even Sol'-o-mon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Golden Text.—*"But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Matt. 6: 33.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalm 23.

30 But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith?

31 Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 For after all these things do the Gen'-tiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Daily Bible Readings

May 4. M. Real Treasures (Matt. 6: 19-25)
May 5. T. God's Kingdom First (Mark 10: 23-31)
May 6. W. Solomon's Wise Choice (1 Kings 3: 4-12)
May 7. T. Service in the Kingdom (Luke 5: 1-11)
May 8. F. Our Lord's Care (John 15: 1-8)
May 9. S. God's Care for Us (Psalm 40: 1-8)
May 10. S. A Very Present Help (Psalm 46: 1-11)

Time.—During the Galilean ministry, probably in A.D. 27, or shortly thereafter.

Place.—Possibly Mount Hattin, or some mountain in that vicinity.

Persons.—Jesus, his disciples, and the multitudes.

Introduction

The Sermon on the Mount, from which this lesson is taken, is an orderly and thorough discussion of the principles of the kingdom of heaven. The entire sixth chapter of Matthew is devoted to a discussion of the essence of the kingdom with respect to our relation to God. In the first eighteen verses of the chapter, Jesus shows that the secret devotion of the heart, rather than the outward acts of religion, is that which counts with God; and in the remainder of the chapter, he shows that undivided trust in God is absolutely essential to an acceptance with him.

Jesus did not set forth an elaborate economic system, and yet the very foundation of his social teaching contains certain ethical and economic principles which are as vital as they are advanced. These principles, however, are presented so incidentally

and elusively that the readers of the gospel narratives often fail to recognize them. They are set forth in the Lord's answer to searching questions which were presented to him in chance conversations, in direct inquiries, and in his parables.

By far the majority of his parables deal with the question of money, in one way or another; and it has been estimated that one verse out of six of the gospel records is concerned with the same subject. Four reasons for this large amount of teaching on the subject of money have been suggested. (1) The acquisition of wealth is the chief ambition of the majority of men. (2) The subject itself is of great importance, not only from the standpoint of the individual, but also of society. (3) The hot pursuit of riches was unquestionably one of the

chief barriers which prevented men from accepting the Lord's philosophy of living. (4) Jesus himself, during a part of his life, had had practical experience in the field of economics;

and, being a teacher sent from God, he approached the question, not as a mere theorist, but as one who spoke with authority on a subject which needed attention.

The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is found in the passage which serves as a basis

of our study, and it will be considered in its proper place.

The Text Explained

Trust in God *versus* Mammon Worship (Matt. 6: 19-24)

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal:" This is the negative statement of the proposition which Christ is discussing, and it in no way implies that he teaches against prudence in connection with material things, or that he is suggesting that his disciples should disregard secular duties. He wants his disciples to be able to recognize the things which are of supreme importance. He warns against worthless ideals which may be outgrown; and inasmuch as his disciples are children of eternity, rather than time, he wants them to see that it is the height of folly to devote the strength of life to the gathering of treasures which cannot be converted into the currency of the country to which they are going.

Those who lay up treasures upon the earth not only run the risk of losing them to moth, rust, and thieves, but, and what is more important, they are themselves imperiled. Cf. 1 Tim. 6: 9, 10. It is interesting to note that the original word for "consume" is the same word which is used of the hypocrites who "disfigure" their faces, that they may be seen of men to fast. (6: 16.) The moth and rust cause these earthly treasures to "disappear," just as the hypocrites caused their natural appearance to disappear.

"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:" This is the positive statement of the proposition, and this is where Jesus wants us to place the emphasis. The wrong is not in the gathering of wealth as such, but in the use we make of it after it comes

into our possession. Cf. Luke 12: 13-21; 16: 9-13. The statement, "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness," gives us some idea of the manner in which God wants his people to use their material possessions. Cf. 1 Tim. 6: 17-19.

"For where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also." It is a well known fact that devotion to any cause will leave an indelible mark upon the character. And if the treasure of any person is subject to deterioration, the heart which is in it will be liable to the same fate. The Lord's warning therefore is not that a man may lose the things for which he lives; but that he may actually lose himself. Cf. Matt. 16: 26.

"The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!" This passage contains a brief allegory which illustrates the lesson of verses

19-21. The use of the physical eye is evidently intended to teach a lesson regarding the spiritual eye. As long as a man's physical eye is sound, that is, is functioning properly, he has a clear view of the things which are about him, and his inward man, so to speak, is full of light. Just so with the spiritual man. When a person is characterized by a single purpose—to be well-pleasing to God, 2 Cor. 5: 9—, his spiritual eye is sound, and he has clear views regarding the relative importance and value of things, both temporal and eternal. Cf. 2 Cor. 4: 16-18. But if the heart looks with a double interest upon both earthly and heavenly treasures, the result is a double-minded man, and his life is thereby spoiled. Cf. James 1: 5-8.

The man, then, who lays up treas-

ures in heaven is the man who has his eye "singled" to God's glory, and who sees things in their true relationship to each other and to God. But the man whose interest is divided between heaven and earth will not be able to see things in their true relationship, and will lay emphasis upon the wrong thing—he will lay up treasures upon the earth. Anyone can easily determine to which class he belongs by this simple test: "Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. 7: 20.)

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." This verse illustrates the preceding lesson on a divided interest. Jesus assumes that man must have a master, and that he has the power to choose the one whom he will serve. Mammon is represented as the god of riches, and is set over against Jehovah in making claims upon the devotion and service of men. But since the interests of God and mammon are diametrically opposed to each other, it is utterly impossible for anyone, to serve them both at the same time. They both promise to care for those who serve them, but God demands our supreme love and undivided devotion; and unless we give them both to him, it is certain that we cannot please him. In making the choice between God and mammon, we should remember that God is eternal, while mammon goes no further than time. There is every reason therefore why we should place our undivided trust in our heavenly Father. But it is astonishing that so many professed Christians who, in the face of this plain teaching by Jesus, attempt to serve both God and mammon.

Trust in God *versus* Anxious Care (Matt. 6: 25-32)

"Therefore I say unto you," That which is to follow must be understood in the light of the impossibility of double service; and lest anyone should get the idea that only those who have amassed an earthly fortune, or are busily engaged in doing so, are guilty of a failure to trust in God, Jesus, in this section, proceeds to show that the poor themselves are in danger of sinning in the same way.

The anxiety regarding earthly goods which seems to be out of reach, such as food, drink, and clothing, and the attitude of avarice manifested by those who have acquired earthly riches, or are busily engaged in doing so, spring from the same root, namely, a lack of confidence in God. Those who manifest these attitudes appraise earthly goods above the spiritual. Both avarice and anxiety lead away from God; and both darken the eye of the soul, so that it cannot perceive spiritual verities.

"Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment?" The term "anxious" is used in the sense of worry or over-anxiety. Jesus names two general objects of anxiety, namely, life (its prolongation) and the body (its comforts or needs); and his exhortation in this passage gives the first reason for not being anxious about them. Seven other reasons are to follow. Adam Clarke asks, "Can he who gave us our body, and breathed into it the breath of life, before we could ask them from him, refuse us that which is necessary to preserve both, and when we ask it in humble confidence?" Mammon can supply only the food, but God gives the life; mammon can furnish only clothing, but God gives the body. Jesus teaches us that by observing single-mindedness we can find peace, for God is to be relied upon; but if doublemindedness is the rule of our life we can only fall to worrying, for mammon may fail to supply the things which we feel we need.

"Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?" This is the Lord's second reason for not being anxious about the necessities of life. Birds don't worry, but people do. Birds are only creatures, but the Lord's people are his redeemed children; and Jesus asks, "Are not ye of much more value than they?" The conduct of the birds should put many Christians to shame.

"And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the

measure of his life?" This is the third reason. If anyone thinks that anxiety can help him in getting that which he wants, let him try to increase the measure of his life, either by raising his height or extending the length of his days. Instead of finding that kind of help, many people have discovered the ill effects of the auto-intoxication which results from unnecessary worrying. Prayer, and not worry, is what we need.

"And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 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?" This is the fourth reason. It is true that the lilies do not toil nor spin, but they do perform that for which they were created; and the Lord's argument is that if we do that which God has ordained for us, he will supply our needs just as he does for the lilies. The magnificence of Solomon is proverbial, especially in the east. He is regarded as representing the highest earthly grandeur; but Jesus says that the lily of the field surpasses him in glory. The comparison is further heightened by the Lord's reference to the brief life of the grass of the field. Bengel notes that *"O ye of little faith"* is the only term of reproach which Jesus applied to his disciples.

"Be not therefore anxious, saying. What shall we eat? or. What shall we drink? or. Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek;" This is the fifth reason for not being anxious. Christians have a heavenly Father who has promised to supply their needs, and they should not therefore live as the people do who do not regard God as their Father. Cf. Matt. 7: 7-11; Heb. 13: 5, 6; Phil. 4: 19.

"For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." The sixth reason. This statement has been called the panacea for anxiety. God himself pronounces food, drink, and clothing essential to the welfare of his children, and it is certain that a benevo-

lent Father will not withhold them from those who trust in him. *"In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. . . . And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 4: 6, 19.)

The Basis for Our Trust in God (Matt. 6: 33, 34)

At this point in our study of the subject of trusting in God, a question naturally arises, namely, Do the Scriptures offer any solid ground upon which we may erect the structure of our confidence? The answer is clearly given in this section of our lesson; and it is certain that there is no other statement which more distinctively expresses the will of Christ regarding the conduct of his people than this one. It is the Lord's definition of the chief good which is within the reach of all men, and especially those who follow him. There are other statements of Jesus which may be regarded as ruling principles of life, but they are only parts of this simple and sublime utterance. It has been called the *"secret of Jesus,"* the clue which he put into the hands of men to guide them through the labyrinth of life.

Many of the far-reaching principles announced by Jesus were spoken in opposition to the scribes and Pharisees of his day; but in the instance now before us he passed beyond the ideas of any sect or class of men, and set forth his own estimate of the chief aim in life in contrast with that which men consider first. *"In his moral perspective the desirable things of life are arranged in a startlingly new order, and with a surprisingly strong emphasis. He places first what men degrade to a very subordinate position. In the foreground, as men's highest and best good, he sets the quest for the kingdom of God."* Every man who would be successful in any undertaking must have something before him which he always considers to be of the highest importance. It will do little good for one to resolve not to worry, if that is all that he does about it. When the demons of worry, anxiety, and fear have been evicted, something better must take their places, if one is to remain free from

them. Cf. Matt. 12: 43: 45.

"But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The seventh reason. Here is the Lord's plan of putting first things first. This is the great objective of everyone who would be pleasing to God. Everything else must be made subordinate to this goal, if the greatest good is to be realized. The kingdom of God which we are to seek is a great ideal which finds full expression in the New Testament. It is God's government for his people; and for one to seek his kingdom, therefore, is equivalent to the effort to bring himself into complete harmony with the divine will.

Righteous, in a broad sense, is the state of one who is as he ought to be; the condition which is acceptable to God. Cf. Matt. 3: 15. The righteousness of the kingdom has been discussed by Jesus in this sermon at

great length (see Matt. 5: 17-6: 32), and here he exhorts men to seek to attain it. His gracious promise to all who do seek first God's kingdom, and his righteousness, is that they will have the necessities of life—food, drink, and clothing—which are essential to the life of every person.

"Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." This is eighth and final reason which Jesus gives here for putting one's trust in God. The burdens of one day are enough for anyone to bear. When people learn to put their trust in God, they soon come to see the folly of borrowing trouble for the future. Only God knows about the future; and he is amply able to take care of any situation which may arise. Therefore to worry about the future is to distrust God.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Give something of the setting of the lesson from the standpoint of the context.

Why is trust in God essential to an acceptance with him?

What was the attitude of Jesus toward economic principles?

Why did he teach so much on the subject of material possessions?

Trust in God *versus* Mammon Worship

Why did Jesus tell his hearers not to lay up treasures upon the earth?

Is it wrong for Christians to have large possessions? Give reasons for your answer.

What is the significance of the term "consume"?

How does the Lord want his people to use their wealth?

How can they make friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness?

Why is one's heart where his treasure is?

What is the purpose of the allegory of the lamp of the body?

What does it mean to have a "single" or an "evil" eye?

How may one determine his own attitude toward these things?

Why can't a man serve two masters?

Who or what is mammon?

Why can't a person serve both God and mammon?

Why do so many professed Christians attempt to do this?

Trust in God *versus* Anxious Care

What is the force of the expression "Therefore I say unto you"?

Wherein lies the danger of sin by failing to trust in God?

What is the meaning of "anxious" and how is it applied here?

How does Jesus reason regarding the needs of life and the body?

What is the lesson regarding the birds?

Why ask, "Are not ye of much more value than they?"

Show how anxiety cannot help in securing the needs of the body?

What ill effects are often seen in those who are overly anxious?

What is the lesson of the lilies? and of the grass of the field?

Why say, "O ye of little faith"?

What is the essential difference between God's children and "Gentiles"?

How do God's people manifest this difference?

What is the divine panacea for all anxiety?

The Basis for Our Trust in God

What question naturally arises at this point in our study?

Discuss the importance of the Lord's statement in verse 33.

How does his teaching differ from that of the world?

Why must every successful person have a worthy goal before him?

What does it mean to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness?

What is God's kingdom? Discuss fully.

What is God's righteousness? and how may one attain it?

What is the Lord's promise to those who make this quest?

Why not be anxious for the morrow? and how does one do this?

Why say, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof"?

Lesson VII for Sunday, May 17, 1959

INSTRUCTION AND ADMONITION

Lesson Text

Matt. 7: 12-27

12 All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets.

13 Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby.

14 For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it.

15 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves.

16 By their fruits ye shall know them. Do *men* gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the

kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day. Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

24 Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock:

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock.

26 And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand:

27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof.

Golden Text.—*"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."* (Luke 6: 31.)

Devotional Reading.—Matt. 6: 24-34.

Daily Bible Readings

May 11. M.	Righteous and Wicked (Psalm 1: 1-6)
May 12. T.	Sin of Covetousness (Luke 12: 13-21)
May 13. W.	Warning Against Drunkenness (Isa. 28: 1-10)
May 14. T.	Lawlessness Condemned (Isa. 42: 18-25)
May 15. F.	Pursuit of Wisdom (Prov. 2: 1-8)
May 16. S.	Noble Example (Dan. 1: 8-21)
May 17. S.	Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 16-26)

Time.—During the Galilean ministry, probably in A.D. 27, or shortly thereafter.

Place.—Possibly Mount Hattin, or some mountain in that vicinity.

Persons.—Jesus, his disciples, and the multitudes.

Introduction

Our lesson for today begins with what is commonly known as the Golden Rule. The passage which contains this rule is the last verse of that section of the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus discusses the righteousness of the kingdom. The

particular point of that general subject which is discussed in this immediate context is the essence of the righteousness of the kingdom with respect to our relationship to our fellow men. It will greatly aid our understanding of the great rule if

we keep in mind the lessons of the eleven verses which immediately precede it; for verse 12 is a broad summary, not only of what is said in verses 1-11, but of the law and the prophets.

Verse 13 of the lesson for today marks the beginning of the third and final section of the Sermon on the Mount. This section is concerned with exhortations regarding entrance into and progress within the kingdom; and if one will read it carefully, he will see that it contains four parts, namely, (1) choosing a road, 13, 14; (2) a timely warning, 15-20; (3) spurious discipleship, 21-23; and (4) the need for a solid foundation, 24-27. The more one studies the Sermon on the Mount, the more he will see the orderliness of its arrangement.

This last study in the Sermon on the Mount, for the present, can be made the occasion for a summary of

the entire message in an effort to fix the Lord's teaching securely in our minds. It has already been pointed out that the kingdom had not been established at the time Jesus delivered the sermon, but these are the basic principles which underlie the kingdom. In the first sixteen verses Jesus tells what kind of people will be in the kingdom and their relationship to the world. The second, and by far the longest, section of the sermon is devoted to the righteousness of the kingdom, with special emphasis on (1) its relation to the law; 5: 17-19; (2) the difference between the Lord's righteousness and that of the scribes and Pharisees, 5: 20-48; (3) the essence of the righteousness of the kingdom with reference to God, 6: 1-34; and its essence with reference to man, 7: 1-12. And then, as already noted, exhortations regarding entrance into and progress within the kingdom, 7: 13-27.

The Golden Text

Inasmuch as the golden text for today is Luke's record of that which is found in Matthew, we shall con-

sider this portion of the lesson in the regular order of the text.

The Text Explained

A Rule to Live By (Matt. 7: 12)

"All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets."

The general idea of the Golden Rule has long appealed to humanity. Many great leaders have attempted to give expression to it; but it remained for Jesus to state the ideal in its most comprehensible form. Some of the attempts at formulating the basic principle of this great rule bear some resemblance to the manner in which Jesus expressed it; but when they are considered in the light of the teaching of Jesus, it will be seen that there is a profound difference between them. Practically all of the uninspired statements are negative and passive, while the one by Jesus is positive and active. And, too, the motive in the statements by men is more or less selfish, while that of Jesus looks to the positive good of others.

The teaching of Christ is above all things practical. The ultimate aim

is not to gratify intellectual curiosity by unveiling divine mysteries, but to give men guidance for their daily lives. Religious knowledge, if God is to be pleased, must issue forth in genuine goodness of character and conduct. The ideal expressed by Jesus can be of real benefit to us, only as we are willing to apply it in our own lives. We must learn to live daily by the Golden Rule, which means that we must strive to order all our social relationships according to its spirit.

Sometimes people are heard to say that if one lives by the Golden Rule he will be saved, but it is obvious that they have failed to grasp the scope of this precept. Man has a threefold duty: (1) to himself, (2) to his fellow men, and (3) to God. The rule which we are considering here does not cover all behavior or conduct. It has nothing to say of a man's private attitude and relation to God. There is nothing said about our behavior when we are alone, and this means that there is in this precept nothing in the nature of spiritual

discipline. It is primarily for the regulation of our relationships with our fellow men. And even this must be done according to the general teaching of Christ.

Jesus said in an earlier part of this sermon that he did not come to destroy the law or the prophets: his purpose was not to destroy, but to fulfil. That was the first thing he said as he began his discussion of the righteousness of the kingdom; and now he closes that section of the sermon, he says, "For this is the law and the prophets." The meaning is that in this statement is condensed all that is required in the law and the prophets regarding our duty to our fellow men.

Choosing a Road (Matt. 7: 13, 14)

Most well ordered sermons are characterized by exhortations and admonitions, especially near their close. After having instructed the hearers, the preacher urges the auditors to accept that which has been presented. This is the plan which Jesus follows in the sermon now under consideration. The first thing he does in this section of the sermon is to ask the people to choose a road.

"Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby" It makes no difference which way one chooses to travel, the way must be entered through a gate. First the gate, and then the way. The use of the term "gate" here is obviously a figurative expression. The reference is evidently to the method of access to, or entrance into, the way which the Lord has ordained for his people.

Jesus has just been discussing the nature of his kingdom; and since he came to seek and save the lost, he is anxious for every person to pass through the gate into the way which will lead to eternal life. The exhortation to enter by the "narrow gate" is timely. All men must pass through one or the other of two gates—the narrow or the wide; and unless one is very careful, he will find that it is much easier to enter the wide gate than it is the narrow one.

The broad way is described as the way of the many. It is the way which is most manifest and obtru-

sive, and the nearest to us naturally. It is entered by a gate which is wide and most inviting, so far as the world is concerned. In fact, so "wide is the gate" that one may pass through it without hardly realizing that it is there. The way is called broad because those who walk in it follow their own inclinations; they do as they please, and think that they are enjoying liberty! It is alluring at first; and many who travel it seldom realize that they are in reality captives. Cf. John 8: 34; 2 Tim. 2: 25, 26.

"For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it." No one can read the Sermon on the Mount without being impressed with the frankness of Jesus. He makes no secret of the conditions of discipleship; and he makes no attempt to picture the Christian life in gay and attractive colors. The entrance into the way of life is called narrow because all who pass through it must act definitely and decisively; no one can drift through it by chance. No one can obey the Lord by accident. Cf. Rom. 6: 17, 18; John 6: 44, 45.

When one passes through the narrow gate he enters into a way which is called "straitened" which, in its literal sense, means narrow or contracted; but metaphorically, as used in the text, it signifies a way which is characterized by trouble, affliction, and distress. Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 12. But we must all remember that the Lord will always give help to those who are sincerely trying to please him. Cf. Phil. 4: 13, 19; 1 Cor. 10: 13.

Some Timely Warnings and Exhortations (Matt. 7: 15-27)

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves." It is easy to see that the Lord's teaching regarding the straitened way would be very unpopular with most people who are not truly consecrated to him; and since time-serving prophets (preachers of smooth things) would endeavor to persuade men that it is not necessary for them to be too particular about their religious convictions and practices, it was timely, indeed, for Jesus to give expression to these words of warning.

"By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them. These false teachers look like sheep, but they act like wolves. Their purpose, of course, is to gain the confidence of the people and influence them accordingly. The original word for "ravening" is the same from which we have "extortioners" in 1 Cor. 5: 10; 6: 10, and the meaning is *one who snatches away*. Cf. Acts 20: 28-30.

False teachers, as well as true, are always known by their fruits. Their fruits are not their doctrines alone, but the practical effects of their teachings—the fruits which those who accept their teachings bring forth in their lives. Cf. Acts 2: 42. "Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them" is a criterion which never fails. Any person, then, who makes any change in the Lord's teaching is a "false prophet," and his final destiny is eternal punishment. Cf. Gal. 1: 6-9.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." False teaching, which the Lord has just warned against, naturally results in spurious disciples; and so Jesus makes it plain that a simple profession of loyalty to him will not suffice for entrance into the kingdom of heaven, that is, into heaven at the last day. An impressive example of this is found in the Lord's discourse regarding the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming of Christ. See Matt. 25: 11, 12.

"Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works?" This verse is an illustration of that which is said in the preceding verse, and the lesson is this, A mere profession of loyalty which is accompanied by the performance of deeds, however great

they may be, will not avail, unless such is the will of God. *That day* is the judgment day, and Jesus makes it plain here that those who cried, "Lord, Lord," had not been idle. The form of the negative, as Vincent points out, is used in such a way as to expect an affirmative answer; while the whole scene pictures both the self-conceit and the self-deception of those addressed by Jesus.

The double use of "Lord" probably suggests surprise, as if they shall exclaim, "What, Lord: How is this? Are we to be disowned? Surely you know that we have prophesied [preached], etc., by thy name." The three-fold repetition of the question, each time in the same form, expresses in the liveliest manner the astonishment of the speakers at the attitude the Lord now assumes toward them. There will be many such surprises at the judgment, and the only way that men can be sure that they are doing the Lord's will is to follow his word to the letter.

"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." This is the Lord's final verdict, and it contains: (1) An open declaration that he had never recognized or endorsed them as his disciples; and this, in spite of their claim of intimacy with him, which was all the worse for them; for they could have known and should have done better. Cf. Luke 19: 22, 23; 2 Tim. 2: 19. (2) A command to depart from him. Cf. Matt. 25: 41, 46a. (3) A reason for the verdict, namely, "ye that work iniquity." The term "iniquity" means, according to Thayer, the condition of one without law—either because he is ignorant of it, or because he violates it. Cf. Luke 12: 47, 48; 1 John 3: 4. The word also means, according to Thayer, contempt for and violation of law, and wickedness.

It is evidently in the first sense that the term is to be understood in the passage now before us. Their aim was not wickedness in contrast with righteousness (2 Cor. 6: 14); they simply acted without law or the Lord's authority, whether intentional or not. Any teaching or practice therefore which does not have the Lord's endorsement will result in one's being guilty of iniquity. This is true whether in ignorance or not.

It would be difficult to find a more serious statement than that which the Lord made in verses 21-23.

"Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof."

These words form the closing part of Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount. Great crowds had heard the Lord deliver this sermon; and they had listened to him in astonishment. However, as he reached his conclusion he told them, and he tells us, that it is not enough to listen, even though it is with reverent approval. If our hearing is to benefit us, it must lead to action; and to illustrate this, Jesus told the story of the two builders whose houses were tested by the storm.

Jesus, in this parable, recognizes that every man is a builder, and he emphasizes the supreme importance of the foundation upon which the building rests. Furthermore, he points out that the day of testing is

not one of sunshine, but one of tempest and storm. But there is no need for fear on the part of the wise builder; for those who build upon the teaching of Christ will find that what they build will stand unmoved. But those who build upon other foundations will find that their buildings will be swept away. Those who build upon that which Jesus teaches, build for eternity; and there is no storm which can destroy their building. Cf. 1 Cor. 3: 10-15.

And so the Sermon on the Mount ends with a warning to men individually. Each one must hear and obey the teaching of Jesus, if he is to withstand the testing time. The Lord shows clearly in this conclusion that it is not always necessary to close a sermon with words of consolation; for this discourse, which had made such a profound impression upon those who heard it, ended with the tragic fall of the house on the sand like the crack of a giant oak in the forest. Jesus did not attempt to smooth over the final outcome of those who are not willing to render implicit obedience to his word.

A single soul, in the estimation of Jesus, is worth more than the entire world (Matt. 16: 26), and it follows therefore, as Godet observes, that a single lost soul is a great ruin in the eyes of God. The Lord's method here reminds us of a similar effort on the part of one of his greatest followers. See Acts 24: 24, 25.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

At what particular point in the Lord's sermon does this lesson begin?
How does verse 12 stand related to the first 11 verses of the chapter?
How is verse 13 related to the sermon?
What are the divisions of the third section of the sermon?
Give a comprehensive outline of the entire Sermon on the Mount.

A Rule to Live By

Is there any material difference between Matthew's and Luke's statement of the Golden Rule? Discuss fully.
Was Jesus the first to state the principle of this rule? Give reasons for your answer.
What is the principal difference between the Lord's statement of the rule, and that by other teachers?
What was the Lord's purpose in giving the Golden Rule? and how can it benefit us?

What about the statement that if one lives by this rule he will be saved?

In what sense is the Golden Rule "the law and the prophets"?

Choosing a Road

What is the first thing that Jesus does in the last section of the sermon? Why?
How does anyone enter the way which he travels?
Why the exhortation to enter in "by the narrow gate"?
Why is the other way called the "broad" way?

What are some of its characteristics?

Why is the gate into the way of life called "narrow"? and the way "straitened"?

Why is it impossible for one to obey the Lord by accident?

Some Timely Warnings and Exhortations

Why the warning against false prophets? and who are they?
How may one always know whether or not a teacher is false?
What is the meaning of "ravening"?
What is the natural result of false teachers?

What is the point in the Lord's statement in verse 21? An example of it?
 What will some say "in that day"? and what day?
 Was the cry of Lord. Lord, the plea of idle professors. Give reasons for your answer.
 Why the double use of "Lord"?
 What did Jesus say his final verdict would be? and why?
 What is the meaning of "workers of iniquity"?
 Is it possible for people today to work iniquity? How?
 Why did Jesus close his sermon with a parable?

What obligation always rests upon those who hear the word of God?
 Why is every responsible person a builder?
 Why is the foundation so important?
 Why is the testing made in storm rather than in sunshine?
 What important lesson does Jesus teach regarding the closing part of a sermon?
 What is the most important point in preaching?
 In what way did Paul imitate the Lord's method of preaching?
 What is your general observation along this line?

Lesson VIII for Sunday, May 24, 1959

WORKS OF JESUS

Lesson Text Matt. 8: 14-27

14 And when Je'-sus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother lying sick of a fever.

15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she arose, and ministered unto him.

16 And when even was come, they brought unto him many possessed with demons: and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all that were sick:

17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken through i-sa'-iah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases.

18 Now when Je'-sus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

19 And there came a scribe, and said unto him, Teacher, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

20 And Je'-sus said unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven *have* nests; but the Son

of man hath not where to lay his head.

21 And another of the disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

22 But Je'-sus saith unto him, Follow me; and leave the dead to bury their own dead.

23 And when he was entered into a boat, his disciples followed him.

24 And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the boat was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

25 And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Save, Lord; we perish.

26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

27 And the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?

Golden Text.—"Jesus of Nazareth . . . went about doing good." (Acts 10: 38.)

Devotional Reading.—Isa. 61: 1-3.

Daily Bible Readings

May 18. M..... Leper Healed (Matt. 8: 1-4)
 May 19. T..... Servant Healed (Matt. 8: 5-13)
 May 20. W..... Sea Calmed (Mark 4: 33-41)
 May 21. T..... Ruler's Daughter Healed (Matt. 9: 18-26)
 May 22. F..... Helping the Sorrowing (John 11: 33-44)
 May 23. S..... Helping the Perplexed (Luke 24: 13-27)
 May 24. S..... King to Serve (Isa. 61: 1-3)

Time.—Probably A.D. 27 or 28.

Place.—Capernaum and the Lake of Galilee.

Persons.—Jesus, his disciples, Peter's mother-in-law, and others.

Introduction

It is not practical for a work of this nature to attempt to present in chronological order the events in this part of the Lord's ministry. If one reads Matthew's account alone, with no regard for Mark and Luke, it appears that the first evangelist is giving a connected narrative and closely following a chronological order. But a careful study of the three records together will reveal that neither of the evangelists follows a strictly chronological pattern. Possibly Mark comes nearer doing that than either of the other two.

No one, however, should be disturbed because these inspired writers failed to follow a chronological order in their narratives; for it is evident that such was not their purpose. The portion of scripture which serves as our text for this lesson is a part of a section of Matthew's record contained in 8: 1-9: 34. This section is a demonstration of the power of Jesus to meet human needs. J. W. McGarvey, in summing up the argument of Matt. 8: 1-9: 34, says:

"The obvious purpose of Matthew in the preceding section is to present miraculous proofs of the claims of Jesus. The fact that his word was attended by divine power is proof that he spoke by divine authority. He is represented as making this argument himself in the case of the paralytic (9: 5, 6), and it is Matthew's argument throughout the section. The demonstration is manifold, including the miraculous cure of six diseases—leprosy, paralysis, fever, chronic female hemorrhage, blindness, and dumbness. It includes also the expulsion of demons, the stilling of a tempest at sea, and the raising of the dead. All the ills to which humanity is exposed—the diseases of the flesh, the dangers of land and sea, the dominion of demons, and the power of death—are proved to be alike under the control of Jesus, and they are all controlled for the good of man. The benevolent *purpose* of his mission is demonstrated at the same time with its divine origin."

The Golden Text

"Jesus of Nazareth . . . who went about doing good." These words are taken from the sermon which Peter preached at the house of Cornelius, the first time that a gospel message was delivered to a Gentile audience. The good works which Jesus performed, as we have already seen, constituted a part of the over-all program which God had ordained for him. The record of this program is graphically set forth in Luke 4. Jesus had entered upon his great Galilean ministry, during which these deeds were done, and had come "to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read."

The passage which he selected that day was the first part of Isa. 61, the passage which serves as our devotional reading for today. The congregation was astonished at the selection which he made, since it was all in the first person singular, and the young carpenter offered no ex-

planation. It sounded as if he was making the words of the prophet his own. However, the people did not have to wonder long; for Jesus himself, after a moment of tense silence, having closed the book and sat down, calmly announced, "To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears."

So he did mean that which he seemed to imply; and he thereby announced his coming into the world as a benefactor of humanity. No one in the congregation that day could go home complaining that the service had been "dull as usual," for it turned out to be a near-lynching. From that day forward Jesus was a man to be watched. Unfortunately for us, our minds are so diverted by the violent impact of the words of Jesus upon his fellow townsmen, with its dramatic sequel, that we tend to overlook the words themselves. Why did Jesus select this passage? Obviously, because it describes to perfection his mission upon the earth.

The Text Explained

Miracles in Capernaum

(Matt. 8: 14-17)

"And when Jesus was come into

Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother lying sick of a fever." We learn from John 1: 44 that the home

of Peter was in Bethsaida, which was probably a suburb of Capernaum; or it may have been that Peter had moved from Bethsaida into Capernaum; for there can be little doubt that the events of this lesson took place in Capernaum. See Matt. 3: 5ff.

The text is very specific regarding the fact that Peter was a married man, and that his mother-in-law was living in his home, at least, she was there at the time of this lesson, and was lying sick of a fever." Furthermore, after years of service in the kingdom of Christ, we read: "Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" (1 Cor. 9: 5.) Cephas, of course, was Peter. The papal doctrine of clerical celibacy finds no example in Peter, as, indeed, that system finds no example in him for any of its peculiar doctrines.

"And he touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she arose, and ministered unto him." Luke is more graphic: "And Simon's wife's mother was holden with a great fever; and they besought him for her. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she rose up and ministered unto them." (Luke 4: 38b, 39.) The "great fever" indicates a burning or violent fever. But regardless of its greatness, the fever fled at the touch of Jesus, after having been rebuked by him. No convalescent period was necessary: the woman's recovery was complete; for she arose and ministered unto Jesus and those with him.

"And when even was come, they brought unto him many possessed with demons: and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all that were sick." The reason why the people waited until even to bring the sick unto Jesus is seen in the fact that the day on which Jesus healed Peter's wife's mother was the sabbath, which ended "when the sun did set." Jesus and his disciples had attended the meeting at the synagogue before going into the house of Simon and Andrew; "and at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were sick, and them that were possessed with demons. And

all the city was gathered together at the door." See Mark 1: 29-34. The size of the crowd and the immediate and complete cures made the possibility of fake healing impossible.

There was a period during the history of the world, especially during the time of Christ and the apostles, when demons, that is, wicked spirits dwelt in people. Both the origin and the exact nature of these emissaries of Satan are unknown to us. It should always be kept in mind that they were "demons" and not "devils." There is only one being revealed in the Bible who is called "devil," and that is Satan. See Rev. 12: 9. Some have thought that the demons of the New Testament period were the spirits of the wicked dead who returned to torment men, but there is no direct evidence to justify this conclusion. It is enough for us to accept the fact that demons or evil spirits did dwell in some people then, and that they were frequently driven out by divine power; but there is no proof that people are afflicted with that same type of spirits today. We do not know when they began to dwell in people, or when they ceased to do so; but we have the word of God to tell us that men were thus afflicted in New Testament times.

"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases." This quotation is from Isa. 53: 4, although not literally rendered. The original words were spoken with reference to the sacrifice of Christ for our sins, and they were fulfilled in that high sense when Jesus died on the cross; but they were also fulfilled in a secondary sense when the Lord sympathized with people in their afflictions and healed their diseases. The term "bare" is significant; he acted because he felt.

The Imperial Claims of Christ (Matt. 8: 18-22)

"Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side." The crowds were those who gathered about him because of the teaching of Jesus and the miracles he performed. So, in order to get away from the people, Jesus gave commandment to enter into a boat and

cross the Sea of Galilee to the eastern side. This was an easy method of escape, and it was no doubt frequently employed by the Lord, although he was sometimes followed by the people. See John 6: 1-25.

"And there came a scribe, and said unto him, Teacher, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." There was apparently no reservation or limit to this proposal. Such an unconditional surrender and offer of allegiance were the very things which Christ demands of those who would be his disciples. See Matt. 16: 24-26; Luke 14: 25-33. What, then, was the Lord's reply to this offer to follow him?

"And Jesus saith unto him. The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." This answer was not a rebuff, in the ordinary sense of that term, but was evidently intended to lay before the potential follower a peculiarity attaching itself to the Lord's service which the man had not sufficiently, if at all, considered. It was as if Jesus were saying to him, "Now will you come? are you willing to pay the price? will you still say, 'I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest?'"

The reply which Christ gave to this man reveals him as being characterized by an inconsiderate impulse, one who was easily swayed by the feelings of the moment. Such a person would easily fall a victim to any sudden impulse. He could not be depended upon to remain steadfast in the face of a crisis. People of this character are frequently led to utter words of tremendous import, without realizing their implication. Cf. Luke 14: 28-30; Matt. 13: 20, 21. Jesus, in effect, flung this man back upon himself and bade him reflect.

"And another of the disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus saith unto him, Follow me; and leave the dead to bury their own dead." The term "another" suggests that the scribe of verse 19 was also a disciple, but it is evident that he was not a regular follower. Luke represents Jesus as requesting this second man to follow him. See Luke 9: 59. If Matthew and Luke are referring to the same individual, then we have a

situation which is almost the exact opposite of the one which we have just considered. The one now before us apparently was willing to follow Jesus, if he were first allowed to take care of that which he considered another duty.

Whether the man's father was actually dead at the time when Jesus spoke to him, or whether he was merely requesting that he be permitted to remain with him until he did die, is neither clear nor important to the understanding of the lesson. That which the man in effect was saying was that other duties took precedence over the demands of Christ. This idea is not peculiar to that man or to his age; it is still characteristic of people today. His trouble was the same in principle as that of the rich young ruler. See Mark 10: 17-22.

There are times in the lives of people when even such duties as burying one's father must be subordinated to a more imperious call. Cf. Matt. 10: 37. Those who follow Christ must learn to put first things first. See Matt. 6: 33a. There are too many people who allow things much less sacred than burying one's father keep them from faithfully following the Lord.

The Stilling of the Tempest (Matt. 8: 23-27)

"And when he was entered into a boat, his disciples followed him." It is evident from the parallel passages in the other gospel records that the events in this section of Matthew did not follow immediately one after another. Mark places this event near the close of the day on which Christ spoke the parables of Matt. 13; Mark 4; Luke 8. "And on that day, when even was come, he saith unto them, Let us go over unto the other side. And leaving the multitude, they take him with them, even as he was, in the boat." (Mark 4: 35, 36a; cf. Matt. 13: 1-3.) The boat may have been one of the large fishing boats which belonged to one of his disciples. Cf. Luke 5: 1-3.

"And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the boat was covered with the waves: but he was asleep." Furious storms such as this one, were not uncommon on the Sea of Galilee, an inland body of water which was 682 feet below

sea level. The water-courses on the banks had cut out deep ravines which acted like great funnels in drawing down the cold air from the mountains, so that the storms were often both sudden and severe. Thomson (*The Land and the Book*) says that such winds are not only violent, but they come down suddenly, and often when the sky is perfectly clear. Cf. Matt. 14: 22ff.

The fact that Jesus could sleep amid such conditions is accounted for on the basis of the fatigue and the nervous exhaustion which he, in common with other people, experienced. He had spent the greater part of the day in the midst of those who gathered about them, and had spoken the parable which are recorded in the passages already referred to. Mark says that Jesus was in the stern, asleep on the cushion.

"And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Save, Lord; we perish." Mark's version is, "Teacher, carest thou not that we perish?" while Luke says, "Master, master, we perish." At least some of the disciples were experienced fishermen, and were accustomed to such stormy trips; but here we see them so thoroughly afraid that they cannot avoid waking their sleeping master. The disciples evidently felt that Jesus could do something to save them from the angry waters about them.

"And he saith unto them. Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" The disciples did have some faith in Jesus, but it was weak. What they needed was a faith which would make them calm and brave in the midst of difficulties. Such faith is not a mere belief in the doctrines of Christ, but an "all-confiding trust in the love of his heart, in the might

of his arm, in the truth of his word, in the rectitude of his administration, and in the benevolence of his aims."

Julius Caesar was once at sea in a little boat, so the story goes, when a terrible storm came on. He endeavored to inspire the courage of the men who were handling the oars, by telling them that their little boat bore Caesar and his fortunes. That should remind us that "no water can swallow the ship where lies the Master of ocean and earth and skies; they all shall sweetly obey thy will, Peace, be still! Peace, be still!"

"Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm." Mark says, "And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." At the word of Jesus, the sea sank to rest as if it were exhausted by its own beating. The storm was as sudden in its lull as it was in its rise; and that fact can be accounted for only on the basis of a miracle of divine power.

"And the men marvelled, saying. What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" McGarvey notes that the astonishment which these men experienced when Jesus calmed the raging sea by his word is another evidence of their weak faith. If they had realized the fulness of his divine power, they would not have been surprised at anything which he did. But the Lord adapted himself to the weakness of human faith, by working a great variety of miracles, so that even the weakest disciple would have no room to doubt that with him all things are possible. The Lord wants all of his people to feel that they can always be safe with him. Cf. 1 Cor. 10: 13.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Does accuracy in the gospel records depend upon chronological order? Give reasons for your answer.

How do we know that the evangelists did or did not follow such an order?

Give the general setting of the text of our lesson for today.

What was Matthew's purpose in this section of his narrative?

Discuss in detail the various demonstrations of power cited by Matthew.

The Golden Text

When and where were the words of the golden text first spoken?

Discuss the Lord's program of good works.

What relation does the devotional reading for today have to the lesson?

Miracles in Capernaum

Where did the events of this part of the lesson take place?

What important facts do we learn here regarding Peter? and why are they important?

Tell of the healing of Peter's wife's mother, and how long it took her to regain her strength.

Why did the people wait until "even" to bring the sick unto Jesus?

Where had Jesus and the disciples been that day?

What circumstances made fake healings impossible at that time?

What did it mean for one to be possessed by demons?

Who or what was a demon? and when did they begin and cease to dwell in people?

What prophecy did Jesus fulfill and in what sense?

What is the significance of the term "bare" in verse 17?

The Imperial Claims of Christ

Why did Jesus give commandment to depart to the other side? and the other side of what?

Discuss the scribe's offer to follow Jesus in the light of Matt. 16: 24-26; Luke 14: 25-33.

How did the Lord answer him? and why?

Why wouldn't Jesus permit another disciple to bury his father before leaving home to follow Christ?

What was this man's basic trouble?

What lesson must all who follow Christ learn?

The Stilling of the Tempest

Why were Jesus and his disciples on the Sea of Galilee at this time?

Tell something of the character and frequency of the storms on that lake.

How was it possible for Jesus to sleep amid such circumstances?

Why did the disciples awake Jesus? and what did they say to him?

In what way did Jesus reply to them?

What "degree" of faith does the Lord want his people to have? Discuss fully.

What should have made them know that the boat could not sink?

How did Jesus relieve the situation?

What caused the men to marvel? and what did that prove?

Why did Jesus adapt himself to the weakness of human faith?

How does he want all of his people to feel?

Lesson IX for Sunday, May 31, 1959

APOSTLES SENT FORTH

Lesson Text

Matt. 10: 1-15

1 And he called unto him his twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness.

2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Si'-mon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zeb'-e-dee, and John his brother;

3 Philip, and Bar-thol'-o-mew; Thomas, and Mat'-thew the publican; James the son of Al'-phae'-us, and Thad-dae'-us;

4 Si'-mon the Ca-na-nae'-an, and Ju'-das Iscar'-i-ot, who also betrayed him.

5 These twelve Je'-sus sent forth, and charged them, saying, Go not into any way of the Gen'-tiles, and enter not into any city of the Samar'-i-tans:

6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Is'-ra-el.

7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

8 Heal the sick, raise the dead,

cleanse the lepers, cast out demons: freely ye received, freely give.

9 Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses;

10 No wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff: for the laborer is worthy of his food.

11 And into whatsoever city or village ye shall enter, search out who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go forth.

12 And as ye enter into the house, salute it.

13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, as ye go forth out of that house or that city, shake off the dust of your feet.

15 Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sod'-om and G6-mor'-rah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few." (Matt. 9: 37.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 52: 7-12.

Daily Bible Readings

May 25. M..... The Apostles Encouraged (Matt. 10: 24-33)
 May 26. T..... A Prophet's Call (Jer. 1: 1-10)
 May 27. W..... The Missionary Spirit (Isa. 42: 1-9)

May 28.	T. Need for Laborers (Matt. 9: 35-38)
May 29.	F. Progress and Persecution (Acts 8: 1-8)
May 30. S.....	Counsel and Admonition (Matt. 10: 16-23)
May 31. S.....	Need for Servants (John 4: 34-38)

Time.—During the third Galilean tour, probably in A.D. 28 or 29.

Place.—Somewhere in Galilee.

Persons.—Jesus and the twelve apostles.

Introduction

We learn from Luke 6: 12, 13 that Jesus selected the twelve apostles from the group of disciples which he had gathered around him. "And it came to pass in these days, that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples; and he chose from them twelve, whom he also named apostles." The apostles therefore were disciples, but not all disciples were apostles. This distinction should be kept in mind.

The primary meaning of a disciple is a learner, a student, or one who is taught; an apostle is one who is sent on a specific mission. Jesus before returning to the Father, charged his followers to go into all the world: "and make disciples of all the nations." (Matt. 28: 19.) The practical meaning of this is to convert people to Christ, or bring those who are outside his fold into it. Any child of God can make a disciple, but only Christ could make

an apostle. Inasmuch as one of the chief duties of an apostle was to bear witness of Jesus, it was necessary therefore that the apostle see Christ. Cf. Acts 1: 21, 22; 26: 15, 16. Only Christ could commission and send forth his apostles.

The term "apostle" was not limited to the twelve, to Matthias who was appointed to take the place of Judas, and to Paul. Many others in New Testament times were called apostles. This was true because of the primary meaning of the word. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the *Apostle* and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus." Heb. 3: 1. Barnabas was not one of the twelve, but he was referred to as an apostle, Acts 14: 14, but evidently in a secondary sense. The "messengers of the churches" (2 Cor. 8: 23) were the "apostles of the churches." See the marginal reading. But our lesson for today is concerned primarily with the twelve.

The Golden Text

"Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few." These words were spoken by Jesus just before he sent the twelve on the mission of this lesson. The full statement of the context is: "And Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into the harvest." (Matt. 9: 35-38.)

As already indicated, this was the third tour which Jesus was to make

through Galilee. It appears that the twelve were set apart during the first tour, and that they accompanied him during the second; but when he was preparing for the third tour, he sent the twelve before him. The words of the golden text were spoken at or near the close of the second tour. Jesus had visited all the cities and villages of Galilee, and had witnessed the deplorable condition of the people. He was deeply stirred when he saw their spiritual needs.

As Jesus surveyed the work which was before him, he used two figures to describe the spiritual condition of the common people. (1) "As sheep not having a shepherd;" and (2) as a harvest ready for the reapers but with an insufficient number of workers to gather it in. The harassed and bewildered state of mental dejection on the part of the people was

brought about by their religious teachers who had failed to instruct them properly. They had also hindered them from accepting the teaching of Jesus (Matt. 23: 13); and had laid upon them grievous burdens to be borne (Matt. 23: 4). This dis-

tressful condition caused Jesus to be filled with compassion for the people, and furnished the occasion for the instruction and sending forth of the twelve. They were exhorted to go with a prayer for others to enter into the great harvest.

The Text Explained

The Endowment and Names of the Twelve (Matt. 10: 1-4)

"And he called unto him his twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness." This is the first time that Matthew mentions this "group of learners"; although he assumes that they had already been chosen as the Lord's special representatives. Cf. Mark 3: 14. Luke makes it plain that the twelve were chosen from the other disciples before the delivery of the Sermon on the Mount. See Luke 6: 12ff. These apostles, as has already been pointed out, were to be sent on a special mission; and they were given miraculous power and authority in order to prove that their mission was divinely authorized. Then, too, the miraculous works which they would perform would also prove that Jesus is divine; for only one who was approved of God could bestow such gifts upon men.

"Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him." There are three other lists of the original twelve found in the New Testament, namely, Mark 3: 16-19; Luke 6: 14-16; Acts 1: 13. John gives only a partial list in his gospel. Each of the four complete lists contains three groups of four each, except the one in Acts where the name of Judas is omitted. Two pairs of brothers make up the first group; and it is thought by some that James the son of Alphaeus and Judas the son of James were also brothers. The marginal reading is Judas the brother of James. See Luke 6: 16; Acts 1: 13.

It will be observed that Simon Peter stands at the head, not only of his group, but also of each list; while Judas Iscariot is at the bottom, until he drops out entirely. The primacy of Peter was not due to any special power or authority which he had over the others, but it is evident that he did enjoy a position of precedence of some sort. Cf. Matt. 16: 19. His first place in the lists of the apostles may have been due to his age, or to the fact that he was more or less the spokesman for the others because of his natural impetuosity.

There are some facts in connection with the names of the twelve apostles which merit our attention. Matthew and Mark list Thaddaeus, while Luke in his gospel and in Acts has Judas the son of James. Both were probably the two names of the same individual. Cf. John 14: 22. Matthew and Mark have Simon the Cananaean, while in Luke and Acts it is Simon the Zealot. "Zealot" is a translation into Greek of the Aramaic "Cananaean." Both terms indicate Simon's connection with the Zealot party of Galilee, a sect which stood for the recovery of Jewish freedom and the maintenance of distinctive Jewish institutions. See Vincent, *in loco*. They endeavored to punish what they regarded as flagrant offenses by taking the matter into their own hands, and attempted to justify their conduct, according to McGarvey, on the basis of the example of Phinehas as found in Num. 25.

Bartholomew's name is found in all four of the lists of the apostles already referred to, but many Bible students are of the opinion that he was the Nathanael of John 1: 45 and 21: 2, the only places in the New Testament where his name occurs. The reasons given for this view are as follows, and they at least bring the question within the realm of possibility. (1) Both passages which mention Nathanael list him with the apostles of Jesus, or with those who

became apostles. (2) In the lists of the apostles which are found in the Synoptic Gospels, Bartholomew is always placed immediately after Philip. These writers couple him with Philip in precisely the same way that Andrew is coupled with Peter, and John, with James. Cf. John 1: 45. (3) Nathanael is never mentioned by the Synoptics, and Bartholomew is not mentioned by John. It is altogether probable therefore that the two names belonged to the same man, Bartholomew being the surname, while Nathanael was his given name.

The Twelve Commissioned (Matt. 10: 5-8)

"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and charged them, saying. Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter, not into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This is popularly known as the "limited commission." Jesus himself said. "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt. 15: 24.) That refers, of course, to his earthly ministry—to that period of preparation for the world-wide mission which was to follow Pentecost. There were at least two good reasons for the Lord's limiting the twelve at this time to the Jews only. (1) They were the only people who had been prepared for such preaching as the apostles would do; and (2) the time element—"But when they persecute you in this city, flee into the next: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." (Matt. 10: 23.),

We learn from Mark (6: 7) that the apostles were sent out "by two and two," and it is possible that they are listed in the pairs in which they journeyed and labored. Although limited to their own people, the apostles could not expect a ready reception for the message which they were commanded to present. In giving them their instruction, Jesus said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to councils, and in their synagogues they will scourge you; yea and before governors and kings shall ye be brought

for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles." (Matt. 10: 16-18.)

If people who had been taught to expect the kingdom would treat its messengers in this way, then it is easy to see why they were forbidden to go to the Gentiles and the Samaritans. The Jews did not even consider the Gentiles as being entitled to the blessings which had been vouchsafed to them; and they had no dealings with Samaritans. See John 4: 9. This first mission therefore was strictly one of preparation.

"And as ye go, preach, saying. The kingdom of heaven is at hand." This was the message which John the Baptist and Jesus proclaimed; and it signified that the kingdom which Christ came to establish was soon to be set up. David had reigned as king over God's people during the Old Testament period, that is, during the time of his life; and the promise was made to him that his son would continue that reign in the latter days. Cf. Acts 2: 30, 31; Psalm 110: 1. This son, of course, was the Christ.

Jesus, however, did not permit his followers to preach that he was the promised Messiah, that is, the Christ, until after he was raised from the dead. See Luke 9: 20-22; Mark 9: 9. The work which the apostles were now to do was in preparation of the coming kingdom; but after the resurrection of Jesus he gave the "unlimited commission," and it is a noticeable fact that it contains no such prohibition. The kingdom was fully set up on the day of Pentecost, following the Lord's ascension; and no one since that day has preached, by divine authority, that the kingdom is at hand. Cf. Col. 1: 13.

"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons: freely ye received, freely give." These are the miracles which Christ empowered the apostles to perform for the purpose of confirming their word. The Lord has never asked people to believe his word which was meant for their salvation in the absence of sufficient evidence that it was from on high. Cf. Mark 16: 19. But after the kingdom of Christ was set up and the message confirmed, there was no further need for the exercise of miraculous power by man. Cf. 1 Cor. 13: 8; Eph. 4: 11-16; Jude 3; Gal. 1: 6-9.

The statement "freely ye received, freely give" has direct reference to the miraculous powers which Christ conferred upon the apostles. These powers were given to the apostles without cost to them; and they must now use them without any material gain so far as they are concerned. Such powers could be made the source of great wealth, but that would be to abuse them. Cf. Acts 8: 18-21.

Their Means of Support and Manner of Dealing with the People

(Matt. 10: 9-15)

"Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff: for the laborer is worthy of his food" These provisions were for ordinary needs and comforts, but they were not to be taken on this preaching mission. The reason for this prohibition seems to lie in the fact that the Jews to whom they were sent were God's people, the preachers were his messengers, and the work that which he had authorized to be done. God has always required his people to support his servants while they were engaged in his work. Cf. 1 Cor. 9: 13, 14.

Later on, when Jesus sent these same apostles out under the unlimited commission, this prohibition against providing for this support was removed. Cf. Luke 22: 35, 36. Under the latter commission they would often be among aliens who know nothing of nor were commanded to support the work of gospel preaching. Cf. 3 John 5-8.

"And into whatsoever city or village ye shall enter, search out who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go forth. And as ye enter, into the house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you" These heralds of the coming kingdom had a responsibility to discharge before they began their preaching in any city or village, and that was to find a suitable place for their home while there. They must search out who in it is worthy to entertain a messenger of God's word. The wisdom of this practice is still evident today. The house in which a strange preacher lodges, on entering a town or city,

according to McGarvey, often has much to do with his influence and success. An unnecessary change in one's lodging-place, while engaged in a series of gospel meetings, is often attended with some disadvantages, as every experienced evangelist knows, and Jesus exhibited a wise foresight in forbidding such changes during this hurried mission of the twelve. Cf. Luke 10: 7.

In saluting a house, the apostles probably followed the instructions Jesus gave the seventy when they were sent out. "And into whatsoever house ye shall enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him: but if not, it shall turn to you again." (Luke 10: 5, 6.) If the house into which you enter is worthy of God's peace, he will give the occupants that which you wish for them; but if the house is not worthy, then God shall give you that which they refuse, that is, the peace which you wish for them shall turn to you again.

"And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, as ye go forth out of that house or that city, shake off the dust of your feet" It has been said that the Jews considered their land so peculiarly holy, that when they returned home from any heathen country they stopped at the borders, and shook or wiped off the dust from their feet, so that the holy land might not be polluted by it. The Lord's injunction here was a lively imitation of this practice, and shows that the Jews who rejected the Lord's message by his apostles were no longer holy, but were on a level with the heathen and idolaters. Paul complied with this precept on two different occasions. See Acts 13: 51; 18: 6.

"Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city" Those who are familiar with the New Testament are aware of the fact that it is a fixed principle in the divine government that men shall be judged according to their opportunities. "And that servant who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes,

shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more." (Luke 12: 47, 48.) The sin of those who re-

jected the preaching of the twelve was not so gross in character as were the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, but it was less excusable on account of their superior opportunities. Cf. Matt. 11: 20-24.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, persons.

Introduction

From what source did the Lord select his apostles?

What is the difference between an apostle and a disciple?

What were the duties and qualifications of an apostle?

How many apostles do we read about in the New Testament? (Use your concordance and other Bible study helps.)

The Golden Text

Give the contextual setting of the golden text.

What was the occasion for making this statement?

How did Jesus picture the work which was before him?

Why were the people in such a helpless condition?

How was Jesus affected by their plight?

What exhortation did he give his apostles?

The Endowment and Names of the Twelve

Why was miraculous power given to the twelve disciples?

Give the names of the twelve apostles.

How are they arranged in the four New Testament listings of them?

Who is always at the head of each of the three groups?

What are the probable reasons for Peter's heading the entire group?

How do you account for the differences in the names found in the four listings?

What is the meaning of "Cananaean" or "Zealot"?

By what other name was Bartholomew

probably known? Give reasons for your answer.

The Twelve Commissioned

Why was this preaching tour of the twelve limited to the Jews only?

Why were they sent in pairs?

What did Jesus tell them regarding their possible reception?

What was to be the theme of their message? and what did it signify?

When was the kingdom of heaven established?

What promise had been made to David? and why?

Why did Jesus forbid his disciples to preach his Messiahship before death and resurrection?

What miraculous powers did the twelve receive? and why?

Why are miracles not needed now?

What is the meaning of "freely ye received, freely give"?

Their Means of Support and Manner of Dealing with the People

Why were the apostles not allowed to make provisions for their needs?

Why was the prohibition removed when he was preparing to send them out under the world-wide commission?

What were they to do in each city or village before beginning their preaching?

What was meant by saluting a house?

How could the peace of the apostles turn to them again if the place was unworthy?

What was meant by shaking off the dust of their feet?

Why would the sin of those who rejected their preaching be greater than that of Sodom and Gomorrah?

Lesson X for Sunday, June 7, 1959

WARNING AND INVITATION

Lesson Text

Matt. 11: 20-30

20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not.

21 Woe unto thee, Cho-ra'-zin! woe unto thee, Beth-sa'-i-da! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Si'-don which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

22 But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Si'-don in the day of judgment, than for you.

23 And thou, Ca-per'-na-um, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Ha'-des: for if the mighty works had been done in Sod'-om which were done in thee, it would have remained until this day.

24 But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sod'-om in the day of judgment, than for thee.

25 At that season Je'-sus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou

didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes:

26 Yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight.

27 All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever

the Son willeth to reveal *him*.

28 Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

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

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And the Spirit and the bride say. Come. And he that heareth, let him say. Come."* (Rev. 22: 17a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Luke 19: 41-48.

Daily Bible Readings

June 1.	M.....	Jesus Speaks of Himself (Matt. 11: 2-6)
June 2.	T.....	Jesus Speaks of John (Matt. 11: 7-19)
June 3.	W.....	Peter's Testimony of Jesus (Matt. 16: 13-20)
June 4.	T.....	A Call to Repentance (Isa. 55: 1-13)
June 5.	F.....	Offer of Mercy (Ezek. 33: 10-16)
June 6.	S.....	Messiah Promised (Isa. 61: 1-9)
June 7.	S.....	Jesus' Mission (Matt. 10: 34-38)

TIME.—Probably A.D. 27 or 28.

PLACE.—Somewhere in Galilee.

PERSONS.—The Father, Jesus, and the people who had seen his works.

Introduction

Too much emphasis cannot be placed upon the fact that one's responsibility before God will be determined, to a large extent, in the light of his opportunities. This is true because the proposition is affirmed over and over again in the New Testament. "And that servant, who knew his Lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. *And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more.* (Luke 12: 47, 48; cf. Matt. 25: 14-30.)

Some people seem to have the idea that because their abilities and opportunities are somewhat limited, they are therefore more or less free of responsibility; but that is a serious mistake. The fallacy of this idea is one of the lessons we learn from the parable of the talents. The responsibility of the man who had the least ability was great enough to result in his condemnation. In speaking of the use which people make of their

opportunities to learn the will of God, Jesus said, "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath." (Matt. 13: 12.) And again, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from my self." (John 7: 17.)

If people expect to have more opportunities for learning the will of God, they must use the ones they have; but if they are unwilling to do that, then the opportunities which they have will be taken away from them. It follows therefore that when Jesus warns people of the consequences of their failure to act in the light of their abilities and opportunities, or urges them to accept that which is set before them, he is bestowing upon them a great favor indeed. God does not want any one to be lost (2 Pet. 3: 9), but instead he wants all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4). One of the greatest lessons we can learn is to heed the Lord's warnings and accept his invitations.

The Golden Text

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come." This statement is taken from the closing chapter of the New Testament. Some Bible students hold that these words are the response of the Spirit and the bride to the Lord's promise to come quickly as expressed in verses 7 and 12 of the chapter from which the golden text is taken; but in view of the closing part of verse 17, it seems more natural and reasonable to consider the words of the Spirit and the bride, along with that of each individual hearer, as a general invitation to everyone to accept the blessings which are available for all responsible people.

The work of the Holy Spirit in the scheme of human redemption must be understood in connection with his relation with the Father and the Son. The Father designed the plan, and then sent the Son into the world to execute it. After Jesus finished his work here on the earth, he returned to the Father, and the Spirit was sent to take up his abode in the newly

established church in order to give life and direction to it. The plan to be followed in all things is that which is revealed in the New Testament. This is the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and it must be followed in all details, if God is to be pleased.

The purpose of the Book of Revelation is to give a broad outline of the struggles and final triumph of the church from the time John wrote till the earthly period is over. The blessings which are in Christ (cf. Eph. 1: 3) have been provided for all who are willing to comply with the Lord's will; and these and greater blessings will be continued in the world to come, that is, all blessings which are suitable for the society of heaven. Therefore, as the final pages of inspired revelation are being completed, the Spirit and the bride, that is, the church (cf. Eph. 5: 22f; Rev. 19: 7, 8), along with every individual that hears, join in a great invitation to all men to come to Christ and accept the wonderful blessings which have been provided for all.

The Text Explained

Woes upon the Cities of Opportunity

(Matt. 11: 20-24)

"Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not." The term "upbraid" means to accuse or reprove reproachfully. These people had had wonderful opportunities to see the error of their ways, and to turn to God; but they had declined to act. It was in response to their obstinate attitude that Jesus again emphasized the principle that one's responsibility will be measured by his opportunities. The words of the text were spoken by Jesus just before he was ready to leave Galilee and to "the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not." To bring men to repentance is one of the most difficult tasks any gospel preacher has ever had to face.

"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say

unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you." The exact locations of Chorazin and Bethsaida are not certainly known, but it is now generally believed that they were in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee. The site of Chorazin has been placed about two miles northwest of Capernaum. If this Bethsaida was the home of Andrew and Peter (John 1: 44), then it was probably a suburb of Capernaum. Both places have long since been completely destroyed.

Tyre and Sidon were cities of the ancient country of Phoenicia, and were therefore Gentile cities. Phoenicia bordered Galilee on the northwest, and the wickedness of these two cities were well known to the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida. The mighty works referred to were the miracles which Jesus performed, and which demonstrated his divinity; and this demonstration, along with his preaching, should have caused those who heard and saw to repent.

But when high privileges are disregarded, the guilty parties are made to feel less the need of repentance.

The gospel will always make people better or worse, depending, of course, upon their attitude toward it. The people of these Galilean cities had had the opportunity to see and hear the greatest of all preachers, but now, in the estimation of Jesus, they were not so susceptible to good influences as the nearby Gentile cities of Phoenicia who probably had never known the will of God. This principle still holds good, whether with respect to communities or individuals. Cf. 2 Cor. 2: 14-16. It is interesting to note that Tyre and Sidon did receive the gospel message later on, thereby verifying the words of Jesus in this text. See Acts 21: 3-6; 27: 3. The expression "more tolerable" means that those with the lesser opportunities will be more excusable. The idea is fully illustrated in Luke 12: 47, 48.

"And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Hades: for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for, the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." Jesus, near the beginning of his public ministry, left his home in Nazareth, and "came and dwelt in Capernaum." (Matt. 4: 13.) This accounts for the figure of Capernaum's being exalted unto heaven, that is, the city's opportunities were greater because of the presence and miracles of Jesus. But the exaltation, if it is disregarded, must have a corresponding degradation, hence, "thou shalt go down unto Hades." This, of course, is also a figurative expression, used to indicate the plight of lost opportunities. The city has long since been in a state of complete ruins.

In summing up the truths of this section of our lesson, we note the following: (1) Every hearer of the gospel message is either better or worse for his opportunity. (2) The "mighty works" (miracles) which Christ performed were calculated to lead men to repentance, since they demonstrated his authority to demand that men repent. (3) There is a difference among those who stand condemned at the judgment, since it shall be more tolerable for some than for others. (4) God takes

into account one's opportunities when he comes to measure his guilt. Cf. Matt. 5: 21, 22; John 9: 39-41; 15: 22-24; Rom. 2: 12.

Things Hidden and Revealed

(Matt. 11: 25-27)

"At that season Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight." If we take Matthew's account alone, it is natural to assume that these words were spoken by Jesus immediately after his pronouncement regarding the cities which had rejected him; but when we read Luke 10: 21, 22, it will be seen that they were spoken after the return of the seventy. It is possible, of course, that the same or similar words were spoken on both and other occasions. The time and place of utterance are not as important as the words themselves. But whatever the occasion, Jesus is pictured in a mood of worship; or, as someone has said, It was a momentary outburst of his continual inward communion with the Father. The marginal reading of "thank" is *praise*, which fits into the idea of worship.

Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 1: 21 is a good commentary on the passage now under consideration. "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." It has never been the divine plan that men through their wisdom should arrive at a knowledge of God's will; that is possible only by inspired revelation. "The preaching" in 1 Cor. 1: 21 means *inspired preaching*. So Jesus, in the passage now before us, praises God for the wisdom of his plan of hiding these things from the earthly wise, and revealing them unto them who are without such wisdom. Cf. Matt. 5: 3; 11; 5b.

"All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him." This statement must be understood in the

light of the context. The "wise and understanding" professed to want to know the things of God, but Jesus says that such is impossible apart from him. This is an assertion of his importance as the revealer of God, saying in effect, "The wise despise me, but they cannot do without me. Through me alone can they obtain that knowledge which they profess to desire above all things." Cf. Matt. 13: 10-17; John 14: 6; Heb. 1: 1, 2. The Son's ability to reveal the Father was made possible by having all things delivered into his hands. See Matt. 28: 18; Eph. 1: 20-23.

The Precious Invitation (Matt. 11: 28-30)

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In the preceding section, Christ appears in his relation to God. In that part of our lesson, he stands before us as the devout worshipper, the only one who has exclusive knowledge of God, and the authorized and indispensable revealer of the eternal Father. In this section, he appears in his relation to humanity. He is pictured as the divine philanthropist, as he looks with an eye of unutterable tenderness and love upon an afflicted and sin-burdened world, and graciously invites every distressed soul to come to him for rest.

When people read the four gospel records they are certain to find that the one thing which Jesus preached was himself. He made no effort to set before his hearers a ready-made system of religious truth. He simply said, "Come unto me"; "learn of me"; "follow me"; "love me"; "obey me"; "I am the good shepherd"; "I am the true vine"; "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven"; "and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself"; "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me." All of this clearly shows that Jesus regarded himself as the answer to all our needs, and that truth, morality, and true religion can be ours only in our personal relation to him.

The invitation of Jesus is addressed to people who feel their need of help. They are the ones who labor (active) and are heavy laden (passive). The burdens of life fall into two classes:

the inevitable and the self-imposed. Most of ours are self-imposed; being, as they are, brought on by carelessness, thoughtlessness, sins of the past and the present, force of evil habits which are allowed to go unchecked, by declining to exercise self-discipline, refusing to heed the wise advice of others, etc., etc.

All of this, in the final analysis, belongs to the category of sin, and it was primarily to the problem of sin that Jesus addressed himself. Sin is the basis of every burden which we bear. And as Jesus looked upon the people who were heavy laden he must have been especially distressed as he observed that they had turned their very religion into a burden. Indeed, that which was intended to give them strength to bear other burdens, they had turned into an additional load. But such is the pervasiveness of the human race.

The rest which Christ gives, as pointed out by James Hastings, is based on a perfect reconciliation to God. He gives us an eternal settlement, adjusting us to a place which we feel to be thoroughly suitable, and satisfying all in us which we feel deserves to be satisfied. He gives us rest by making life intelligible and by making it worthy; by showing us how through all its humbling and sordid conditions we can live as God's children; by delivering us from guilty fear of God and from sinful cravings; by setting us free from all foolish ambitions and by shaming us out of worldly greed and all the fret and fever that come of worldly greed; by filling our hearts with realities which still our excited pursuits of shadows; and by bringing into our spirit the abiding joy and strength of his love for us. We enter into the truest rest when we believe that he takes part with us and that we can depend upon him. In short, the rest which Christ gives is not rest from toil, but rest in toil. Cf. Isa. 26: 3; Phil. 4: 6, 7.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for, I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." A yoke, as used here, is something on the shoulders to aid one in bearing his burden. A sentimental interpretation of Christianity is always wrong; for the religion of Christ is not a cruise, but

a pilgrimage. These words of Jesus do not urge us to escape from life, but to face it in the right way. To bear a yoke is not to escape a burden; it is to learn to carry it properly. Anyone who has been on a walking tour knows the difference in comfort between a cheap, ill-adjusted knapsack, and one which is properly fitted with a frame, and adjusted to the back and shoulders.

When the weight of the burden is properly distributed, one can carry twice as much without feeling the strain; and that is what Christ means

by saying that his yoke is easy, and his burden light. As already observed, all men have burdens to bear, but some feel that they can carry theirs better with the yokes devised by men; but that is only deception. Jesus says that if we will take his yoke, we will find that it fits easily; and that when it is worn, even the big burdens seem light. Jeremy Taylor says that the yoke of Jesus is like feathers to a bird; they are not loads to be carried, but helps to motion.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction
What major factor is always taken into consideration by the Lord in determining one responsibility? Why is this true?

Why do many people of limited ability feel their lack of responsibility?

What did Jesus say about this question?
How should people regard the warnings and invitations of Jesus?

The Golden Text
Give the general setting of this golden text.

In what way does the Spirit say. Come?
Discuss the work of the Spirit in the scheme of redemption.
What is the overall purpose of the Book of Revelation?
Who is the bride?

Woes upon the Cities of Opportunity
What is the meaning of the term "upbraid?" and why did Jesus upbraid the cities of the text?

Give the probable locations of the cities in question.

What happens when high privileges are disregarded?

Why would it be more tolerable in the day of judgment for the less favored cities? and what is the meaning of "more tolerable"?

What was the peculiar situation of Capernaum?

What important lessons do we learn from this section of the lesson?

Things Hidden and Revealed
At what season did Jesus speak these words?

Under what conditions were they spoken?

For what did Jesus thank, that is, praise God?

Why are these things hidden from the wise and understanding?

What was Paul's comment regarding this question?

What preaching did he have in mind when he wrote 1 Cor. 1: 21?

Why are "babes" more favored in this respect?

What lesson does Jesus teach in verse 27?

The Precious Invitation
In what relationship does Christ reveal himself in this part of our lesson?

How does he view the condition of mankind?

Where or upon what did Jesus place the emphasis in his preaching?

Why was this true?
To whom does Christ address his invitation?

How may the burdens of life be classified?

To what particular question did Jesus address himself. Discuss fully.

How can people make a burden out of their religion?

What is the rest which Christ promises those who come to him?

What is the difference between rest *from* toil and rest *in* toil?

What is the meaning of "yoke" as used in this lesson?

What is the relation between a yoke and a burden?

Why is a yoke a necessity in living the Christian life?

Why is the yoke of Christ easy? and his burden light?

Why do so many people choose the yokes of men?

In what way is the yoke of Jesus like the feathers of a bird?

How does one put on the yoke of Christ?

Lesson XI for Sunday, June 14, 1959

JESUS AND THE SABBATH

Lesson Text

Matt. 12: 1-13

1 At that season Je'-sus went on the sabbath day through the grain-fields; and his disciples were hungry

and began to pluck ears and to eat.

2 But the Phar'-i-sees, when they saw it, said unto him, Behold, thy

disciples do that which it is not lawful to do upon the sabbath.

3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was hungry, and they that were with him;

4 How he entered into the house of God, and ate the showbread, which it was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them that were with him, but only for the priests?

5 Or have ye not read in the law, that on the sabbath day the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are guiltless?

6 But I say unto you, that one greater than the temple is here.

7 But if ye had known what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

Golden Text.—“For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath.” (Matt. 12: 8.)

Devotional Reading.—Luke 6: 1-11.

Daily Bible Readings

June 8. M.
June 9. T.
June 10. W.
June 11. T.
June 12. F.
June 13. S.
June 14. S.

Sabbath Instituted (Deut. 5: 1-15)
Sabbath Observed (Ex. 20: 8-10)
Sabbath Wrongly Observed (Ezek. 20: 13-24)
A Parallel Passage (Mark 2: 23-28)
Sabbath, a Part of the Old Law (Ex. 20: 1-11)
Law of Sabbath Abolished (Col. 2: 8-17)
First Day of the Week (Acts 20: 1-7)

Time.—Probably A.D. 28.

Place.—Grain fields in Galilee and a synagogue.

Persons.—Jesus, his disciples, the Pharisees, and the man with a withered hand.

Introduction

It would be difficult to find a Bible subject about which there is more general misunderstanding than the one now before us. The chief cause of this widespread misinformation, or so it seems, lies in the failure to determine, first of all, the precise meaning of the term “sabbath” itself, apart from its application to the Jews under Moses. It appears that the average person is under the impression that “sabbath” and “seventh” are exact synonyms, but that is not true.

Most members of the churches of Christ are aware of the fact that the law of the sabbath, as it was applied to the Israelites under Moses, has no application whatsoever to Christians today. The New Testament clearly teaches that the law of Moses, *in toto*, was abolished when Christ died on the cross. See Col. 2: 14; Eph. 2: 14-16; Heb. 8: 1-13; cf. Jer. 31: 31-34.

8 For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath.

9 And he departed thence, and went into their synagogue:

10 And behold, a man having a withered hand. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? that they might accuse him.

11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be of you, that shall have one sheep, and if this fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?

12 How much then is a man of more value than a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the sabbath day.

13 Then saith he to the man. Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, as the other.

This clearly shows that Christians are in no sense obligated to keep the sabbath of the Decalogue. Cf. Col. 2: 16, 17.

The term “sabbath” literally means a *cessation*. The original word from which we have our word sabbath, in its various forms, occurs about seventy times in the Old Testament; and it will be comparatively easy to see what the root idea is if some of the passages containing the word are read and studied. See, for example, Gen. 8: 22; Josh. 5: 12; Neh. 6: 3; Isa. 14: 4; 24: 8, where the term is rendered “cease,” literally, “keep sabbath.” If the student will read each one of these passages and substitute the expression “keep sabbath” for “cease,” he will have the basic idea of the meaning of the word.

Thus, when one ceases to use time for his own purposes, and sanctifies

a portion to the Lord, he is "keeping sabbath" in the literal meaning of the term. Cf. Isa. 58: 13, 14. Such a day is or was devoted to the Lord, and it is distinguished from the other days of the week which are largely characterized by secular pursuits. The manner in which the day was observed did not necessarily inhere in the meaning of the word which designated the day. Jehovah, as a Sovereign Ruler and the Author of the institution, has the right to prescribe the manner of observance which will please him.

The *Lord's day* of the Christian dispensation is distinguished from the other days of the week, and no professed follower of Christ who deliberately appropriates the day to his own secular pursuits can be pleasing

unto the Lord. This day of spiritual refreshment is distinguished from the other days of secular pursuits, not only by the name it bears (Rev. 1: 10), but also by a cessation on the part of those who observe it.

Jehovah gave the Israelites *written instruction* regarding the manner in which they were to observe the sabbath day which was set apart for them, while Christians have the teaching of the New Testament to instruct them with reference to the manner in which they are to observe the Lord's day; and any one who is familiar with the teaching of the Bible knows that the two days are not the same, and that the manner of the observance of the one is totally unlike the way in which the other is observed.

The Golden Text

The golden text for today will be

treated in the body of the lesson.

The Text Explained

The Disciples Defended

(Matt. 12: 1-7)

"At that season Jesus went on the sabbath day through the grainfields; and his disciples were hungry and began to pluck ears and to eat." The grain mentioned here was probably wheat, or some other small grain. The fields, such as this one, remind us of the picture which Christ drew when he spoke the parable of the sower. The narrow road ran through the field, and the bending heads of the ripening grain would be within easy reach of the disciples on either side. We naturally assume that the distance which they travelled on this occasion would not exceed a sabbath day's journey (cf. Acts 1: 12). The disciples, being hungry, began to pluck the ears and to eat.

"But the Pharisees, when they saw it, said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which it is not lawful to do upon the sabbath." The manner in which the Pharisees spoke to Jesus was probably intended as a reproach to him. It was as if they said, "Do your disciples break the sabbath before your own eyes, and you do not rebuke them? Is this the kind of instruction they have received from you?" Edersheim (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*) has this interesting comment: "On any

ordinary day this would have been lawful; but on the Sabbath it involved, according to the Rabbinic statutes, at least two sins, viz., plucking the ears, which was reaping, and rubbing them in their hands (Luke 6: 1), which was sifting, grinding, or fanning. The Talmud says: 'In case a woman rolls wheat to remove the husks, it is considered as sifting; if she rubs heads of wheat, it is regarding as threshing; if she cleans off the side-adherencies, it is sifting out fruit; if she bruises the ears, it is grinding; if she throws them up in her hand; it is winnowing.' " This will give some idea of the extremes to which the Pharisees were willing to go. The law of Moses itself did not prohibit the preparation or the eating of food on the sabbath. Cf. Deut. 23: 23.

"But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was hungry, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and ate the showbread, which it was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them that were with him, but only for the priests?" The reference to David and his companions is found in 1 Sam. 21: 1-6. If one isn't careful, he is likely to miss the point in this contrast between the action of David and that of the dis-

ciples of Jesus. Jesus clearly admits that David did wrong in eating the bread which was intended only for the priests; and some are ready to assume that Jesus was ready to take the case of David, which the Pharisees excused on the ground that he was hungry and was thereby justified in eating the showbread, and use it as a parallel to justify his disciples under similar circumstances. But that interpretation is not correct.

Jesus freely admitted that David did wrong, but he knew that the Pharisees excused it on the ground that he was hungry; but Jesus did not admit that his own disciples had broken the law of the sabbath. His argument runs something like this: Both Jesus and the Pharisees recognized that David violated the law, and so Jesus, in effect, says to his critics, "David, when hungry, ate the showbread, which you admit was unlawful for him to do, yet you justify him. My disciples pluck grain and eat it on the sabbath, something which the law does not forbid, but you condemn them." If Christ had allowed the disciples to break the sabbath law just because they were hungry, then there would be no point to his teaching which requires men to suffer hardships for his sake. Cf. Matt. 5: 19.

"Or have ye not read in the law, that on the sabbath day the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are guiltless?" See Num. 28: 9, 10. The term "profane" is used in the sense of doing ordinary work on the sabbath, that is, the same kind of work which was done on other days of the week. After having pointed out to the Pharisees their own inconsistency, Jesus next calls their attention to the fact that even the law itself authorizes some work to be done on the sabbath. This was enough to show that the prohibition against working on the sabbath was not absolute in its practical application.

"But I say unto you, that one greater than the temple is here." The marginal reading for "one" is *a greater thing*. This is in keeping with the neuter gender. Just as the priests were required to perform some manual labor on the sabbath in meeting the demands of the temple worship, just so it was in the case of Christ and his disciples. The

service which they rendered to him sometimes prevented their obtaining food in the usual way, and they were therefore put to the necessity of gathering it as they did on the sabbath day in question; and since Christ himself is greater than the temple, those serving him were justified in performing a needful service on the sabbath. Or, to state the same thing in other words, If the priests in the temple can profane the sabbath and remain guiltless, how much more can the disciples of him who is greater than the temple do so in his service and by his authority?

"But if ye had known what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." This is conclusive proof that the disciples did not violate the sabbath law when they plucked the ears of grain, rubbed them in their hands, and ate them. The scripture from which Jesus quoted is Hosea 6: 6. Cf. Matt. 9: 13, where Jesus told his critics to go and learn its meaning. It very frequently happens that people are guilty of condemning others when they themselves do not know the facts in the case.

The contrast between "mercy" and "sacrifice" is the same in principle as Paul's contrast between "love" and "religious deeds" in 1 Cor. 13: 1-3. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Just so, sacrifice great and important as it is in God's sight, is not pleasing to him, if it is to be done at the expense of mercy. Cf. James 2: 13. Satisfying hunger while following Jesus was more acceptable to God, in the case of these disciples, than the keeping of the letter of the law in a spirit of austerity.

The Lord of the Sabbath

(Matt. 12: 8)

"For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath." The parallel reading in Mark is, "And he said unto them,

The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: so that the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath." (Mark 2: 27, 28.) The article "the" is before man in the original, and, according to Thayer, the idea is, "The sabbath was made for mankind." Johnson notes that it was made for *humanity*; and in commenting on Mark 2: 27 he says, "The Sabbath rest; that is, a rest of one day in seven was made for man, not for Jews only. This implies that it is to be a universal institution; that the good of man requires it, and that it is not an arbitrary enactment, but a wise and benevolent provision for the welfare of the race."

According to this view, the sabbath is an *institution* and is itself a principle, rather than a mere statute. "Principles are eternal and cannot be changed, any more than God can; and he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. But precepts are the different embodiments of principles and are called 'laws.' These *precepts*, or *laws*, may be changed any-time the Maker of them desires to do so, for he is the Maker of them and has absolute authority over them." (Hall L. Calhoun, Teacher's Gospel Quarterly, Gospel Advocate Co.)

The principle of the sabbath was applied by statute to the Jews during the Mosaic Dispensation, and the seventh day was called "the sabbath." That law applied to the Jews only. When the law of Moses had served its purpose, it was abolished and no one after that was obligated to obey it. When Christ gave his law, he applied the principle of the sabbath to his people, but the time of its observance is "the first day of the week." The two days therefore can never be confused. The sabbath of the Decalogue was abolished, and the Lord's day of the New Testament was established; and any one who knows the facts in the case knows that the two days are not the same, and that the Lord's day is not to be observed as the sabbath was kept. The Lord's day, as the expression implies, belongs to him, and if people will devote the day to him by doing those things which he authorizes, they will be better by having done so. Public meetings, private prayers, Bible study, visiting the sick, encouraging the weak, exhorting the disorderly, teaching the lost, and similar duties

are sufficient to keep Christians busy during the entire Lord's day; and if these things are done in the spirit of Christ, the doers cannot but be made better.

Brother Calhoun continues: "In modern life there are many even professing Christians who shamefully neglect the Lord's day. They take it and use it for their own purposes without ever thinking of the Lord's claim to it—visiting for *personal* gratification, *excursions*, *sleeping*, entertaining friends for their own pleasure. Reading papers and magazines and books just to amuse themselves, attending games and contests for the amusement they get out of it. Often these things are done because those who do them have never learned the Bible teaching about how to keep the Lord's day."

The Principle Further Exemplified (Matt. 12: 9-13)

"And he departed thence, and went into their synagogue: and behold, a man having a withered hand." The location of the synagogue is not given, but it may have been in Capernaum. The incident there probably took place soon after leaving the grainfields, although that is not entirely certain. The place and time of the event are not of prime importance. McGarvey thinks that it is highly probable that Jesus foreknew what would take place in the synagogue, and reserved further remarks regarding the sabbath until that time. The man with the withered hand was in the assembly, and his presence gave Christ the opportunity for further teaching, although the Lord himself did not raise the question.

"And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? that they might accuse him." The action of the scribes and Pharisees (see Luke 6: 6-11; Mark 3: 1-6) furnished the occasion for further illustrating the scope of the principle of humanity laid down in connection with the incident in the grainfields. According to Mark, the Lord's enemies watched to see whether or not Jesus would heal the afflicted man on the sabbath day. After seeing that Jesus made no move in that direction, it was probably then that they asked him. Their very attitude demonstrated that they had no mercy; they only wanted to accuse

Jesus, and were willing to make use of a man's affliction to that end.

"And he said unto them, *What man shall there be of you, that shall have one sheep, and if this fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man of more value than a sheep.*" Luke notes that Christ knew the thoughts of his critics, and he asked the afflicted man to stand forth in the midst. This would constitute a dramatic setting for his remarks. The argument which the Lord made at this time was drawn from the practice of his would-be-accusers. They were perfectly willing to relieve the sufferings of a single sheep on the sabbath day, and considered that such acts of mercy would not be in violation of the sabbath law; but they were wholly unwilling to do as much for a human being, and charged anyone else who did show mercy to him with breaking the law of the sabbath. The attitude of the scribes and Pharisees clearly demonstrated their lack of sympathy for

suffering humanity; they were content with sacrifice without mercy.

"Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the sabbath day." This is the general conclusion which Jesus drew regarding the question before him. Taking the two incidents—the grain-fields and the synagogue—together, Jesus taught that deeds of religion, such as those performed by the priests, and works of humanity, such as feeding the hungry and showing mercy to the suffering, were lawful on the sabbath day.

"Then saith he to the man, *Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, as the other.*" Jesus not only proved his point; he followed the proof by practicing what he preached. It should be observed that Jesus gave his enemies no basis for an accusation against him. He did not touch the man, nor command the restoration to take place; he simply bade the man to stretch forth his hand, and it was healed.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Why are there so many conflicting views regarding this subject?

How do we know that we are not to keep the sabbath of the law of Moses?

What is the literal meaning of the term "sabbath"? Illustrate freely.

What is the true spirit of "keeping sabbath"?

How could anyone learn to observe the sabbath?

How is the "Lord's day" related to this study?

The Disciples Defended

Give the setting of this section of our lesson.

What is implied in the statement of the Pharisees?

Discuss briefly some of the views which they held.

What did the law of Moses say about plucking grain in the fields of others?

What was the first argument the Lord made in answering the Pharisees?

What was the point in the case of David?

Did Christ admit that his disciples did wrong in plucking the grain on the sabbath? Give reasons for your answer.

What was the argument regarding the priest of the temple?

What was it which was greater than the temple?

What is the meaning of, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice"? and how is the principle illustrated?

The Lord of the Sabbath

What did Jesus mean by saying that he is lord of the sabbath? and why did he say it?

What "sabbath" was made for man?

Discuss the sabbath as a principle; as a precept.

Why is it impossible to confuse the sabbath of the Decalogue with the Lord's day of the New Testament?

What does the expression "the Lord's day" imply?

How should Christians observe the Lord's day?

How do many professed Christians regard the day? and why?

The Principle Further Exemplified

What was the setting of this section of the lesson?

Why are the time and place relatively unimportant?

Why did the scribes and Pharisees raise the question regarding the man with the withered hand?

What did their attitude reveal concerning their character?

How did the Lord answer them?

Why would they be more concerned about the welfare of a sheep than that of a man?

What conclusion did Jesus draw?

What were some of the things which one could lawfully do on the sabbath?

What did Jesus next say to the crippled man? and why?

Why do so many people want to prove their point and go no further?

Did Jesus give any ground for an accusation against him? Give reason for your answer.

Lesson XII for Sunday, June 21, 1959

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Lesson Text

Matt. 13: 1-9, 18-23

1 On that day went Je'-sus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.

2 And there were gathered unto him great multitudes, so that he entered into a boat, and sat: and all the multitude stood on the beach.

3 And he spake to them many things in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went forth to sow;

4 And as he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured them:

5 And others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth: and straightway they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth:

6 And when the sun was risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

7 And others fell upon the thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked them:

8 And others fell upon the good ground, and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

9 He that hath ears, let him hear.

18 Hear then ye the parable of the sower.

19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, *then* cometh the evil *one*, and snatcheth away that which hath been sown in his heart. This is he that was sown by the way side.

20 And he that was sown upon the rocky places, this is he that heareth the word, and straightway with joy receiveth it;

21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he stumbleth.

22 And he that was sown among the thorns, this is he that heareth the word; and the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

23 And he that was sown upon the good ground, this is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; who verily beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Golden Text.—*"Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live."* (Isa. 55: 3a.)

Devotional Reading.—Prov. 3: 13-18.

Daily Bible Readings

June 15. M.

June 16. T.....

June 17. W.

June 18. T.....

June 19. F..

June 20. S...

June 21. S.....

Occasion for Parables (Matt. 13: 10-17)

Parables of the Kingdom (Matt. 13: 31-33, 44-52)

Parable of the Tares (Matt. 13: 24-30)

Those Who Refuse to Hear (Zech. 7: 8-14)

Counting the Cost (Luke 14: 25-35)

Sin of Preoccupation (Luke 21: 29-36)

Reaping in Joy (Psalm 126: 1-6)

Time.—Probably A.D. 28.

Place.—By the Sea of Galilee, probably near Capernaum.

Persons.—Jesus, his disciples, and the multitudes.

Introduction

Our lesson for today is popularly known as the *Parable of the Sower*. This is true because of the emphasis which is placed upon the one who dispensed the seed. If we should center our attention primarily upon the reception which the seed received, it would be altogether proper to refer to the passage as the *Parable*

of the Soils. In either case, or in both cases, this is a vital and interesting lesson, and we should give it our most careful consideration.

Seed-sowing in the parable now before us is made to represent teaching or preaching; and it is well to keep in mind that all seed-sowing, whether in the ground or in the hu-

man heart, is extremely mysterious. The communication of truth to others is but the dropping of seed into their minds; and in many instances the result is not that which is expected. At least that is the point which Jesus makes in the lesson now before us. Any thoughtful person will readily agree that the success of the effort depends upon both the work of the sower and the condition of the soil. This is another lesson which Jesus clearly points out in this connection. Cf. Luke 8: 18.

There are at least three reasons which may be assigned for the failure to reap a harvest, namely, (1)

the seed may have been bad; (2) the soil may have been unfavorable; and (3) the sowing may have been improperly done. Jesus, in the lesson now before us, assumes that the seed was good; he further assumes that the work of the sower was correctly done; and he clearly points out that the failure to reap a harvest lay directly in the fault of the soil. It is impossible to miss his lesson here, if we will only read that which he says. The Lord is primarily interested in our learning something of the relation which exists between the word of God and the soul of man.

The Golden Text

"Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live."

Man's greatest responsibility is to listen to that which Almighty God has to say. In Mark 4: 24, which is a parallel context of our lesson for today, Jesus says, "Take heed *what* ye hear." There are many things said today which purport to come from God, but they are the very opposite of that which is found in his revealed word. Paul warns in 1 Cor. 4: 6 that we should "learn not to go beyond the things which are written;" and John tells what the results are when people do go beyond that which God has spoken: "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9.)

In the same connection in which Mark says, "Take heed *what* ye hear," Luke says, "Take heed therefore *how* ye hear." (Luke 8: 18.) We must listen to God's word whether it pleases us or not. Jehovah warns, a few verses below our golden text, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the

earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55: 8, 9.) The case of Balaam is a good example of how not to hear (Num. 22: 19), while the attitude of Cornelius illustrates the kind of hearing which pleases God (Acts 10: 33.) The result of the latter kind of hearing always leads to the Lord. Cf. Acts 17: 11, 12.

Along with the necessity of *what* we hear and *how* we hear, the spirit of the golden text emphasizes *whom* we must hear. So far as we are concerned today, God says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Matt. 17: 5b.) Jesus declares, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak." (John 12: 48-50; cf. Acts 3: 22, 23; Luke 10: 16.)

The Text Explained

An Ideal Setting for Teaching

(Matt. 13: 1, 2)

"On that day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side." "On that day" links the contents of this chapter with the preceding events. Jesus habitually assumed the sitting posture while teaching, and that, of

course, made it impossible for him to be heard at any great distance, especially when multitudes of people gathered around him. The sea side was an ideal place for the crowds to assemble, but of course they went there because that was where the Lord was.

"And there were gathered unto him great multitudes, so that he entered into a boat, and sat; and all the multitude stood on the beach " The boat which was anchored near the shore furnished Jesus with a suitable "pulpit" from which to speak to the eager multitude who were standing on the beach. This arrangement made it impossible for the people to crowd too closely around Jesus. Cf. Luke 5: 1-3.

The Parable Stated

(Matt. 13: 3-9)

"And he spake to them many things in parables." A parable has been defined as "a narrative moving within the sphere of physical or human life, not professing to describe an event which actually took place, but expressly imagined for the purpose of representing in pictorial figure, a truth belonging to the sphere of religion, and therefore referring to the relation of man or mankind to God." The term "parable" literally means to place alongside for comparison or measurement, like a yardstick. It is an objective illustration for spiritual or moral truth. Others taught by means of parables, but it is doubtful if anyone ever equalled Jesus in this respect. As a rule the parables of Jesus illustrate one principle truth, and the details are more or less incidental, although he himself sometimes explains them too.

"Saying, Behold, the sower went forth to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured them." This was a familiar scene to all who heard Jesus. There were no farm houses in Palestine; all the people lived in cities, towns, and villages, and the farmers literally "went forth to sow." This is an important work which cannot be dispensed with; for if there is no sowing, there will be no harvest. The "way side" was a path or road made by the people along the edge or through the middle of the plowed ground. It was natural, of course, for the birds to eat the seeds which did not enter into the prepared ground.

"And others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth: and straightway they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was risen, they were scorched: and because they

had no root, they withered away." The "rocky places" were areas of the field where only a thin layer of soil covered the ledge which was beneath the surface.

"And others fell upon the thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked them." The place of the thorns was a section of the field where the seeds and roots of thorns were already present — "upon the thorns" — and would grow more vigorously than the grain which was being sown.

"And others fell upon the good ground, and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." The "good ground" was that part of the field which had been prepared for the grain, and which was free from the things which would hinder a normal harvest.

"He that hath ears, let him hear." This was a warning or a solemn call to attention which Jesus regarded as necessary in order to cause the hearers to realize that something important was being said, and not merely an address for their entertainment. It also warned them of a meaning which was beneath the surface, and which they, of course, had not as yet understood. This thought is clearly set forth in verses 10-17 which should be carefully read when studying this lesson. Some were willing to use their ears, while others were not.

The Lord's Interpretation

(Matt. 13: 18-23)

"Hear then ye the parable of the sower." This is one of the few parables which Jesus spoke and gave the complete interpretation himself. The explanation is given to the disciples, rather than to the multitude; because the disciples were ready to make use of their opportunities. "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath." (Verse 12.) Luke says that "the seed is the word of God." (8-11.)

"When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the evil one, and snatcheth away that which hath been sown in his heart. This is he that was sown by the way side." The way side hearers do not understand that which is said, and they appar-

ently make no effort to do so. That was the chief difference between the disciples and the multitudes—the one had, while the other had not. The devil, taking advantage of their failure to hear and their indifference toward the message, removes the word from their heart, “that they may not believe and be saved.” (Luke 8: 12.) The gospel is the power of God to save only the believer. See Rom. 1:

16. There is nothing said about why their hearts were unreceptive. How many hearts there are which have been trampled over and made hard by the things of this world! Many a man's mind is like a footpath made hard by the constant passage through it of fleshly desires, religious forms, and evil thoughts. But whatever the cause of the unresponsiveness, the result was that no fruit was borne.

“And he that was sown upon the rocky places, this is he that heareth the word, and straightway with joy receiveth it, yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he stumbleth.” The rocky ground hearers are the emotional type; they are touched by the gospel, but only superficially so. They do not understand what a commitment to Christ involves; and, having no root in themselves, they quickly fall away when difficult and unpleasant situations arise. Hasty and premature action will not ultimately succeed. High pressure methods in many modern revivals may cause people to accept religion gladly; but as soon as the meeting closes, the evangelist leaves, and they return to normal life, their religion vanishes.

“And he that was sown among the thorns, this is he that heareth the word; and the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” Luke says, “And that which fell among the thorns, these are they that have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.” (Luke 8: 14.)

The thorny ground hearers are those who have a divided mind or a divided affection. Cf. Matt. 6: 33; James 1: 8. There is no fault found with the ground; it is not represented as being either hardened or super-

ficial, but rather as containing those conditions which prevent a fruitful harvest. Luke's account, as has already been seen, is fuller and represents three of the common barriers to an acceptable life—“cares and riches and pleasures of this life.” If one wants to make Christianity a success, he must not allow himself to become deeply entangled with such things. Paul, in speaking of the Christian soldier, uses this illustration, “No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier.” (2 Tim. 2: 4.) The Christian's chief aim should be to please God. See 2 Cor. 5: 9. He must make his religion his primary interest, and never sacrifice it, compromise it, nor subordinate it to any other. He must make the kingdom of God and his righteousness his first concern, and see to it that all other things are made secondary.

“And he that was sown upon the good ground, this is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; who verily beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” The parallel statement in Luke is, “And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience.” The good ground hearers are those who avoid all the defects of the other three. They are willing to hear, have receptive hearts, hold the word fast, and endeavor to understand it; and when they know what their duty is, they go about their work diligently and bring forth fruit according to their ability.

The lesson of the parable of the sower is a most important one, and it will be to our advantage, even at the risk of seeming repetition, to deal at greater length with the characteristics of the honest and good heart which is represented by the good ground. The Lord is primarily interested in our learning something of the relation which exists between the word of God and the soul of man. And, too, it should be observed that the one whose duty it is to sow the seed is not primarily responsible for the condition of the soil.

Jesus, in the parable now before us, simplifies the situation. He does not go into detail about why people

differ in their attitude toward God's message to men; he simply points out the various reactions manifested. God wants everybody to be saved (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9), and that is the reason for sowing the seed in all areas of the field; but man is allowed to exercise his freedom of choice as to what he will do about it.

The man represented by the good ground differs from the way side man in that he *understands* the word, and does not allow Satan to take it away from him. The reason for his understanding is not necessarily superior natural ability, but superior attention. He is willing to ask questions in order that he may know the meaning of that which has been spoken. How can any one plead honesty in ignorance, while making no effort to learn the truth? The idea contained in the contrast between the good ground and the way side hearers is forcefully illustrated in the following scriptures.

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Many of them therefore believed; also of the Greek women of honor-

able estate, and of men, now a few." (Acts 17: 11, 12.) "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them." (2 Cor. 4: 3, 4.)

The good ground hearer differs from the rocky ground hearer in that he does not allow the evil one to take the word of God away from him. His mind is fixed upon the truth, and he loves to have it so. "But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; and on his law doth he meditate day and night." (Psalm 1: 2.)

The good ground hearer differs from the thorny ground hearer in that he does not allow the things of the world to divert his attention from the work of the Lord. Instead of being overcome by them, he is himself the victor. Cf. 1 John 2: 15-17; James 4: 4.

And finally, the good ground hearer differs from all the others in that he alone is fruitful. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples." (John 15: 8; cf. Col. 1: 10; Gal. 5: 22, 23.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, persons.

Introduction

Why is this parable usually spoken of as the Parable of the Sower?

What does the seed-sowing of the parable represent?

What two things are absolutely essential in order to have a harvest?

Give three reasons for the failure to reap a harvest.

Upon what assumption did Jesus speak this parable?

What lesson is he primarily interested in our learning?

The Golden Text

What do you consider man's greatest responsibility? Give reasons for your answer.

What three things are involved in our hearing correctly? Discuss each briefly.

An Ideal Setting for Teaching

Describe the setting now before us.

Why did Jesus sit while teaching?

Why did he enter into a boat before beginning his address?

The Parable Stated

What is the meaning of the term "parable"?

What can you say of its effectiveness as a means of teaching?

What were the agricultural habits of the people of Palestine?

What was the "way side" and what happened to the seed which fell there?

What is meant by "rocky places"? and what happened "to the seed which fell there?"

Why was some ground called "thorny"? and what was the effect there?

What was the nature of the "good ground"?

Why did Jesus say, "He that hath ears, let him hear"?

The Lord's Interpretation

To whom did the Lord explain the parable of the sower? and why?

Whom does the "way side hearer" represent?

Why is the devil so anxious to get the word of God out of the heart?

What are some of the ways in which a heart may become hardened?

Who are the "rocky ground hearers"?

What is meant by not having root in himself?

How may the word of God be sown among the thorns?

Why is it wrong for professed Christians to have divided minds?

What are three of the common barriers to an acceptable life?

What is said about the "good ground hearer"?

Why don't all people bring forth the same amount of fruit?

Why is the parable of the sower so important?

Is the sower responsible for the condition of the soil?

Why do people react differently to the divine message?

Why does the Lord want the seed to be sown in all areas of the field?

In what way does the good ground hearer differ from the way side hearer?

How is the truth in this contrast ef-

fectively illustrated?

What is the difference between the good and the rocky ground hearers?

Contrast the good and the thorny ground hearers.

In what way does the good ground hearer differ from all the others?

Why is it so important to bear fruit in the Lord's service?

Lesson XIII for Sunday, June 28, 1959

FIVE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

Lesson Text

Matt. 13: 31-33, 44-52

31 Another parable set he before them, saying. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:

32 Which indeed is less than all seeds; but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the heaven come and lodge in the branches thereof.

33 Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.

44 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls:

46 And having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:

48 Which, when it was filled, they drew up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but the bad they cast away.

49 So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous,

50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

51 Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea.

52 And he said unto them. Therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

Golden Text.—*"He that hath ears, let him hear."* (Matt. 13: 43b.)

Devotional Reading.—Prov. 2: 1-8

Daily Bible Readings

June 22.	M.	Reward of Wisdom (Prov. 3: 19-26)
June 23.	T.	Reaping What We Sow (Gal. 6: 1-10)
June 24.	W.	A Sure Harvest (Eccles. 11: 1-8)
June 25.	T.	A Parable of Reproof (2 Sam. 12: 1-10)
June 26.	F.	A Parable of Forgiveness (Matt. 18: 21-25)
June 27.	S.	Sowing to the Wind (Hos. 8: 1-7)
June 28.	S.	Delight in God's Way (Psalm 119: 9-16)

Time.—Probably A.D. 28.

Place.—By the Sea of Galilee, probably near Capernaum.

Persons.—Jesus, his disciples, and the multitudes.

Introduction

The thirteenth chapter of Matthew, as the reader can see, contains seven parables; and it appears that they were all spoken on the

same occasion. These parables all had reference to the kingdom which Christ was preparing to establish, and each was meant to emphasize

one distinctive aspect of that kingdom. The general subject of this series of parables is the same as that of the Sermon on the Mount, which was delivered by Jesus earlier in his ministry. If we speak of the earlier sermon as the gospel of the kingdom, then these parables may be regarded as an illustrative appendix to that great address.

When Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount, he dealt primarily with the principles of the kingdom, while in the parables he uses familiar figures to illustrate the nature of the kingdom, and to emphasize the different effects which the teaching regarding it produces on men of different dispositions. In the sermon, Jesus set forth the difference between the law of Moses and the law which he would give; and it was in this respect somewhat retrospective, while in the parables, he is almost entirely prospective, as he unfolds the manner of the progress of the

kingdom and the nature of its consummation. In the sermon, broad principles and specific commandments are set forth, while in the parables, prominence is given to individual cases and peculiar features.

Then there is the order of arrangement which must not be overlooked. All of these parables, as has already been stated, relate to the kingdom, and they all, of course, have a specific purpose. The Lord was not simply speaking a group of unrelated parables, but was delivering a well-ordered discourse (a series of illustrations) regarding the kingdom. The first, which was considered last week, stands alone as illustrating the general effects which are produced by preaching the gospel everywhere. The other six parables come in pairs; and in the three couplets each member is a complement and companion of the other. We shall consider them more in detail as we proceed with the lesson text.

The Golden Text

"He that hath ears, let him hear." Inasmuch as the Lord made it plain in his interpretation of the parable of the sower that the character of the hearer determines the effect which the word will have upon him, the question of one's attitude toward the message becomes a major factor in our study of these parables. That which a man takes from the word depends upon that which he brings to the word. This view of the question takes us back to the moral law, and shows that man has a responsibility, even before the word is preached; he must be ready to receive it. Cf. John 8: 37, 43.

The very fact that men have ears with which to hear is proof of their responsibility. It would be an interesting exercise to go through the gospel records and observe the number of times Jesus reminded people of their responsibility to use their ears. In each of the seven letters to the churches in Asia, Jesus instructed

John to write, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." It is only by hearing the divine message that one can know what God wants him to do.

One of the best illustrations of what it means to listen properly to the teaching of Jesus is found in the context of this lesson. See verses 10-17. The disciples saw that the multitudes did not understand the Lord's parabolic teaching, and they asked, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" Jesus replied, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." Both the disciples and the multitudes had the opportunity of learning about the coming kingdom, but only the disciples were willing to improve their situation, hence, "blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." Truth is never kept from those who are willing to listen.

The Text Explained

The Mustard Seed and the Leaven

(Matt. 13:31-33)

These two parables constitute a pair, and they must be studied together if we are to get the lesson which they were intended to teach.

The subject is the progress of the kingdom of heaven here upon the earth. The first of these two emphasizes the contrast between its small beginning and its ultimate greatness, while the second gives prominence

to the method of its internal operation, and the universality of its diffusion at the last.

"Another parable set he before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is less than all seeds; but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the heaven come and lodge in the branches thereof." The mustard plant which is described in this passage is very different from the mustard which is a common garden plant with us. Johnson notes that Dr. Hooker measured a mustard plant in the Jordan valley which was ten feet in height.

The mustard seed of the text is called "less than all seeds," but that does not mean that it was smaller than any seed known to man. It appears that "a grain of mustard seed" was, among the Jews, a familiar expression for anything which was exceedingly small. The smallness of this seed was considered, not by comparing it with other small seed, but with the large plant which grew out of it. It is therefore a suitable figure to represent the general idea that great things can arise out of small beginnings. This was certainly true of the kingdom of heaven. Cf. Dan. 2: 34, 35; Zech. 4: 6, 10.

While the parable now under consideration has primary reference to the kingdom of heaven itself, it is not amiss to apply the principle which it illustrated to the church in any given community. If those who are responsible for the work will only see to it that the gospel of Christ is faithfully preached and obeyed by each member, it makes little difference how small the beginning may be, the work will grow into a vigorous congregation in the Lord. This should be a matter of great encouragement to every faithful member of the body of Christ.

"Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened." Leaven, as every homemaker knows, quietly but certainly diffuses itself through the mass into which it has been placed. This is the way the kingdom of Christ affects human society. The word of God, which is the seed of the

kingdom, is sown in the hearts of men; or, to change the figure somewhat, the *idea* is planted in their minds; and then working like yeast, it is going to have its effects in the lives of those who have entertained the message.

Leaven is not an integral part of the meal; it is brought from the outside and put into it, and then its work begins. Just so with Christianity; it is, so far as the world is concerned, an imported power. Christ declared that his kingdom is not of this world (John 18: 36.) The kingdom of Christ has been brought into the world, not to become like it, but to win men from the control of Satan to God. The reformatory work which Christ has authorized begins, not with outward institutions and forms, but with inward principles (cf. Heb. 4: 12, 13), and then continues its penetrating influence until it fashions its subject into its own ideals.

Inasmuch as leaven, as used in the Bible, usually stands for evil, some commentators profess to see in this parable the progress of corruption, rather than the regeneration of the world. It is true that leaven in the Bible is generally associated with evil, but it is not always so. Cf. Lev. 23: 17. But since Jesus said that the "kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven," we must conclude that he was using the nature of leaven and the manner in which it works to illustrate the progress of his kingdom here upon the earth. Evil will never be able to overcome the church of the Lord. Cf. Dan. 2: 44; Matt. 16: 18; Heb. 12: 28.

It should also be observed that the leaven is always smaller in quantity than the mass into which it is placed. That has always been true with Christianity in its relation to the world. When Jesus began to call his disciples from the masses of their countrymen, his primary interest was not in quantity, but in quality; and it has always been that way with his people since the church was established on the first Pentecost following his ascension. Those who have come the nearest to doing his will have always been in the minority, both with reference to the world about them and their own brethren.

Every professed follower of Christ should ask himself this question;

"Am I a part of the meal or of the leaven?" Too frequently we forget the mission of Jesus and the manner in which he has called us to work for him, and seek to become members of a majority movement for the maintenance of the *status quo*. The world, as well as many professed Christians, needs to be changed, and the Lord's message in the parable of the leaven tells his followers how they are to work toward that end.

The Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price

(Matt. 13: 44-46)

As in the case of the two parables of the preceding section of our lesson today, the two now before us have a common lesson, namely, the intrinsic value of the kingdom of heaven, and the willingness, yes, and the eagerness, of the one making the discovery to sacrifice everything he possesses in order to obtain. The one principal difference between the two parables of this section is this: The one comes upon the treasure as it were, by accident, or at least unexpectedly, while the other finds it as he goes about the business of his life.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." The imagery of this parable is based upon the customs of the time of Christ here among men. The people who had valuable possessions often buried them for safe keeping. The owner of the treasure now under consideration may have been vastly wealthy, and may have hidden many treasures in the field; and in the course of time, he may have forgotten about one or more of them. Probably he left the country and was never able to return for his possessions. Or again, he may have died without disclosing the location of the treasure which he had buried. At any rate the treasure was hidden in the field, and a man who knew nothing of it found it, and immediately hid it again.

The discovery of the treasure brought great joy to the finder's heart, and he determined to make it his own. There is no indication that the man who owned the field at the time the treasure was found knew of its existence, and he was, accord-

ingly, willing to sell the field without reckoning the value of the hidden treasure in the price. These considerations, of course, are merely the drapery of the parable, and they must not be allowed to overshadow the principle lesson which it is designed to teach. The manner of obtaining the field without informing the owner of the treasure which had been found is no more commended than the dishonesty of the unjust steward was upheld while commending his wisdom. See Luke 16: 8.

The treasure of this parable is made to stand for the blessings of the gospel of Christ. Paul speaks of them as "the unsearchable riches of Christ." See Eph. 3: 8. Many people have learned of these blessings who were not at the time seeking for them. Cf., example, the woman of Samaria, the Philippian jailor, et al. It should be observed, however, that each man must make them his own by a distinct act of his will. No one can become a Christian without knowing it.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it" Although the general lesson is the same, the peculiar situation in this parable is the reverse of that in the preceding one. Here the man is in search of something better than that which he already has. He has a definite purpose in mind, and he is not going to be contented until he finds that for which he is looking. But, having found the object of his search, he, like the man who found the hidden treasure, does not consider any sacrifice too great to make in order to make the newly found blessings his own. Cf. Phil. 3: 7-11; Luke 14: 25-33.

The Drag-Net and an Observation

(Matt. 13: 47-52)

The parable of the drag-net is linked with the parable of the tares to form the third couplet of parables in the chapter now under consideration. Both of these parables have the same general lesson to set forth, namely the co-existence of good and evil within the same enclosure, but with their separation to take place "in the end of the world." In the case of the tares, the place of the co-

existence is the world, while in the parable of the drag-net it is the church. The final separation in both cases does not take place until this life is over. The question of "church discipline" is not directly involved in the parable now before us. "So shall it be in the end of the world." (Verses 40, 49.)

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was filled, they drew up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good into the vessels, but the bad they cast away. So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." This is a picture of the church at work; the "gospel drag-net, so to speak, is cast into the sea of men, and gathers every kind. This does not mean that such is the will of God, but the work is done by fallible human beings, and they do not always know what is in the hearts of professed disciples. The apostle Paul, in writing to the church in Philippi, said, "For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." (Phil. 3: 18, 19.) The New Testament authorizes Christians to exercise discipline (cf. 2 Thess. 3: 6-15), but fallible men can never rid the church of all evil. See 1 Cor. 4: 3-5.

That work is reserved for the angels: "The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire." Church leaders who fail to exercise discipline to the best of their ability, may find themselves on the side of the wicked in the last day.

"Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea. And he said unto them. Therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." These things" refer to the parables which Jesus had been speaking. Two of the parables had been fully explained by Jesus, and he may have said more to them than is here recorded. At any rate, the disciples said that they did understand them, and Jesus apparently let their answer stand. However, it could hardly be correctly affirmed that their understanding was full and complete.

The scribe who has been made a disciple is one who is converted to Christ; and he is able, from his storehouse of knowledge, to bring forth lessons with which he has long been familiar, and also new ones which he has but recently acquired. This is something which preachers and other Christian teachers should remember. The expression "bringeth forth" literally means "to hurl forth;" and it indicates the zeal with which the Christian teacher communicates his instruction, and the fulness out of which he speaks.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

How is this parabolic address related to the Sermon on the Mount?

What was the Lord's purpose in speaking these parables?

Discuss the arrangement of the seven parables of the chapter.

State the leading thought in each of the classifications.

The Golden Text

What is implied in the statement, "He that hath ears, let him hear"?

What responsibility does a man have before hearing the word of God?

What is the strongest proof of this responsibility?

How did Jesus illustrate this lesson?

Discuss the difference in the attitude of the disciples and the multitude.

The Mustard Seed and the Leaven

What is the principal lesson of these two parables?

In what way do they differ?

What kind of a mustard plant was this?

Why was the grain of mustard seed called "less than all seeds"?

What is the chief lesson of this parable?

Show how this principle can be applied to any congregation.

In what way is the kingdom of heaven like leaven?

What does this parable show regarding the relation of the church to the world?

Why is the right nearly always in the minority?

What specific question should each child of God ask himself?

The Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price

What is the common lesson of these two parables?

What is the principal difference between them?

Why would such a treasure be hidden in a field?

How was the man affected by his discovery?

What does this "treasure" mean to us?

How can people find such blessing without searching for them?

What is the main lesson of the goodly pearl?

What prompted the merchant to seek for goodly pearls?

The Drag-Net and an Observation

How is this parable related to the parable of the tares?

What is their principal lesson?

Wherein do they differ?

Why can't the wicked in the church be separated from the righteous now?

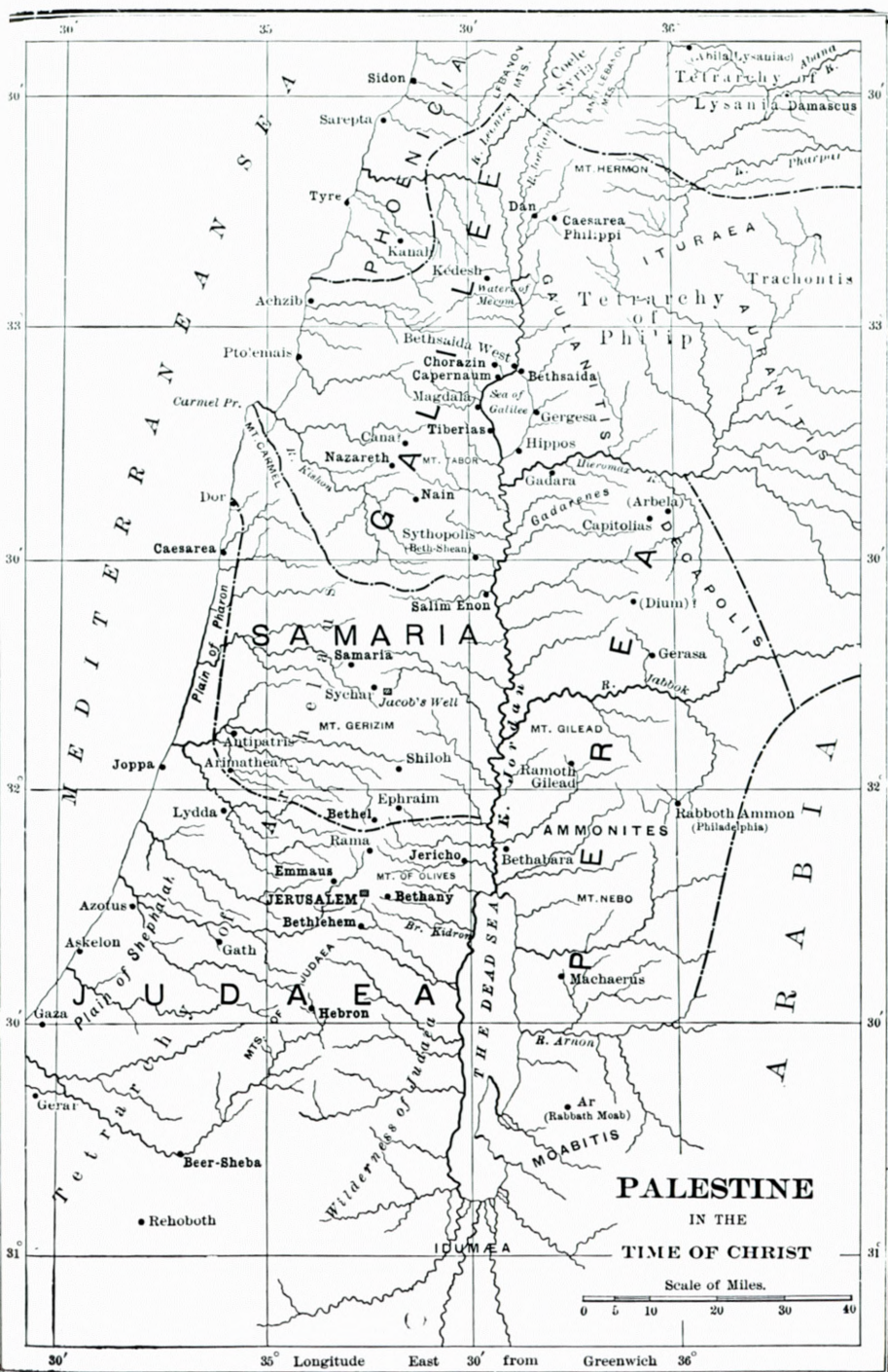
What should be the church's attitude toward discipline of the wicked?

Why did Jesus ask the disciples if they understood all these things?

What observation did he make?

How could a scribe be made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven?

What is his duty with reference to teaching?



THIRD QUARTER

STUDIES IN MATTHEW

(Second Half of Six Months Course)

Aim.—To study in detail the gospel according to Matthew, to realize its true Messianic content, and to receive its message of salvation for us today.

JOHN THE BAPTIST BEHEADED

Lesson I—July 5, 1959

Lesson Text

Matt. 14: 1-12

1 At that season Her'-od the tetrarch heard the report concerning Je'-sus,

2 And said unto his servants, This is John the Bap'-tist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore do these powers work in him.

3 For Her'-od had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of He'-ro'-di-as, his brother Philip's wife.

4 For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.

5 And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

6 But when Her'-od's birthday came, the daughter of He'-ro'-di-as,

Golden Text.—"*And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" (Matt. 3: 1, 2.)

Devotional Reading.—Dan. 5: 1-31.

danced in the midst, and pleased Her'-od.

7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she should ask.

8 And she, being put forward by her mother, saith, Give me here on a platter the head of John the Bap'-tist.

9 And the king was grieved; but for the sake of his oaths, and of them that sat at meat with him, he commanded it to be given;

10 And he sent and beheaded John in the prison.

11 And his head was brought on a platter, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.

12 And his disciples came, and took up the corpse, and buried him; and they went and told Je'-sus.

Daily Bible Readings

June 29.	M.....	Birth of John (Luke 2: 57-80)
June 30.	T.....	John Forerunner of Christ (Matt. 3: 1-11)
July 1.	W.....	John's Testimony of Christ (John 3: 25-36)
July 2.	T.....	Christ's Testimony of John (Matt. 11: 1-13)
July 3.	F.....	Report of Jesus' Work (Mark 6: 30-32)
July 4.	S.....	Death of John (Mark 6: 14-29)
July 5.	S.....	Jesus Warns of Persecution (Matt. 24: 3-14)

Time.—Probably A.D. 29.

Place.—Possibly at the fortress-prison of Machaerus, overlooking the northeast shores of the Dead Sea.

Persons.—Herod, his family and friends, John the Baptist, his disciples, and Jesus.

Introduction

The Herod of this lesson was known as Herod Antipas. He was the son of Herod the Great and Malthece, a Samaritan, which means that he was not a Jew by blood. Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Gali-

lee (Luke 3: 1) and Peraea. The name of this Herod is mentioned in the New Testament more often than any other. Antipas was the Herod which Jesus referred to as "that fox" (Luke 13: 32), because of his skulk-

ing treachery. This Herod was incestuously married to his niece, the former wife of his half-brother Herod Philip. Her father was Aristobulus, son of Herod the Great, thus making her the granddaughter of that wicked king. Herodias deserted Philip for Antipas, and the latter, in turn, divorced his wife to marry Herodias. The evil, permeating influence of Herod Antipas was characterized by Jesus as "the leaven of Herod" (Mark 8: 15.) He was deposed as tetrarch by the emperor Caligula in A.D. 39.

John the Baptist was one of the most unique characters of the New Testament. His was a strange combination of gentleness and fire. The same man who could and did conduct himself with utmost self-effacement in the presence of Jesus, could stand before the multitude and shout, "Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And even now the axe also lieth at

the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." (Luke 3: 7-9.)

On one occasion, John allowed his zeal for preaching the truth to carry him beyond the limits of discretion, so far as that particular audience was concerned. He leveled his attack upon the tetrarch, and denounced Herod for living with Herodias who, as has already been pointed out, was both the wife of his brother Philip and his niece. There were three basic reasons why the marriage of Antipas and Herodias was unlawful, and John therefore was on solid ground when he warned the tetrarch of his sin. The reasons were: (1) Herod himself was legally married to another woman; (2) Herodias was the legal wife of Philip; and (3) the law of Moses forbade the marriage of people who were close of kin. See Lev. 18: 6-18. Thus the marriage of Antipas and Herodias was both adulterous and incestuous, and John therefore had correctly said, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." But more about this in the body of the lesson.

The Golden Text

"And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." John the Baptist, as all Bible readers know, was the forerunner of Jesus; he was sent to prepare the way for the coming of the Christ, and to prepare a people for his reception. John was a rugged individualist; and, so far as the record goes, he never failed in the mission on which he was sent, as long as he was free to observe and speak as he saw the needs to be.

The burden of his preaching was "repentance." This was true because the people had gone so far astray from the path of righteousness. The term "repent" literally means to change one's mind, to have another

mind, or to think differently about that which one has done. In order for repentance to be genuine, there must always be a high motive, and in order for repentance to be effective, there must be worthy fruit. Godly sorrow is the divine motive (2 Cor. 7: 10), while making proper amends and living a life of righteousness are the acceptable fruits.

John did not hesitate to preach repentance to anyone who needed to repent. That was why he told Herod what he did. Herod had sinned, and that is just exactly what John told him. God wants all men to be saved, and anyone, regardless of that which he has done, will receive the Lord's blessings, if he will repent, and bring forth fruit worthy of repentance.

The Text Explained

A Disturbing Report

(Matt. 14: 1, 2)

At that season Herod the tetrarch heard the report concerning Jesus. When Herod the Great died he left

a will which specified that his kingdom was to be divided into four parts, known as tetrarchies, and over each part a ruler known as "tetrarch"—a ruler of a fourth. Judaea

was given to Archelaus, one of Herod's sons, but he was deposed after a few years, and Judaea was made a province over which a Roman governor ruled. See Matt. 2: 22. This explains why Pilate, instead of Archelaus, is mentioned in the following quotation: "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, . . . (Luke 3: If.) The Philip mentioned here was not the former husband of Herodias, but another brother. As already pointed out, Antipas also ruled over Peraea, east of the Jordan and north and east of the Dead Sea. See map.

The Galilean ministry of Jesus was at its height, and the popularity of Jesus was very great; and when the news of his mighty works reached Herod, he was understandably disturbed. His is an example of the truth and a guilty conscience makes a coward of anyone.

And *said unto his servants. This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore do these powers work in him.* It appears from Luke 9: 7-9 that the idea that Jesus was John raised from the dead did not originate with Herod, but was adopted by him after the thought was voiced by others. "Now Herod the tetrarch heard all that was done: and he was much perplexed, because that it was said by some, that John was risen from the dead; and by some, that Elijah had appeared; and by others, that one of the old prophets was risen again. And Herod said, John I beheaded: but who is this, about whom I hear such things? And he sought to see him."

It is stated in John 10: 41 that "John indeed did no sign," that is, worked no miracle; but there was a widespread idea among the people of that day that the spirits of the dead were endowed with superhuman powers. It was but natural therefore for Herod, once he accepted the idea that John had been raised from the dead, to conclude that he was doing the mighty works in question.

The Fruits of Sinful Lusts

(Matt. 14: 3-11)

For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. The word "for" implies that the following narrative is introduced in order to make the foregoing remarks of Herod regarding John intelligible. We are told that it was the practice of petty rulers, such as Herod, to make frequent visits to Rome, where they participated in the social affairs of the court, and waited for any crumbs of imperial patronage which might come their way. It was during one of these visits that Herod became involved with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and when he left Rome she went with him. It appears that Herod planned to divorce his lawful wife when he reached home and marry Herodias; but his wife, having already learned of her husband's intrigue with Herodias, fled to her father's house before Herod reached home.

We are not informed as to when Herod actually divorced his wife and married Herodias, but we are told that even the sickly public opinion of that day rose up in indignation against this monstrous injustice. The people of the realm felt outraged when they knew that Herod's wife had been driven from the palace, and that Herodias and her daughter had been brought in to take her place.

For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. In speaking this truth, John was speaking for God. That is the literal meaning of a prophet, and Jesus said that John was more than a prophet. See Matt. 11: 9. Both Herod and Herodias knew that John was telling the truth; for they both knew that their marriage was both incestuous and adulterous. But truth, when it condemns, burns the heart, and the heart of Herodias blazed with such anger that, if she had been able, she would have killed John then and there. But being unable to do that, she "nursed her wrath to keep it warm," and waited for her opportunity.

It is extremely unfortunate that many so-called Christian people represent being told the truth. Paul asked

the Galatians: "So then am I become your enemy, by telling you the truth?" (Gal. 4: 16.) Such an attitude alone is sufficient to convince any thoughtful person that he is not right at heart. But when people are determined to have their own way regardless of whether or not it is right, they usually do not stop to think, and are in no position to be set right.

And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. This desire to put John to death was inspired by Herodias. Mark says, "And Herodias set herself against him, and desired to kill him; and she could not; for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe." This seems to imply that Herod was keeping John safe from Herodias; but he evidently would have killed him himself, had it not been for the multitude. Public opinion is a powerful weapon: and that is why the Jewish leaders were so anxious to get it turned in their direction when they were plotting the death of Jesus. Cf. Matt. 27: 20.

There is a striking parallel between Herod, Herodias, and John, on the one hand, and Ahab, Jezebel, and Elijah, on the other. Both kings were torn between their fear of the men of God, and the strong-willed temptresses at their sides. Herod, as we have already seen, would have put John to death, but he feared the multitude. His unhappy lot then was to protect the Baptist from the malignity of his vindictive wife.

But Herodias never ceased to wait and watch for her opportunity. Josephus tells us that Herod's former wife had fled to her father Aretas, the king of Arabia Petrea, and the latter, seeking to avenge his outraged daughter, proclaimed war against Herod. This probably accounts for the fact that Herod honored the military and state leaders, as set forth in the following passage.

But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced in the midst, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she should ask. Mark gives a fuller account of this setting: "And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday

made a supper to his lords, and the high captains, and the chief men of Galilee; and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and them that sat at meat with him; and the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom." (Mark 6: 21-23; cf. Esther 5: 3ff.)

This day was "convenient" for the diabolic purpose of Herodias. Meyer quotes Grotius as saying, "Opportune for the insidious woman, who hoped, through wine, lust, and the concurrence of sycophants, to be able easily to overcome the wavering mind of her husband." Salome (Josephus says that that was the name of Herodias' daughter) was probably induced by her mother to engage in the dance. This kind of dance was of a libertine character, a kind of pantomimic performance, not unlike the nature of "night-club" dancing of our day. It was the type that would appeal to the wine-drinking, celebrating crowd of men whose morals were low to begin with. The expression "the daughter of Herodias herself" implies that it was somewhat unusual for a daughter of the king to dance before a group like this. Johnson notes that it was not customary for ladies of high rank to dance beyond the limits of the harem. Herod evidently thought that Salome was entitled to a reward in keeping with her standing, and hence his extravagant proposal.

And she, being put forward by her mother, saith, Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist. Mark says, "And she went out, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptizer. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou forthwith give me on a platter the head of John the Baptist." This terrible request, its diabolical vindictiveness, and its shameless cruelty, made an impression even upon Herod's wine-soaked brain; and for a moment the fate of both John and the wicked Herodias hung in the balance. "And the king was grieved."

This was a dramatic moment; what will Herod do? Will his manhood

rise to the occasion and utter a thunderous "No"? Will his kingdom assert itself and protect an innocent man? Alas! it was Herod's other self, his weak and cowardly side which prevailed. He was swept away by the drunken shouts of them that sat at meat with him, and he commanded that Salome's request be granted. Here are the inspired words which tell the sad story:

"And the king was grieved; but for the sake of his oaths, and of them that sat at meat with him, he commanded it to be given; and he sent and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought on a platter, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother." McGarvey's comment on this despicable scene is worthy of note: "Herodias had thirsted for revenge, and sought it persistently ever since John administered the fatal rebuke: but when the gory head was laid in her lap, instead of the pleasure which she anticipated, there must have been kindled within her heart the flames of a remorse, which, like the fires of hell, never shall be quenched. The crime stamped the names of the guilty couple with greater infamy than that for which John had rebuked them; and who can depict the scene when they shall meet John in the day of judgment? Such is re-

venge. Let all who allow themselves to thirst for it take warning." Cf. Rom. 12: 19-21.

A Loving Service

(Matt. 14: 12)

A lid his disciples came, and took up the corpse, and buried him; and they went and told Jesus. The thick mantle of silence has been drawn over the fate of John's head. John Wesley observes, "How mysterious is the providence which left the life of so holy a man in such infamous hands! which permitted it to be sacrificed to the malice of an abandoned harlot, the petulance of a vain girl, and the rashness of a foolish, perhaps drunken, prince, who made a prophet's head the reward of a dance! But we are sure the Almighty will repay his servants in another world, for whatever they suffer in this."

After the disciples had buried the headless body of their leader, they went and told Jesus, not merely to acquaint him with the news, but doubtless to find in him a new leader; and we may be reasonably sure that they transferred to Jesus the confidence and devotion which they had shown toward John. Something of the greatness of John may be learned from the Lord's eulogy in Matt. 11: 7-11.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, persons.

Introduction

Who was the Herod of this lesson?

Give something of his family connections.

Tell something of his prominence in the New Testament.

Who was Herodias?

What can you say of the uniqueness of John's character?

How did John come into conflict with Herod?

The Golden Text

Why did John come preaching repentance?

What is repentance? and how is it related to cause and effect?

Why would John not hesitate to preach to people like Herod and Herodias?

A Disturbing Report

What was a "tetrarch" and how did Herod become one?

Why was Herod disturbed at this time?

Why would he think that Jesus was John raised from the dead?

If John worked no miracles in life, why think that he could if raised from the dead?

The Fruits of Sinful Lusts

Why was the narrative regarding John's death introduced here?

How did Herod come to marry Herodias?

What happened to his lawful wife?

Why did John tell Herod that it was not lawful for him to have Herodias?

How were they affected by John's rebuke? and why?

Why do such people object to being told the truth?

Why did Herod want to kill John? and what kept him from doing it?

Why is public opinion such a powerful weapon?

Discuss the parallel between Herod. Herodias, and John, and Ahab, Jezebel, and Elijah.

Why did Herod put John in prison?

What was the occasion for bringing this matter to a head?

Why was that a "convenient" day? and convenient for what?

Why was Herod probably entertaining at that particular time, in addition to it being his birthday?

Why would the daughter of Herodias dance in their midst?

What kind of a dance was it?

Why would Herod and his guests be pleased with her performance?

Why would he make such an extravagant proposal to the daughter?
Why did she consult her mother before telling the king what she wanted?
Discuss the drama of that moment.
Why was Herod grieved at Salome's request?
Why regard such an oath as this?
Would it have been wrong for him to have disregarded his oaths on this occasion? Why?

What usually happens to people when their thirst for revenge has been satisfied?
Why is it wrong for Christians to seek revenge?

A Loving Service

What happened to John's head?
Why did his disciples go to Jesus after burying John's body?

Lesson II—July 12, 1959

JESUS AND THE CANAANITISH WOMAN

Lesson Text

Matt. 15: 21-31

21 And Je'-sus went out thence, and withdrew into the parts of Tyre and Si'-don.

22 And behold, a Ca-naan-i'-tish woman came out from those borders, and cried, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon.

23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

24 But he answered and said, I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Is'-ra-el.

25 But she came and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

26 And he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs.

27 But she said, Yea, Lord; for

even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

28 Then Je'-sus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it done unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was healed from that hour.

29 And Je'-sus departed thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Gal'-i-lee; and he went up into the mountain, and sat there.

30 And there came unto him great multitudes, having with them the lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and they cast them down at his feet; and he healed them:

31 Inasmuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb speaking, the maimed whole, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Is'-ra-el.

Golden Text.—*"But she came and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me."* (Matt. 15: 25.)

Devotional Reading.—Mark 7: 24-37.

Daily Bible Readings

July 6.	M.....	Elijah and a Widow (1 Kings 17: 8-16)
July 7.	T.....	Elijah Raises the Widow's Son (1 Kings 17: 17-24)
July 8.	W.....	Power of Faith (Matt. 17: 14-20)
July 9.	T.....	Jesus and His Friends (Luke 10: 38-42)
July 10.	F.....	Jesus and His Enemies (Mark 15: 22-32)
July 11.	S.....	Test of Friendship (John 6: 60-71)
July 12.	S.....	Jesus and the Centurion (Matt. 8: 5-13)

Time.—Probably A.D. 29.

Place.—The parts of Tyre and Sidon, a mountain near the sea of Galilee.

Persons.—Jesus, his disciples, the Canaanitish woman, her daughter and the multitudes.

Introduction

The events of this lesson took place during the Lord's third Galilean tour, and also during the third year of his ministry. Painstaking Bible students

are aware of the fact that no single gospel writer professed to record all the things which were said and done by Jesus. In fact, all of them to-

gether do not make that claim. See John 21: 25. This means, of course, that these gospel narrators had another purpose in mind when they wrote their records.

It is generally thought that Matthew wrote primarily for the Jews, but there is nothing to indicate that other peoples would not be benefited by that which he wrote. His prime purpose seems to have been to show that Jesus is the Messiah who was promised in the Old Testament scriptures. Then in addition and subordinate to this primary object, Matthew also recorded many precepts, promises, and prediction which Jesus spoke, and which would be useful for the practical guidance of his people after the kingdom was established.

Those who study these lessons should, whenever possible, read carefully the parallel passages in the other gospel narratives. The lesson which is before us now is also found in Mark 7: 24-37, the passage which serves as our devotional reading. When the records of Matthew and Mark are carefully compared, it will be seen that each complements the other by a number of details. This is a demonstration that their purpose was not to record every detail of the Lord's ministry, but to accomplish a definite thing for their readers. If Jesus had done only a fraction of that which any one of the four gospel narratives contain, the fact that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, would have been abundantly proved.

The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson will be is before us today, treated in the body of the text which

The Text Explained

A Cry for Mercy (Matt. 15: 21-24)

And Jesus went out thence, and withdrew into the parts of Tyre and Sidon. The incident of this lesson follows the Lord's encounter with scribes and Pharisees who came to him from Jerusalem. Read Matt. 15: 1-20. The text does not specifically say that Jesus actually crossed the border into Gentile territory, but it is generally assumed that he did. Tyre and Sidon were the principal cities of Phoenicia, a narrow strip of land northwest of Palestine, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. See map. The record does not say that Christ went to Tyre and Sidon, but rather to "the parts," that is, territory, which belonged to those cities.

If Jesus actually crossed the border into Phoenicia, then that was probably the only time he was on Gentile soil during his public ministry. One commentator suggests that after that interview with the sanctimonious Pharisees who thought the whole world outside of Judaea was unclean, it would be a refreshment to his spirit to cross over the line and feel that he was still in God's world, with blue sky overhead and the sea on this hand and mountains on that, all showing the glory of their Maker.

He would breathe a freer, less stifling atmosphere there.

And behold, a Canaanitish woman came out from those borders, and cried, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon. Mark calls this woman "a Greek, a Syrophenician by race." The term "Greek" is to be understood in the sense of a Gentile, in contrast with the Jews; while "Syrophenician" means a Syrian of Phoenicia. It appears that Phoenicia was controlled by Syria, in that it was a part of the Syrian province. There is nothing in Mark's record which conflicts with the idea that the woman was a "Canaanite." The Canaanites were the original inhabitants of Palestine, and the Phoenicians were descended from them. Cf. Gen. 10: 15-19.

The expression "Have mercy on me" suggests that the distressed mother had made her child's misery her own. Cf. Mark 9: 22. Her words regarding Jesus as the son of David show that she had some knowledge of the Messianic hope of the Jewish people. Her country was adjacent to that of the Jews, and Matthew says that "the report of him went forth into all Syria: and they brought unto him all that were sick, holden with

divers diseases and torments, possessed with demons, and epileptic, and palsied; and he healed them." (Matt. 4: 24.) In some way the distraught mother learned of the presence of Jesus, and she immediately sought him out. When she told him that her daughter was grievously vexed with a demon, she was literally saying that she was badly demonized. Mark says that the girl was a *little daughter*, and that she had an *unclean spirit*.

But he answered her not a word. This, in many ways, is a remarkable passage. It has been called the silence of love; and from that which later happened, we can well understand that it was. Man has a listening and apprehending capacity; and he has been taught to expect a response when there is a need. David prayed, "Unto thee, O Jehovah, will I call: My rock, be not thou deaf unto me; Lest, if thou be silent unto me, I become like them that go down into the pit. Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee. When I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle." (Psalm 28: 1, 2.) The silence of Jesus toward the Syro-phoenician woman was not the silence of indifference; his purpose was to teach a lesson, possibly to test and to demonstrate her faith.

And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. These disciples did not mean for Jesus to send her away without granting her request; but rather to do what she asked and thereby get rid of her. They were annoyed by her entreaties. They apparently did not like this form of public attention: a strange woman crying after them. Mark implies that they were seeking quiet: "And he entered into a house, and would have no man know it; and he could not be hid."

But he answered and said, I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This reply was evidently to the disciples, and it would naturally remind them of the instruction which he had given them in 10: 5, 6. It was not meant to suggest that he was not interested in the woman's petition, nor that the terms of his commission made it necessary for him to disappoint her. His aim was probably to indicate the

proper course of his public ministry. We know that Jesus did frequently give help to Gentile people; but that was not the prime purpose of his ministry. Cf. Acts 3: 26; 18: 5, 6.

The Reward of Faith

(Matt. 15: 25-28)

But she came and worshipped him, saying, Lord help me. Mark says that she came and fell at his feet. The piteous cry of this helpless woman was the most condensed possible form of expression which was wrung from the anguish of her heart. We have no possible way of knowing the precise feeling which it generated in Jesus. He may have felt that her request was not merely an isolated one, but was in a sense representative of the Gentile world inviting him who was all but rejected by his own people, to come over and help them, a kind of omen of the transference of the kingdom from Jewish to Gentile soil.

And he answered and said. It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. The word for "dogs" is diminutive and literally means "little dogs," and the picture is that of a family meal, with the pet dogs running around the table and begging for something to eat. The idea is not the uncleanness of the dogs, but rather their dependence and subordinate position. There was therefore nothing degrading about the Lord's metaphor; he was simply emphasizing the relative positions of the Jews and Gentiles. The children first, and then their pets. "And he said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." (Mark 7: 27.)

But she said. Yea, Lord: for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. The children are the masters of the dogs, and Mark says, "Yea, Lord, even the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." Jesus had suggested the order in the home by which the pets are required to wait until the meal is over before receiving their portion; but with a wit made keen by her desperate plight, the mother replies by alluding to the well known fact that dogs under the table are permitted to eat the crumbs which fall to the floor even while the meal is

in progress; thereby intimating her hope to receive aid even before the needs of the Jews had been entirely satisfied.

The use of the diminutive throughout this exchange between Jesus and the woman is very interesting and suggestive. First, Jesus says that it is not meet to feed the "little dogs," that is, household pets, before the children have their portion; and then the woman replies, Yea, Lord, even the "little dogs" eat of the "little crumbs" which fall from their masters' ("little children") table. Thus, with ready wit, deep humility, and abundant faith, this woman skillfully turned the Lord's figure to her own advantage. She accepted the Lord's evaluation of the situation, and plead only to fare as the household pets which are fed without loss to the household.

Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it done unto thee even as thou wilt. And the daughter was healed from that hour. The immediate compliance with her request and the intense delight in her faith may have recalled a similar case of aid given to a Gentile. See Matt. 8: 5-10. The heart of Jesus must have been greatly refreshed as he experienced such unsophisticated moral nature on pagan soil, in contrast with the traditionalism of his own people. Someone has said that the transition from the one scene to the other unconsciously serves the purposes of consummate dramatic art.

It seemed at first that Jesus would deny the woman's request entirely, but when she demonstrated her faith, he bade her enter the treasure-house and help herself to her heart's content. Few things are more rewarding than persevering faith and prayer; indeed, all things are possible to him who believes. It has been noted that the hindrances which were thrown in this woman's way tended only to increase her faith. The faith which was hers may be compared to a river, which becomes enlarged by dams which have been placed across it, until at last they are all swept away by the mighty stream which they helped to create. The following comment by McGarvey is worthy of our consideration.

"The earnest perseverance of the

faithful woman gains its point, and her mother's heart is made to rejoice. Less love for her child, or less faith in Jesus, would have caused a failure. The entire scene is often repeated in pious households. How often a pious mother, with a child grievously vexed with the demon of sin, cries piteously and long to the blessed Savior, saying, 'Lord, help me.' And how often does Jesus appear, for awhile, to give no heed to the cry, until even a cold world begins to pity the wretched petitioner. But finally, when a mighty faith has been developed out of sorrow and weeping, the unheard answer comes, 'Be it unto thee as thou wilt.' The story of the Canaanite woman is a type, and it is written for our admonition on whom the ends of the world have come. It is another illustration of the Savior's doctrine, that 'men ought always to pray, and not to faint.' (Luke 18: 1-8.)"

More Miracles and Their Glorious Effect

(Matt. 15: 29-31)

And Jesus departed thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and sat there. Mark is more explicit regarding the route of the Lord's return to the vicinity of the sea of Galilee: "And again he went out from the borders of Tyre, and came through Sidon unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the borders of Decapolis." It appears that Jesus went northward from Tyre to Sidon, then eastward across the Jordan toward Damascus; and then turning southward through Decapolis, he approached the sea of Galilee from the east. The probable reason for this circuitous route was to enable Jesus to keep away from the territory which was ruled by Herod Antipas. The tetrarch Philip who governed the districts east of the sea of Galilee and the upper Jordan, was a better man than his brother Antipas, and moreover he had no cause to feel uneasy about Jesus. We are not told why Jesus went to the mountain near the sea of Galilee; it may have been to rest and enjoy the scenery, or possibly to teach.

And there came unto him great multitudes, having with them the lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and they cast them

clown at his feet. This is a graphic account of the happenings on that occasion. They literally flung the afflicted at the feet of Jesus; not carelessly, but in haste, because so many were coming for the same purpose. This is the same district from which the people at an earlier date had asked Jesus to leave their country. Two men who were possessed with demons were healed, and the demons asked for and obtained permission to enter a herd of some two thousand swine, with the result that the entire herd became stampeded and rushed down a steep place, and perished in the waters. This, apparently, was more than the people could tolerate, "And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart from their borders." (Matt. 8: 34; cf. Mark 5: 10-13.)

The reason for the change of attitude of the citizens toward Jesus was probably due to their own reflection and to the preaching of one of men from whom the demons had gone out. See Mark 5: 18-20. This should be a lesson to us today. People who reject the gospel today, may be won tomorrow. Time and events often soften the hearts of people for whom we hold little hope for gospel obedience.

And he healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb speaking, the maimed whole, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing. This is a scene which no professed healer of

our day can produce. The multitude who brought the afflicted to Jesus had seen that which he did, and their eyes did not deceive them.

Mark, in reporting this same incident, mentions only one case of healing, possibly one of the most unusual ones. This is a good illustration of the common difference between the narratives of Matthew and Mark. Matthew, as a rule, mentions the healing of more than one, while Mark picks out one of the most remarkable cases and describes it minutely.

And they glorified the God of Israel. Mark says, "And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well; he maketh even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." The people saw clearly that the power by which Jesus performed his miracles came from God. Cf. John 3: 1, 2.

The expression "the God of Israel" was probably used with reference to the large heathen population of that district. Jesus had come with the twelve from the wholly Gentile territory of Tyre and Sidon into a locality which, although chiefly heathen, was in close proximity to a purely Jewish population, and where, in consequence of which, the name of the God of Israel would be known and revered. Jesus in this way was conquering the national prejudices of his disciples, and was gradually preparing them for their future mission among all the nations of the earth.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What must be taken into consideration if we are to understand the narratives regarding Jesus?
What seems to have been the primary purpose of Matthew's writing?
How can his record benefit people today?
Discuss fully.
Why is it always good to consider parallel passages when studying a given lesson?

A Cry for Mercy

Where did Jesus go on the occasion of this lesson, and for what probable reason?
What was unusual about this trip, if Jesus actually crossed over into Gentile territory?
Who came to Jesus and for what purpose?
Why did Matthew and Mark refer to her under different terms?

Why did she say, "Have mercy on me," when it was her daughter who was afflicted?

Why did she refer to Jesus as the "son of David"?

What was wrong with her daughter?

Why didn't Jesus answer her request in some way?

Why is such silence difficult to accept?

What did the disciples ask Jesus to do, and why?

What reply did Jesus give to them? and why?

Who were the lost sheep of the house of Israel?

The Reward of Faith

What further effort did the woman make to obtain help?

What did Jesus then say to her? and why?

In what sense did he compare her with the dogs?

How did the woman take hold of the Lord's metaphor?

Describe the setting as Jesus pictured it, and as the woman applied it.

How did her answer affect Jesus?
 What did he then say to her? and why?
 What similar case may have been recalled
 by this incident?

Discuss the potency of persevering faith
 and prayer.

How did the obstacles which were thrown
 in this woman's way help to increase
 her faith?

How may this lesson be applied to people
 today?

What does it mean to pray always, and
 not to faint?

More Miracles and Their Glorious Effect

Where did Jesus next go?

Describe his route and give his probable
 reason for taking it.

Who came to him on the mountain? and
 for what purpose?

In what sense did they "cast" the af-
 flicted at his feet? and why?

What great change had come over these
 people since Jesus was last in their
 district?

How do you account for the change?

What lesson should we get from this in-
 cident?

How does the work of healing on the part
 of Jesus differ from professed healers of
 our day?

How were the people affected? and to
 whom did they attribute the power?

What is suggested by the expression "the
 God of Israel"?

Lesson III—July 19, 1959

PETER'S CONFESSION AND THE LORD'S PROMISE

Lesson Text

Matt. 16: 13-26

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 by 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 what-
 soever thou shalt bind on earth shall
 be bound in heaven; and whatsoever
 thou shalt loose on earth shall be
 loosed in heaven.

20 Then charged he the disciples

that they should tell no man that he
 was the Christ.

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

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

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

24 Then said Je'-sus unto his dis-
 ciples, If any man would come after
 me, let him deny himself, and take
 up his cross, and follow me.

25 For whosoever would save his
 life shall lose it: and whosoever shall
 lose his life for my sake shall find it.

26 For what shall a man be
 profited, if he shall gain the whole
 world, and forfeit his life? or what
 shall a man give in exchange for his
 life?

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ,
 the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16: 16.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 53: 1-12.

Daily Bible Readings

July 13. M.....	Confessing Christ (Luke 9: 22-27)
July 14. T.....	Preaching Christ (Acts 4: 1-12)
July 15. W.....	Obedying Christ (Matt. 7: 15-27)
July 16. T.....	Cost of Discipleship (Luke 14: 25-35)
July 17. F.....	Aim of Discipleship (Phil. 3: 7-16)

July 18. S. Power of the Cross.....(1 Cor. 1: 18-25)
 July 19. S..... Enduring the Cross (Heb. 12: 1-7)

TIME.—Probably A.D. 29.

PLACE.—The parts of Caesarea Philippi.

PERSONS.—Jesus and his disciples.

Introduction

When the events of this lesson took place, Jesus knew that his ministry to the multitudes was just about over. The principal task which was then before him was to train and perfect the faith of the disciples who had followed him, and who were to be sent to carry his message to the whole world. It was very essential that these men be made to rise above the vague and earthly conceptions of his person and purpose which were then prevalent. And, too, it was necessary that he make to them a great disclosure, as soon as they were prepared to receive it.

Christ began the task of clarifying the minds of his disciples by asking them a question, namely, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" This doubtless was intended to prepare the disciples for the question which was directed to them regarding their own thinking. It has always been true that as a man thinketh within himself, so is he. (Prov. 23: 7.) The answers to the first

question gave the verdicts which the men of his day had passed on Christ, while the answer to the second is the confession of one who had passed the boundary which separates those who know the Lord from those who know him not. Peter's reply drew from Jesus both a benediction and a great disclosure.

When Christ made known the fact that he would build his church, he was dealing with the rock and key of Christianity. The church must have a solid foundation, and it must offer protection to all who enter and remain faithful to the Lord; but if men are to enjoy that kind of fellowship, the door which leads into the church must be opened, and it was to Peter that the authority was given. The establishment of the church required the death of Jesus, a matter which he next explained to the disciples, and only those who follow Christ can be the beneficiaries of his great sacrifice.

The Golden Text

The golden text for this lesson is a part of the text, and will be considered in its regular order.

The Text Explained

A Confession and a Promise

(Matt. 16: 13-20)

Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? The city now under consideration was anciently called *Paniam*, but when it was rebuilt by Herod Philip, tetrarch of Trachonitis and Ituraea (Luke 3: 1), it was called Caesarea Philippi after the Roman Emperor and himself. The addition of Philippi to Caesarea distinguished this city from another by the same name on the Mediterranean seacoast. Caesarea Philippi was located at the foot of Mount Hermon, and was the most northern point mentioned in the travels of Jesus.

Luke says that as he was praying

apart, his disciples were with him, and he asked them, saying, "Who do the multitudes say that I am?" (Luke 9: 18.) He was not asking about the views of the scribes and Pharisees, and the other leaders among the Jews; but about the views of the common people. The people of Nazareth, and the ruling class, had frequently expressed their adverse opinion of him, but now he asks his disciples to state the popular opinion regarding him. The purpose of this question was doubtless to prepare them for the one which he addressed directly to them.

And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some Elijah; and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. It appears that the disciples knew what the popular views were, and they

were ready to respond. It has already been pointed out in a previous lesson that Herod and others thought that Jesus was John the Baptist, who had been raised from the dead. Those who thought that he was Elijah probably based their conclusion on Malachi's prediction (Mai. 4: 5); and it appears that there was a popular idea among the Jews that "one of the old prophets" (Luke 9: 19), of whom Jeremiah was a representative, would appear to usher in the advent of the Messiah. Cf. John 1: 21.

It should be observed that, although the multitudes differed as to his exact identity, they all agreed that he was not an ordinary man or teacher, but that he was sent directly from heaven. They did not, however, regard him as the promised Messiah, but entertained a retrogressive idea regarding him.

He saith unto them, But who. say ye that I am? The disciples had been with Jesus for several months, and had had ample time to form a correct judgment regarding him; and Jesus wanted to hear them express that judgment. They were to be his ambassadors, but they could not function in that capacity unless they firmly believed him to be the Christ. That was the purpose for which they were being trained, and the time was ripe to let it be known what progress had been made.

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Peter, usually the first to speak, answers for the whole group; and his answer contains two propositions, namely, his Messiahship as the promised son of David, the human side; and the Son of God, hence his divinity. This confession is not made in the terms of the answer to the first question; it is not, we say, or I say, but Thou art! The confession which Peter made is the one confession which all people who are acceptable to God must make today. Jesus must be recognized as the promised Messiah and also as the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. The expression "Bar-Jonah" means *son of Jonah*. Peter was greatly favored of God,

hence, "Blessed art thou!" This was a beatitude for Simon. He had confessed a truth which no human mind could conceive; only God could reveal it unto him. Jesus accepts the confession as being true, and he thereby, in effect, stated his own claim to be the Messiah and the Son of God. God had revealed this truth to Peter through the words and works of Jesus, and it is possible that reference is also to the statement which God made in Matt. 3: 17: "And lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. The point of comparison in "I also" is this, Peter made a certain declaration with reference to Jesus, and now Jesus in his turn, does the same with reference to Peter. The emphasis is not on "Thou art Peter" over against "Thou art the Christ," but on "I also." The Father has revealed to you one truth, and I also will tell you another.

There are three words in this passage which should be carefully defined before attempting an exegesis of it, namely, "Peter," "rock," and "church." Peter is the Greek Petros (masculine) and means a single stone; rock is feminine, and means an unmovable ledge or bed-rock. The term "church" (*ekklesia*) is compounded from *ek* (out of) and *kaleo* (to call or summon). Peter was a stone, but the confession which he had just made, or the truth which he had confessed, was like a mighty bed-rock upon which a building could be erected; and that was what Jesus proposed to do.

Jesus came into the world to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19: 10), and he tells Peter just how he is going about the work. The entire enterprise is to be based upon the truth of his Messiahship, the truth which Peter had just confessed. The saved are compared to a building which is erected upon a solid foundation. The call for people to quit the ways of the world is to go forth, and all who will respond are to be separated *from* the evil one and *unto* Christ who will build them into a spiritual house. Cf. Eph. 2: 19-22; 1 Pet. 2: 5.

The first time the word *church* occurs in the New Testament is in the passage now before us. The term was not coined by Christ or the apostles, but was in general use by the Greek-speaking people of that time. The word *ekklesia* (church) never had any religious significance among the Greeks; it literally meant the *called out ones* or an *assembly*, and it was applied to any body of people, called out and gathered together for any purpose. There is nothing about the original word itself which indicates the character of the assembly. It might have been religious, political, or an unorganized mob. The term was applied twice to the mob in Ephesus, once to the proconsular court, and once to the people of God in the wilderness. See Acts 19: 32, 39, 41; 7: 38. Thus, the *kind* of church must always be determined by the context. Other terms and circumstances will reveal whether the reference is to a church of the Lord, or a church of men.

The people of God during the age of Moses were God's church (*ekklesia*) for that period (Acts 7: 38), and they had the Old Testament as their law; and in a similar manner, the people of God during the age of Christ are his church (*ekklesia*) for this period (1 Cor. 15: 9; 1 Tim. 3: 15; cf. Heb. 3: 1-6), and we have the New Testament for our law.

In the expression "and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it," the pronoun "it" is in the feminine gender; and if the word had been translated "her" instead of "it" there would have been no difficulty in understanding the meaning of this passage. "Not even the gates of Hades—than which nothing was supposed to be stronger—shall surpass the church in strength." (Thayer.)

In the imagery which Christ presents, Hades is pictured as a walled city waging war against the church. The gates of the walled cities of those days symbolized their power, since it was through the gates that their military forces issued forth. Hades is the place of the dead between death and the resurrection; and the practical meaning of the passage is that death would never be able to destroy all the members of the church at any one time. Other scriptures which teach the perpetuity

of the church or kingdom of Christ are Dan. 2: 44 and Heb. 12: 28.

Meyer, in commenting on this statement by Jesus says, "So securely will I build my church upon this rock, *that the gates of Hades will not be able to resist it*, will not prove stronger than it; indicating by means of a comparison, the great strength and stability of the edifice of the church, even when confronted with so powerful a structure as that of Hades, the gates of which, strong as they are, will yet not prove to be stronger than the building of the church."

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. The Lord is here continuing the figure of a building. The church or kingdom is thought of as a house, and Peter is to have the keys or the authority to open its doors. That which Jesus calls the "church" in verse 18, he refers to as the "kingdom" in verse 19. The two terms are used interchangeably, the church signifying the "called out" feature of the Lord's people, while the kingdom refers to the "government" idea.

The power or authority to bind and loose on earth, with the promise that such action would be recognized in heaven, was not limited to Peter; the same language was also addressed to all the apostles. See Matt. 18: 18; John 20: 21-23. But there is this difference to be noted: Peter was given the added responsibility of opening the door of faith, or, which is the same thing, of preaching the first gospel sermon to both Jews and Gentiles, and thereby laying down the conditions whereby they could become members of the church which Jesus built, or the kingdom which he established. See Acts, chapters 2 and 10. To *bind* was to pronounce a man as being unworthy of a place in the kingdom, while to *loose* was to declare that he had been freed from all things which would prevent his becoming a member of the church. Peter and all the apostles, of course, were guided by the Holy Spirit in their work in this respect. Cf. Acts 2: 1-4.

Then charged he the disciples that

they should tell no man that he was the Christ. The people were not yet ready to receive this great truth, and the apostles themselves were not sufficiently instructed; Christ himself must yet die and be raised from the dead, the crowning proof of his Messiahship, and the Spirit be sent to guide the apostles in their work. Cf. Luke 9: 21, 22; 24: 49.

His Death and Resurrection Foretold (Matt. 16: 21-23)

From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples, that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up. Usually about the time students feel that they have some information and may be regarded somewhat as learned, vast territories of unexplored knowledge open up before them, and they are almost made to feel that they know nothing at all. Peter and his fellow-apostles had been with Christ long enough to feel that they knew him, but now the Lord begins to reveal himself to them in a light which to them was wholly unexpected. If they are really to know the Christ, they must know him as the Sin-offering of the world and the risen Redeemer. This is the first plain prediction of his death and resurrection, and it was made a little more than six months before they occurred.

And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee. The fact that Peter dared to rebuke the Son of God shows that he did not fully comprehend the true significance of his confession. It also shows that he was not yet ready to preach Christ to the people. It appears that Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked him privately.

But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men. Peter was tempting Jesus not to go to the cross as Satan did in the wilderness; and in his ignorance he had placed himself

as a stumbling-block across the pathway of Jesus. Bruce notes that none are more formidable instruments of temptation than well-meaning friends, who care more for our comfort than for our character. Peter had a worldly conception of the kingdom which Christ came to establish.

The Conditions of Discipleship (Matt. 16: 24-26)

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. Jesus makes self-denial an essential requisite of Christian discipleship; and that means the turning away from self to Christ, from one center to another. Cross-bearing is usually thought of as bearing burdens or enduring trials in the service of Christ; but the cross which Jesus had in mind was not some inevitable trouble which may come to saint and sinner alike, but to something which is taken up voluntarily, something which we have the power to refuse to touch. Cf. John 10: 17, 18. We bear our cross when we voluntarily suffer for the good of others. Cf. Luke 9: 23.

For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. One's life includes his powers, opportunities, and possessions. If he uses them selfishly he will lose them in the end; but if he devotes them to the service of Christ he will save them eternally. One must give himself—his all—to Christ, if he expects to be saved.

For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life? Life, in the true sense, of course, refers to that which will continue in eternity, and there is nothing in this world which can compensate for its loss. When we think of living, we think of what we are and what we do; but when we think of life as compared with death, we think of that which is immortal.

Questions for Discussion

State the subject of this lesson.
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction
What great problem was before Christ at the time of this lesson?

How did he begin the task of clarifying the minds of his disciples?
 Why is it true that a man is as he thinks within himself?
 What did the answers to the two questions which he asked imply?
 With what was Christ dealing when he made known the fact that he would build his church?
 Why are the rock and key of Christianity necessary?

A Confession and a Promise

Give some general facts regarding Caesarea Philippi.
 Why did Jesus ask the views of the common people regarding him?
 Why did the people think as they did about him?
 What is implied in the answer to the first question?
 Why ask the disciples what they thought regarding the Son of man?
 Why did Peter answer? and what is involved in his reply?
 Why is this confession necessary for all who are pleasing to God?
 What did Jesus then say to Peter?
 Why call him "Bar-Jonah"?
 How did Peter learn the truth regarding Jesus?
 What did Jesus in effect affirm when he accepted this confession as being true?
 Why did Jesus use the expression "I also" in his reply?
 What three words in the Lord's answer need special attention? Why?

Give the significance of each of them?
 Why is the church compared to a building?
 How was the term "church" used in New Testament times? Give some examples.
 In what sense were the people of God under Moses God's church?
 What did Jesus mean by saying that the gates of Hades would not "prevail" against the church?
 What were the "keys" of the kingdom?
 When and how did Peter use them?
 Did he have more authority than the other apostles? Give reasons for your answer.
 What is meant by binding and loosing on earth and being recognized in heaven?
 Why not allow the apostles to tell others that he was the Christ then?

His Death and Resurrection Foretold

Why did Jesus begin at this time to reveal this information unto them?
 How did Peter react to it? and why?
 How did Jesus answer him? and why?

The Conditions of Discipleship

What are the conditions of discipleship named here and why are they necessary?
 What is meant by self-denial? cross-bearing?
 How can one save or lose his life?
 What can compensate for the loss of one's life?

Lesson IV—July 26, 1959

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS

Lesson Text

Matt. 17: 1-13

1 And after six days Je'-sus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart:

2 And he was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light.

3 And behold, there appeared unto them Mo'-ses and E-li'-jah talking with him.

4 And Peter answered, and said unto Je'-sus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, I will make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Mo'-ses, and one for E-li'-jah.

5 While he was yet speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son. in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were

sore afraid.

7 And Je'-sus came and touched them and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

8 And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, save Je'-sus only.

9 And as they were coming down from the mountain, Je'-sus commanded them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead.

10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that E-li'-jah must first come?

11 And he answered and said, E-li'-jah indeed cometh, and shall restore all things:

12 But I say unto you, that E-li'-jah is come already, and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they would. Even so shall the Son of man also suffer of them.

13 Then understood the disciples that he spake unto them of John the Bap'-tist.

Golden Text.—*"We were eyewitnesses of his majesty."* (2 Pet. 1: 16b.)
 Devotional Reading.—2 Pet. 1: 12-18.

Daily Bible Readings

July 20.	M.....	Mark's Report of the Transfiguration (Mark 9: 2-13)
July 21.	T.....	Luke's Report of the Transfiguration (Luke 9: 28-36)
July 22.	W.....	Peter's Report of the Transfiguration (2 Pet. 1: 12-18)
July 23.	T.....	Jesus Acknowledged (Matt. 3: 13-15)
July 24.	F.....	Must Hear Christ (Heb. 2: 1-4)
July 25.	S.....	Christ Greater than Moses (Heb. 3: 1-14)
July 26.	S.....	Christ at God's Right Hand (Heb. 1: 1-14)

Time.—Probably A.D. 29.

Place.—Probably Mt. Hermon.

Persons.—Jesus, Peter, James, and John.

Introduction

The transfiguration of Christ is not to be regarded as a detached and isolated event in his earthly experience, but rather as a specific part of those demonstrations which were designed to show the divine plan in sending him to the earth. About a week before this great experience, Peter had confessed his faith and that of the other apostles in his Messiahship. This was a great moment in the lives of all of them, but almost immediately Jesus informed them of his impending suffering and death. This announcement fell like a thunder bolt upon their ears. It was more than the impulsive Peter could bear, and he, accordingly, rebuked the Master and assured him that such a thing would never happen to him.

Notwithstanding the plainness of the Lord's announcement of his forthcoming treatment at the hands of his enemies, the disciples did not comprehend its meaning. Someone has said that there is nothing more

difficult than to change the ideals of men, and that explains why the disciples could not conceive the idea that the Messiah must die; they held to their belief that he was coming to establish an earthly kingdom. But Jesus went on to show these men that not only must he die, but that they must share his suffering.

It may seem strange that Jesus would let the repeated blows fall upon the disciples, but they must be made to understand what the future held for their Lord and for them. But now the time has come when they need reassurance. They were told that "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." (Matt. 16: 28.) This encouragement was followed by the transfiguration which would serve to impress the disciples with the unmistakable divinity of his nature, and would give them a foretaste of the things to come. Cf. Phil. 3: 21.

The Golden Text

"We were eyewitnesses of his majesty." It will be helpful to us, in considering this part of the lesson, to get the full setting of this text. "Yea, I will give diligence that at every time ye may be able after my decease to call these things to remembrance. For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory, This is my beloved Son, in

whom I am well pleased: and this voice we ourselves heard borne out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount." (2 Pet.: 15-18.)

Thus, in addition to strengthening Christ for the ordeal which lay ahead of him, and to enable the disciples to get a glimpse of the glory of the Lord's being, the experience was also made to serve as a basis of instruction and encouragement for future followers of Christ. John probably had the transfiguration in mind when he wrote, "And we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father." (See John 1: 14.)

The Text Explained

The Scene in the Holy Mountain

(Matt. 17: 1-5)

And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: The three disciples mentioned here are frequently referred to as "the inner circle," or those who were given special privileges in company with Jesus. In addition to this occasion, they were with him when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Mark 5: 37), and in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26: 37). These experiences, and especially the one now under consideration, made an indelible impression upon the minds of these disciples.

The time of the transfiguration was six days after the conversation of the preceding chapter. Luke says, "And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, that he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling." (Luke 9: 28, 29.) Matthew mentions the six days which were exclusive of the two events, while Luke includes the two days on which the conversation of the preceding chapter and the transfiguration took place.

Neither Matthew nor Luke gives the name of the mountain upon which the transfiguration took place; but inasmuch as no indication is given that Jesus had left the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi, the probability is that Mount Hermon was the place. This mountain fulfills the demands of a "high mountain." McGarvey notes that some lofty terrace on its side would have been in every way a suitable spot for the transfiguration. Luke, as was seen in the passage already quoted, says that Jesus went up into the mountain to pray. All indications point to the fact that the time was at night.

And he was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light. The transfiguration was a transformation which was outwardly visible. Bengel observes that our Lord always possessed the glory within himself. Luke says that the fashion of his countenance was al-

tered, which evidently means that there was a change in the Lord's appearance. The shining of his face indicates that the very form of God (Phil. 2: 5; Heb. 1: 3) was manifesting itself visibly through the veil of flesh.

The clothing of Christ, according to Luke, became white and dazzling, while Mark notes that "his garments became glistening, exceeding white, so as no fuller on earth can whiten them." (Mark 9: 3.) Up to this point in the Lord's experience the glory of his divinity seemed to be enshrouded by his suffering humanity, and he had for the most part been seen as the man of sorrows and the one who was acquainted with grief; but here his divinity bursts forth in its glory. This glorious manifestation would serve to impress the disciples with the unmistakable divinity of his nature; with the illustrious majesty of the celestial world; and would give some idea of the change which will be wrought in the saved in the resurrection. See Phil. 3: 21; 1 John 3: 2.

And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him. There is nothing in the text which indicates the manner in which the disciples recognized these ancient worthies. This may have come about as a result of the conversation which they heard. Luke says they "spake of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." This was the subject which Jesus had mentioned in his previous conversation with the disciples, and concerning which Peter had rebuked him. See Matt. 16: 21-23. Moses and Elijah were the representatives of the old order—the law and the prophets—under which the Israelites had lived from Sinai till the time of this appearance.

And Peter answered, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, I will make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. Both Mark and Luke say that Peter did not know what he was saying when he made this proposal; he was afraid. One may wonder why Peter felt called upon to speak at all, if he was afraid and did not know what to

answer; but that was in line With his well known characteristic impulsiveness, and the same is true of many of us. Who of us, amid some unusual experience and out of sheer embarrassment, has not blurted out something without thinking of what he was saying? So far as the record goes. Jesus made no reply to Peter's suggestion. Robertson notes that it is often so that men wish to keep up mountain-top experiences when the valley is calling loudly for them.

While he was yet speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. A careful reading of Luke's account of the experience now before us gives the impression that it was night. While Jesus was praying the disciples were heavy with sleep, and they came down from the mountain "the next day." And then, as McGarvey notes, the three glowing forms of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah suddenly appear out of the darkness; and then, as the two visitors were taking their leave of Jesus, Peter made his rash proposal; and while he was still speaking, and while all the disciples were trembling with fear, a bright cloud, with the same radiant white which was seen in the face of Jesus, came before them out of the same darkness and overshadowed them, and then the Majestic Voice of Jehovah himself spoke to them a message which they could never forget.

The three clauses of the divine utterance are, (1) This is my beloved Son; (2) in whom I am well pleased; (3) hear ye him. The first two clauses are the same as were spoken after the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3: 17), but the third is found only here, that is, at the transfiguration. This message regarding his Son and the disappearance of the two heavenly visitors signified that God, who in the past had spoken to the fathers by the prophets, would henceforth speak only through his Son. The message of the transfiguration is the same as the message of the Book of Hebrews, namely, the passing of the old order and the bringing in of the new.

It has already been suggested that one of the purposes of the transfigu-

ration was to strengthen Jesus and prepare him for the ordeal which awaited him. It was as if the veil had been drawn aside and the eternal world for the time being was opened up to him. David Smith says that it was like a vision of home to the exile, or a foretaste of rest to the weary traveller. Jesus was granted a glimpse of the glory which he had laid aside for the work of redemption (Phil. 2: 5ff), and was given an earnest of the joy which awaited him when his work of redemption was finished. (Heb. 12: 2.) In other words, from the vantage-ground of the Mount of Transfiguration the Father vouchsafed to his Divine-human Son the glory which awaited him beyond the Hill of Golgotha. But even that was not all. The heart of Jesus had been grieved by the dullness of the twelve, the folly of the people, and the hostility of the rulers, but in the transcendent hour which is now before us it was revealed to him how the Father regarded his work, along with the glorified saints who had already accomplished theirs. Notwithstanding the fact that Jesus stood practically alone on the earth, misunderstood, forsaken, and persecuted, he had both the sympathy and approval of Heaven.

The Effect on the Disciples

(Matt. 17: 6-8)

And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. The disciples were dismayed by the Majestic Voice, and were dazzled by the glory of the cloud. Their reaction to these miraculous events and visions reminds us of similar experiences of Daniel and Saul of Tarsus. See Dan. 8: 17; Acts 9: 1-4. And as the transfiguration had a purpose for Christ, it also had a purpose for the disciples. It was designed to reconcile them to the incredible and, in their estimation, the repulsive idea that the Messiah had to suffer the shameful death of humiliation. This was done by revealing to them the glory which was to follow.

As these three wondering disciples listened to the conversation which the two glorified saints had with their Teacher, they heard them speak of "his decease," or, as the Greek has

it. "the exodus which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." Thus, in the estimation of Moses and Elijah, that event, which seemed to the disciples an intolerable ignominy and a crushing defeat, was a splendid triumph, comparable to the mighty deliverance which Jehovah wrought for Israel when he brought them out of the land of bondage and made them a free nation. Edersheim notes that on Hermon Jesus and his disciples reached the highest point in their history. The remainder of I he way was but a descent into the valley of humiliation and death! The resurrection, of course, was to follow.

And Jesus came and touched them and said, Arise, and be not afraid. The touch and voice of Jesus assured the prostrated disciples that he was still in the flesh, and that they had no reason to be afraid. Cf. Luke 24: 36-43. People today, of course, cannot hear the voice of Jesus and feel his touch, as those disciples did; but they have the assurance of his eternal word that all will be well with them if they will do as he has commanded. Cf. Rom. 8: 28; 1 John 5: 3; 4: 17, 18.

And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one. save Jesus only. Moses and Elijah has disappeared, and only Jesus remained as lawgiver and prophet. "Jesus only" is the great lesson of the transfiguration; he is God's only spokesman to the human race today. Only that which he has authorized is binding on men today. Cf. Matt. 28: 18; Eph. 1: 22, 23; Heb. 2: 1-3.

A Mystery Explained

(Matt. 17: 9-13)

And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead. The term "vision" does not imply that the transfiguration was an unreality; for Mark says that Jesus charged them that they should tell not man "what things they had seen." Luke, without mentioning the time condition which had been imposed upon them, says, "And they held their peace, and told no man in those days any of the things which they had seen." The evident reason for this prohibition was that the disciples themselves did not fully understand the significance of the

transfiguration; and to tell it to others, including the other nine apostles, would have led to greater misunderstanding and confusion.

And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come? The appearance of Elijah with Moses upon the mountain, along with the command not to tell any one of his coming, evidently caused the disciples to ask this question. It was the common expectation of the Jewish people that Elijah would precede the Messiah, and would prepare the people for his coming (see Mai. 4: 5, 6). These three disciples had just seen Elijah appear with Jesus, and if no man is to know of his coming, that is, if they are not to tell what they had seen, then what is the significance of the teaching of the scribes regarding him? Is he yet to come?

And he answered and said, Elijah indeed cometh, and shall restore all things: but I say unto you, that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they would. Even so shall the Son of man also suffer of them. Then understood the disciples that he spake unto them of John the Baptist. Malachi's prophecy regarding the coming of Elijah says, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." The purpose of this coming, as stated by Jesus, was to "restore all things." This implied that the people would submit themselves to God and demonstrate their willingness to receive his message; and if this was not done there was this Divine alternative: "lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

Jesus explained to the wondering disciples that Elijah had already come (cf. Matt. 11: 14), and if the people had received his message, there would have been the promised restoration of all things; but as it was, John had been rejected and the other part of Malachi's prophecy would be their lot; and so in logical sequence, the Son of man would receive the same fate. This not only made clear to the disciples that the

promised Elijah was actually John the Baptist, but also gave the reason

for the humiliation and suffering of Jesus.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction
In what light should we regard the transfiguration of Jesus?
Outline the context of this historical event.
Why didn't the disciples understand the Lord's remarks about his forthcoming suffering and death?
In what way did Jesus reassure his disciples?

The Golden Text
Why did Peter say that they were eye-witnesses of his majesty?
What was the general purpose of the transfiguration?

The Scene in the Holy Mountain
"Six days" after what?
Why have these three disciples been called "the inner circle"?
What other special privileges did they enjoy?
Why did Luke say "about *eight* days after"?
What mountain was the probable scene of the transfiguration? Give reasons for your answer.

What does the term "transfigure" mean?
Describe the scene which the disciples saw.

Who appeared with Jesus? and why?
What subject did they discuss? and why?
Why did Peter make the proposal which he made?
When did the transfiguration probably take place? Give reasons for your answer.
What voice did the disciples hear? and what was its message?

Analyze this message, and give the significance of each clause.

What did the disappearance of the two visitors indicate?

How does the message of the transfiguration compare with the lesson of the Book of Hebrews? Give reasons for your answer.

What was the effect of the transfiguration upon Jesus?

What encouragement did it afford him?

The Effect on the Disciples
Why were the disciples filled with fear when they heard the voice out of the cloud?

What benefit did they receive from the vision?

What lesson could be learned from the conversation Jesus had with Moses and Elijah?

How did Jesus deal with the disciples following the transfiguration?

How may the same principle be applied to us today?

A Mystery Explored
How do we know that the transfiguration was a reality?

Why did Jesus command the disciples to keep the vision a secret until after the resurrection?

What question did they ask Jesus? and why?

Why did the people believe that Elijah would come before the Messiah?

How did Jesus answer them?
What were the alternatives of Malachi's prophecy regarding Elijah?

What explanation did Jesus give concerning Elijah?

What effect did that have on the disciples?

Lesson V—August 2, 1959

JESUS TEACHES HUMILITY

Lesson Text

Matt. 18: 1-6. 10-14; 19: 13-15

1 In that hour came the disciples unto Je-sus, saying. Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

2 And he called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them,

3 And said. Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me:

6 But whoso shall cause one of

these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and *that* he should be sunk in the depth of the sea.

10 See that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.

12 How think ye? if any man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and go unto the mountains, and seek that which goeth astray?

13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth over it more than over the ninety and nine which have not gone astray.

14 Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

13 Then were there brought unto

him little children, that he should lay his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

14 But Je'-sus said, Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven.

15 And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.

Golden Text.—*"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant."* (Matt. 23: 11.)

Devotional Reading.—Luke 2: 8-16.

Daily Bible Readings

July 27. M.
July 28. T.
July 29. W.
July 30. T.
July 31. F.
August 1. S..
August 2. S....

Warnings (Matt. 18: 7-14)
Protecting Children (Ex. 2: 1-10)
Christ Blesses Children (Mark 10: 13-16)
A World Safe for Children (Zech. 8: 1-8)
A Child Serving (2 Kings 5: 1-7)
A Child in the Temple (1 Sam. 3: 1-9)
The Model Child (Luke 2: 41-52)

Time.—Probably A.D. 29.

Place.—Capernaum and Perea.

Persons.—Jesus, the disciples, and some children.

Introduction

We learn from Mark and Luke that the occasion for this lesson was the dispute which the disciples had among themselves regarding who among them was the greatest. Mark's record says, "And they came to Capernaum: and when he was in the house he asked them, What were ye reasoning on the way? But they held their peace: for they had disputed one with another on the way, who was the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve: and he saith unto them, If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a little child, and set him in the midst of them: and taking him in his arms, he said unto them. Whosoever shall receive one of such little children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me." (Mark 9: 33-37; cf. Luke 9: 46-48.)

Humility is one of the cardinal virtues of the Christian religion. Peter says, "Likewise, ye younger, be subject unto the elder. Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves there-

fore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you." (1 Pet. 5: 5-7.) These words about humility are directly connected with our trust in God. There are few expressions in the Bible which are more beautiful than this one, and few which appeal to us with greater force.

Humility, like the love which Jesus taught his people to manifest, may be said to have been created by Christianity. This does not mean that both love and humility did not exist before and apart from Christ, but they were not recognized as virtues in the sense which is now attached to them. Cf. John 13: 34, 35. Both love and humility are basic requirements for living the Christian life. Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (Matt. 11: 29.) Humility, as used by Jesus, is akin to meekness; it is the condition of the trusting heart which relies upon God, following the death of self-righteousness. Self-righteousness and humility are exact opposites.

The Golden Text

"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant." The desire for greatness is characteristic of human beings. Although depravity has turned this principle into an evil direction, it was implanted in us for the noblest of purposes, and it is, even in our present state, a witness to the immortal progress for which we were originally designed. It is not proper therefore to denounce this desire without reservation; for if it is directed in the right channel, it serves as the mainspring of the soul, and without it one's energy and elevation are at an end.

Inasmuch, then, as this desire for greatness belongs to our human nature, we should not seek its extirpation. Instead, we should give it a spiritual character, and turn it into a direction that will benefit others rather than ourselves. This is the way that Jesus deals with the problem. He points out the mistaken view which fallible beings have of

the question, and then shows them what true greatness is, and bids them seek after it.

Jesus not only taught the proper attitude toward this vital subject, but he himself gave the greatest demonstration of its true meaning. Ten of the apostles became indignant at James and John for seeking for themselves the chief places in the coming kingdom of Christ. "But Jesus called them unto him, and said. Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercises authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (See Matt. 20: 20-28; cf. Phil. 2: 1-11.)

The Text Explained

True Greatness Illustrated

(Matt. 18: 1-6)

In that hour came the disciples unto Jesus . saying, Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven? This lesson immediately follows the incident of the temple tax, in the closing part of the preceding chapter. Jesus and his disciples were then in Capernaum, his home and headquarters during his great Galilean ministry. This was his last visit in Galilee before his death. The question which the disciples asked, as stated by Matthew, is not clear as to whether the greatest person or character was meant, but the parallels in Mark and Luke show that the reference was to the greatest person, that is, which of them was the greatest.

And he called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. A demonstration is one of the most effective methods of teaching any lesson, and what object could be more suitable for this purpose than a little child? It appears from Mark that Jesus first set the child in the midst of them, and then took him up in his arms,

possibly for the purpose of teaching his disciples how submissive and trustful a child is. Not only could the disciples learn a needed lesson from this little child, but "the child in the midst" will ever remain one of the church's greatest problems and one of its foremost opportunities.

The disciples' need for "turning" was not from sin in general, but to turn from their selfish ambition to be the greatest in the kingdom. The spirit of rivalry which they were manifesting was totally foreign to the spirit of him whom they were following. They were therefore urged to "turn around" and acquire a moral disposition similar to the nature of little children. The use of the strong double negative means that if they did not do that they would not even get into the kingdom, let alone have big places in it.

This object lesson shows what the Lord wants his followers to understand regarding the meaning of humility. When people are characterized by true humility, all selfishness is removed, and the spiritual becomes the supreme object of their interest and desires. Such people prefer others to themselves, and are willing to accept inferior places for themselves

when it is the Lord's plan.

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The idea is not as this little child humbles himself: the child is naturally humble; and what the child is by nature, the Lord's people must become by choice. The reason why the humblest shall be the greatest in the Lord's sight is because they will live unselfishly, and will therefore become more like their Lord.

And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me: but whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea. The "one such little child" refers to those disciples who humble themselves and become as little children. There is therefore no reference to receiving little children in the flesh. To "receive" means to regard one and to treat him as if he belonged to Christ. Cf. Matt. 25: 40. Wesley notes that "all who are in this sense little children are unspeakably dear to me I that is, Christ]. Therefore help them all you can, as if it were myself in person."

But if one does not help the humble and trusting disciple, he is likely to hinder him, that is, cause him to stumble. It appears that the primary reference was to the effect the selfish contentions in which the disciples had been engaging might have on others. This should be an impressive lesson to those followers of Christ who engage in quarrelling among themselves. But as Jesus said concerning offenses, it must needs be that the occasion for them come, for some are not willing to follow the Lord's teaching; "but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh!" One should be made to tremble when he considers that even his speech and conduct, which have no inference to the by-stander, may cause him to stumble. This, of course, has reference to speech and conduct which are contrary to the Scriptures. The terrible consequences are stated in these words: "It is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in

the depth of the sea."

The literal rendering of this is "an ass-millstone," referring to the large grain-crushers, the upper stone of which was turned by an ass, as distinguished from the small hand-mills whose upper stones were turned by women who grasped the upright wooden pegs which had been fastened to it. Meyer observes that such drowning "was not a Jewish method of putting to death, neither was it a practice in Galilee, but belonged to the Greeks, Romans, Syrians, and Phoenicians. Consequently it here expresses in a manner all the more vivid and awe-inspiring that punishment of death to which the man in question has become liable, and which is intended to represent the loss of eternal life. Comp. Vs. 7-9."

God's Attitude toward the Humble

(Matt. 18: 10-14)

See that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father who is in heaven. The term "despise" is used in the sense of treat with contempt or offend, be made to stumble. This can be done when the ambitious disciples, in their determination to seek their own interest, conduct themselves in such a way as to offend the weaker brethren. The powerful deterrent against such treatment is found in the fact that "their angels" always have access to the Father.

The New Testament teaching regarding the ministry of angels, and particularly the providential care which they exercise over individuals, is too plain to be disputed by informed Bible students. Johnson notes that "the doctrine of guardian angels is emphatically taught in the Scriptures. See 2 Kings 19: 31; Psalm 91: 11; Heb. 1: 14; Acts 27: 23." J. W. McGarvey says that "all the angels are 'ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation;' but this general ministration is effected by a ministration for particular individuals. 'Their angels,' then, are the angels especially charged with ministering to them individually."

How think ye? if any man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the

ninety and nine, and go unto the mountains, and seek that which goeth astray? Cf. Luke 15: 3-7. Will he not leave the ninety and nine upon the mountains and seek the wandering one. The anxiety and the effort which grew out of it for the lost sheep are used to show the attitude of God toward a single lost soul, and especially one of "these little ones."

And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth over it more than over the ninety and nine which have not gone astray. It should be noted that no strokes were placed upon the sheep which went astray, no harsh words were spoken, but only love and mercy were extended. This is a lesson which is greatly needed today. Many people no doubt could have been restored to their places who are now lost for ever, if the proper attitude had been shown by the stronger brethren. "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (Gal. 6: 1.)

Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish. The importance of this lesson cannot be over-emphasized. The selfish conduct of brethren who are more interested in having their own way, than in strengthening and saving the weak and uninformed, is in direct opposition against the declared will of God, and they will be held responsible for the souls whom they have despised when they face the judgment at the last day. Cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9.

Jesus and Little Children

(Matt. 19: 13-15)

Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should lay his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. Luke says, "And they were bringing unto him also their babes, that he should touch them." This shows that the reference here is to small children, and not to weak and uninformed disciples. It seems to have been the custom among the Jews for mothers to take their children to the great and good teachers, and ask them to

lay their hands upon them and bless them, or, as Matthew expresses it, to lay hands on them, and pray. These mothers may have recognized in Jesus more than a great and good teacher, for it is hardly reasonable to think that they could have felt otherwise.

When the disciples rebuked the mothers for bringing their children, they probably felt that they were doing Jesus a favor. They had often seen people crowd around him, and they knew that he was often physically tired and exhausted; but they did not understand the heart of their Master. The subject of childhood is one of the most important questions which can engage our attention. No Christian home or congregation of the Lord's people can give too much of the right kind of attention to it; for if the child is permitted to start its growth and development in the wrong direction, it may end fatally. But if it does not end in that manner it will, in all probability, involve an endless struggle to bring the child to and keep him in the right way.

But Jesus said, Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven. The Lord, in effect, said, "Stop hindering them, and allow them to come to me." The command is put in a twofold way, positive and negative. It should be observed that they were to come "that he should lay his hands on them, and pray." There is nothing in the text, context, or anywhere else, which in any manner whatsoever as much as suggests infant church membership. Those who think so receive their ideas from the traditions of men.

The expression "for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven" does not refer to the little children who were then coming to him, but to those people whose characters are *as little children*. The kingdom of heaven, that is, the church, is made up of people who have been unsaved; but since little children have never been lost, they cannot, as such have membership in the kingdom. But if people whose characters are like that of little children can come to Jesus for salvation, then surely the little children themselves are welcome to

come to him. And furthermore, inasmuch as children are made the models of those who can enter the kingdom, being free as they are from personal transgressions, it follows therefore that they, should they die in that condition, will have an unconditional entrance into the eternal kingdom.

And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence. This confirms the view that they had been brought to Jesus only for his personal blessings.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What was the occasion for the Lord's teaching at this time?

What place does humility occupy in the Christian religion? Why?

The Golden Text

Is it wrong for Christians to desire greatness? Give reasons for your answer.

What should be our attitude toward such a desire?

How did Jesus deal with this question, both from the standpoint of teaching and example?

True Greatness Illustrated

What was the exact question which the disciples had been discussing?

Why did Jesus call a little child to him?

What use did he make of the child?

Why is "the child in the midst" so important to us?

From what did the disciples need to turn?

Why did Jesus employ the strong double negative in this connection?

How may one know that he is truly humble in the Lord's service?

What is meant by humbling oneself "as this little child"?

Who is the "one such little child" in verse 5?

What is meant by "receiving" such a person?

How may one cause "one of these little ones" to stumble?

How should this lesson affect people to-

This seemingly unplanned incident of bringing the children to Jesus just after his remarks regarding the indissoluble marriage bond, may not have been so incidental after all. To a married couple who rightly regard each other, the presence of little children in the home is a source of constant happiness, and the pleasant incident of their being brought to Jesus for his blessing, would tend to leave a good impression with reference to married life.

day who are responsible for wrangling and disputing in the church?

Why would it be better for such a person to die than to cause a weak disciple to stumble?

What kind of a "millstone" was meant?

God's Attitude toward the Humble

What is meant by the term "despise" as it respects these little ones?

What is the meaning of "their angels"?

What does the New Testament teach regarding the ministry of angels?

What effect should this doctrine have on Christian people? Why?

What is illustrated by the "lost sheep"?

What is the attitude of the shepherd when he finds the lost sheep? Why?

What is the application of this lesson to us?

What is the will of the Father in this respect?

How should a knowledge of this fact affect Christian people?

Jesus and Little Children

Who were bringing their little children to Jesus? and why?

Why did the disciples rebuke them?

Why should the Lord's people always want children to come to Jesus?

What did Jesus say in response to the disciples' rebuke?

Is this incident a basis for infant church membership? Give reasons for your answer.

Who are the "such" to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs?

What can you say of the timing of this incident regarding the children?

Lesson VI—August 9, 1959

JESUS TEACHES FORGIVENESS

Lesson Text

Matt. 18: 21-35

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

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

23 Therefore is the kingdom of

heaven likened unto a certain king, who would make a reckoning with his servants.

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

25 But forasmuch as he had not *wherewith* to pay, his lord com-

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

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

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

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

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

30 And he would not: but went

and cast him into prison, till he should pay that which was due.

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

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

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

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

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

Golden Text.—*"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."* (Matt. 6: 12.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalm 32: 1-7.

Daily Bible Readings

August 3.	M.....	Prayer for Forgiveness (1 Kings 8: 27-34)
August 4.	T.....	Brotherly Forgiveness (Gen. 45: 1-8)
August 5.	W.....	Repentance and Forgiveness (Luke 19: 1-10)
August 6.	T.....	Forgiveness and Restoration (Hos. 14: 1-9)
August 7.	F.....	Christ's Example of Forgiveness (Luke 23: 33-38)
August 8.	S.....	Jesus Forgives a Sinner (Luke 7: 41-50)
August 9.	S.....	Petition for Forgiveness (Psalm 51: 10-17)

Time.—Probably A.D. 29.

Place.—Probably Capernaum.

Persons.—Jesus and Peter.

Introduction

The term "forgiveness" has been described as the most beautiful word in any language; and, we may add, it is as great as it is beautiful. Love is represented in the New Testament as being greater than either faith or hope, but when we take into consideration the fact that in forgiveness love is in action, we can then have some idea of the greatness of forgiveness. The need for forgiveness is just as great as is the need for daily bread, and the Lord placed the petitions for these two needs together in the model prayer which he taught his disciples.

When Alexander Pope said, "To err is human, to forgive divine," he was not engaged in the use of idle words. Forgiveness is an attribute of God; and only those who have been forgiven are in position to understand and appreciate its meaning, and to manifest the spirit of forgive-

ness toward others. Not only is the term "forgiveness" the tenderest and most beautiful word in our language: it is also very far-reaching in its consequences. This is true because it has to do with human relations which involve the destiny of the soul. Jesus plainly says that God will not forgive the trespasses of those who are unwilling to forgive their fellow men. Any unforgiving person, of course, cannot be saved, it matters not what else he may do in the way of observing that which God has commanded.

The lesson before us today can best be understood in the light of the verses which precede the text. In the first part of the chapter Jesus warned against and showed the seriousness of giving offense. See verses 1-14. In verses 15-17 he shows how to act if and when offense has been

received. Neither the offended nor the offender is to wait for the other. Detailed and exhaustive instruction for effecting a reconciliation is given.

Cf. Matt. 5: 23-26. Verses 18-20 state the authority of the church in matters of discipline, and illustrate its sublime power.

The Golden Text

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." A large part of the troubles and heartaches of this world is caused by a failure to practice the teaching of Jesus concerning forgiveness. It seems strange that so many professed Christians have such unforgiving spirits. In many cases those who have done the wrong are less willing to show kindness toward those whom they have mistreated, than are the ones who have suffered the wrong. The Bible says, "A lying tongue hateth those whom it hath wounded," or, *crushed, margin.* (Prov. 26: 28.)

Sin is here pictured as a debt, and the sinner as a debtor. The sinner remains a debtor as long as he fails to make amends to the one against whom he has sinned, whether it be God or man. In offering this petition for forgiveness, the sinner recognizes his obligation to God, and he humbly requests forgiveness on the ground that he has already done that which he is asking God to do, that is, he has been sinned against, and

he has forgiven those who have trespassed against him. It is absolutely impossible for a person with this kind of a spirit to harbor ill-will against anyone.

To have a forgiving spirit does not mean that one must think that the one who injured him did right. On the contrary, he may be very certain that he himself has been grossly mistreated; but it is still his duty to have a forgiving spirit toward the one who sinned against him, even though the sinner never shows any signs of penitence for the wrong which he has committed. No one, not even the Lord himself, can forgive an impenitent person, but we can and must follow the Lord's example in endeavoring to bring the offender to repentance. We must always have a forgiving spirit, that is, we must always be willing and anxious and ready to forgive; and it is then, and only then that we can rightfully hope to have the Lord grant our petition for forgiveness of sins which we have committed against him.

The Text Explained

A Question and an Answer

(Matt. 18: 21, 22)

Then came Peter and said unto him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? We have no way of knowing what prompted Peter to ask this question, but, judging from human experience, it seems to be a natural question. Peter evidently saw from that which had just been said by Jesus that the offended would be required to possess a large amount of forbearance and forgiveness. Some of the Rabbis had taught that forgiveness should be limited to three times (cf. Amos 1: 3, 6; Job 33: 29, 20). "To a man sinning against another they remit once, they remit twice, they remit a third time, they do not remit a fourth time." Peter may have had this idea in mind when he asked the question, and he may have felt that he was being generous in extending the number of times from three to seven. Cf. Prov. 24:

16; Lev. 26: 18-28. Such a question, of course, implies very plainly that he did not understand what forgiveness is.

Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. This was evidently a play on the word "seven," as used by Peter, but the lesson is quite clear. Forgiveness must be in quality, and not merely in quantity. There must be no limit to forgiveness; it must be extended as often as there is an occasion for it. "Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he sin against thee seven times in the day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." (Luke 17: 3, 4.)

The Lesson Illustrated

(Matt. 18: 23-34)

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, who

would make a reckoning with his servants. This parable was given to illustrate the Lord's teaching with regard to forgiveness, and to show that his law in this respect has no definite limit.

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, that owed him ten thousand talents. The marginal reading indicates that a talent was probably worth about \$1000, and so the entire debt would be something like ten million dollars. This was an enormous debt, and far beyond any private man's ability to discharge; his condition would simply be hopeless. This represents the sinner's insolvent status before God.

But forasmuch as he had not wherewith to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The law of Moses permitted the selling of men for debts (cf. Lev. 25: 39, 47; 2 Kings 4: 1); but the circumstance connected with the lesson now before us suggests that the imagery before Jesus was that of Oriental despotism, rather than the law of Moses. See verses 30, 34.

The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. This does not mean that the servant paid religious homage to his lord. The marginal note says that the Greek word denotes an act of reverence whether paid to a creature (4: 9; 18: 26), or to the Creator (4: 10). It was customary in eastern countries for servants to prostrate themselves before their lords and rulers; and so this man, in humility and reverence, humbly entreats his lord to have patience with him, and he promised to pay all that was due. The promise he made was, of course, impossible to fulfill, although he may have felt at the time that he could do as he had said. Trench thinks that his words imply nothing more than exclamations characteristic of the extreme fear and anguish of the moment, which made him ready to promise impossible things, even mountains of gold. See *Notes on the Parables*, p. 124f.

And the lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. This pitiful plea for mercy, coupled with

the servant's hopeless condition, moved his lord to the extent that he did more than he was asked to do; he forgave the entire debt. This whole lesson, of course, is a picture of God dealing with his sinful people. The severity of God only continues until the sinner is brought to acknowledge his guilt. When Joseph appeared harsh with his brethren as they stood before him in Egypt, it was only love in disguise. After the brothers had fully demonstrated that they realized the terrible sin which they had committed against Joseph, the latter could no longer refrain himself before them, and he told them who he was and extended his mercy to them.

There is no such thing as forgiving in the dark. God is always willing to forgive, but he wills that the sinner must first know what and how much he is being forgiven. The sinner must first know his sins before he can appreciate mercy; he must have the sentence of death within himself, before the words of life will have any abiding worth for him.

But that servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, who owed him a hundred shillings; and he laid hold on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest. The word "but" introduces a contrast in the parable now before us; it is a contrast between the mercy of God and the utter lack of mercy on the part of the servant who had been forgiven. The amount which this fellow-servant owed him was about seventeen dollars, almost nothing when compared to the debt from which he had just been relieved. The remarkable thing about all of this is that the unmerciful servant paid no attention to the words which were addressed to him, almost the very words which he had used to gain his own deliverance from his own enormous debt. He even seized his fellow-servant by the throat, and demanded immediate payment. The average professed Christian today does not need to have anyone tell him that this type of treatment is characteristic of most of us. But we have not yet learned that when we make such demands upon our fellow men, we are but drawing the sword against ourselves.

So his fellow-servant fell down and

besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee. Alfred quotes Chrysostom as saying that the unmerciful servant did not recognize the harbor in which he escaped his impending shipwreck. When people forget their own forgiveness, they tend to become cruel to others. James says that judgment will be without mercy to him who shows no mercy. See James 2: 13.

And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay that which was due. When people forget their own forgiveness, they tend to become cruel to others. They demand perfection in their fellows, while completely ignoring their own sins. This reminds us of David when he said, "The man that hath done this is worthy to die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity," when he himself was the sinner. See 2 Sam. 12: 1-7a; cf. John 8: 7-9. When Paul exhorted Titus "to be gentle, showing all meekness toward all men," he gave as the motive the fact that "we also once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another," but that we were saved through the kindness and mercy of God. See Tit. 3: 2-5.

So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were exceeding sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. It was but natural for the fellow-servants to act as they did; for no matter how much we are inclined to deal harshly with men ourselves, we never like to see others mistreated by someone else. Trench calls attention to the fact that the different emotions which are ascribed to the fellow-servants and to God are not accidental. Man is himself a sinner, and he is conscious of the fact that when he sees sin manifest itself in another, he knows that the same thing exists, in germ at least, in his own heart, and that produces in him humiliation: and hence, he can only grieve at sin. But with God it is different. He is holy and "of purer eyes than to behold evil," and he, accordingly, is angry or wroth with such conduct as that which characterized the unmerciful servant.

Then his lord called him unto him, and saith to him, Them wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besougest me: shouldst not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee? Before the lord brought down his vengeance upon this unmerciful servant, he calmly pointed out to him how shamefully unreasonable and heartless his conduct was. This, of course, would give the punishment meted out to him a double sting. He is called a *wicked servant*, not on account of his debt, but because of his ingratitude and cruelty. The guilt with which he is charged is, as Trench points out, not that, *needing mercy*, he refused to show it, but that *having received mercy*, he remained unmerciful still. Every redeemed child of God has received mercy, and he is therefore deeply obligated to show mercy to his fellow men.

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due. As already referred to in this lesson, this is the standard of judgment in the last day: "For judgment is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy: mercy glorieth against judgment." (James 2: 13.) In the first part of the parable the lord dealt with the servant as a creditor with a debtor, but here he deals with him as a judge with a criminal. This wicked servant is not only taken to prison, but to terrible punishment as well. Vincent quotes Livy as picturing an old centurion complaining that he had been taken by his creditor, not into servitude, but to a workhouse and torture, and showing his back scarred with fresh wounds.

A question in this connection is frequently asked, Do sins which have been forgiven come back again? Alfred seems to have the right answer to this, so far as this parable is concerned. He notes that it is a spiritual meaning which must be taken into consideration. So, he who falls from grace into condemnation, and is overwhelmed with "all that debt," not of this or that sin which was formerly remitted, but of the whole state of enmity to God. This is what must be paid; and since that is impossible, the torture will continue for ever.

The Lord's Conclusion

(Matt. 18: 35)

So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts. God will not accept a sham or lip pardon; it must be genuine, from the heart. This is Christ's full reply to Peter's question in verse 21. No man with an unforgiving spirit can live in harmony with a forgiving God; and, "shall two walk together, except they have agreed?"

It is beyond dispute that the forgiveness which we receive from God is true forgiveness. He says concerning those who have been forgiven, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember against them no more for ever." This probably does not mean that God ceases to know that his people have sinned against him, but it does mean that he treats those whom he has forgiven as if they had not sinned against him. That is the way we must treat those whom we forgive. In commenting

upon this idea. Hall L. Calhoun said:

"While this is true, I do not believe that the one forgiven should presume to draw very heavily upon the forbearance of the one whom he has injured until he has given ample proof that his repentance for the sin for which he has been forgiven has had time for ample proof and until he himself has made earnest efforts by his loyal conduct toward the one whom he has wronged to establish in the heart of that person a feeling of certainty that the offending party has really and truly repented of the wrong. It seems that some flagrant sinners almost demand, when they make a simple confession of their wrong, that they should be lauded with honors and given positions of preference and prominence among those whose forgiveness they have sought. . . . Nothing is more despicable than for a flagrant offender to impose himself upon the forbearance of those by whom he has been forgiven."

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, persons.

Introduction

What are some of the things which have been said about "forgiveness"?

What is necessary to an adequate understanding of the term?

Why can't an unforgiving person be saved?

Give a summary of the verses which precede our text for today.

The Golden Text

What is the basis for many of the troubles and heartaches of our day?

Why is this true?

Why is it that the offender usually has a worse disposition than the offended?

Why is sin pictured as a debt?

What condition must be fulfilled in asking for forgiveness?

What are some of the things involved in a forgiving spirit?

A Question and an Answer

What was Peter's question? and what was the probable reason for it?

What was the Lord's answer to him?

What is the difference of forgiveness in "quality" and in "quantity"?

The Lesson Illustrated

What was the Lord's purpose in speaking this parable?

Why present a man with such an enormous debt?

Why sell the man for his debt, along with his family and possessions?

What was the servant's reaction to the Lord's proposal?

Why did he think that he could repay such a debt? or did he think that he could?

How was the Lord affected by this plea for mercy?

What lesson is here suggested regarding the severity of God?

Why must the sinner be made to recognize and acknowledge his sin before he is forgiven?

Why is this "forgiven" servant pictured in his relation to his fellow-servant?

What was his attitude toward him? and why?

What application does all of this have to professed Christians today?

What plea did his fellow-servant make to him?

Why does a person who has been forgiven sometimes become cruel to others?

What did the fellow-servants who saw this do? and why?

What is the difference between their emotions regarding sins, and God's?

When the Lord called in the unmerciful servant, what did he do before condemning him?

What was the condemned man's guilt?

Why did his Lord deliver him to the tormentors?

Are forgiven sins ever remembered by God again? Give reasons for your answer.

The Lord's Conclusion

Why does God demand genuine forgiveness?

What should be the attitudes of the two parties involved?

Lesson VII—August 16, 1959

JESUS AND THE YOUNG RULER

Lesson Text

Matt. 19: 16-30

16 And behold, one came to him and said. Teacher what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

17 And he said unto him, Why askest thou me concerning that which is good? One there is who is good: but if thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments.

18 He saith unto him, Which? And Je'-sus said. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

19 Honor thy father and thy mother; and. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

20 The young man saith unto him. All these things have I observed: what lack I yet?

21 Je'-sus said unto him, If thou wouldst be perfect, go, sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

22 But when the young man heard the saying, he went away sorrowful; for he was one that had great possessions.

23 And Je'-sus said unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you. It is

hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

24 And again I say unto you. It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

25 And when the disciples heard it, they were astonished exceedingly, saying, Who then can be saved?

26 And Je'-sus looking upon *them* said to them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee; what then shall we have?

28 And Je'-sus said unto them. Verily I say unto you. that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Is'-ra-el.

29 And every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life.

30 But many shall be last *that are* first; and first *that are* last.

Golden Text.—"But *lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.*" (Matt. 6: 20.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Mark 10: 17-31.

Daily Bible Readings

August 10. M.....	Treasures in Heaven (Matt. 6: 19-24)
August 11. T.....	Treasures on Earth (1 Tim. 6: 9-19)
August 12. W.....	The Cheerful Giver (2 Cor. 9: 6-15)
August 13. T.....	Loving and Giving (Luke 6: 27-38)
August 14. F.....	Riches in Poverty (2 Cor. 6: 1-10)
August 15. S.....	Poverty in Riches (Luke 12: 13-21)
August 16. S..	Reward of Giving (Eccles. 11: 1-8)

TIME.—Probably A.D. 30.

PLACE.—Perea.

PERSONS.—Jesus, the young ruler, and the disciples.

Introduction

The man who in the New Testament is referred to as the "rich young ruler" is nowhere described in these words, that is, no one New

Testament writer calls him the *rich young ruler*. But that he was the rich young ruler is true, as may be seen by the combined testimony of

the three writers who record the incident. The threefold account of the memorable event which is now before us is an interesting example of how one record supplements the others. Matthew alone tells us that he was young; Luke alone says that he was rich, although both Matthew and Mark say that he "had great possessions." Luke also is the only one who says that he was a ruler.

While Mark does not mention the fact that the man now under consideration was either young or a ruler, he does add some interesting facts which are omitted by Matthew and Luke, as, for example, the running and the kneeling, the earnestness and the reverence, the look which Christ gave to him, and the love which he had for him. Jesus must have felt a personal attachment for

this man, and when we consider the references to his character, it is not difficult to understand why. For instance, he had a eye for goodness in others, he had courage, he had kept himself unspotted from the world, he was dissatisfied with himself, and he was in quest of eternal life.

A study of the attitude of the rich young ruler shows that it sometimes happens that, in spite of one's high moral character and his professed devotion to God, there may be in his heart a longing for and a service to the material things of earth which will nullify all of his claims toward the Lord. Jesus says, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt. 6: 24.)

The Golden Text

"Bat lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." This is a positive statement of the proposition which Jesus placed before his disciples, and it comes after the negative statement of it. The full proposition is, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also." The last part of the statement (verse 21) is the basis for the teaching.

That which Jesus says in the passage just quoted does not imply that he taught against prudence in connection with material things, or that he suggested that his disciples should disregard secular duties. Jesus at no time put a premium upon either asceticism or carelessness regarding human obligations. The thing which

Christ is emphasizing primarily is that his people keep first in their minds the things which are of supreme importance. He warns against the worthlessness of ideals which may be outgrown; and since his disciples are not children of time but eternity, it is the height of folly to devote the strength of life to the gathering of treasures which cannot be converted into the currency of the country to which they are going.

It is interesting to note that the original word for "consume" is the same word which is used of the hypocrites who "disfigure" their faces, that they may be seen of men to fast. The moth and rust cause these earthly treasures to "disappear," just as the hypocrites cause their natural appearance to "disappear." The following scriptures tell us how we may lay up treasures in heaven: Luke 12: 33, 34; Matt. 19: 21; 1 Tim. 6: 17-19. This last passage makes it evident that we lay up treasures in heaven, not only by giving money, but by giving our services as well.

The Text Explained

In Quest of Eternal Life

(Matt. 19: 16-22)

And behold, one came to him and said, Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? Both Mark and Luke have "Good Teacher." It is quite evident that

the young man did not have a very accurate idea of the term "good," as it is used in this text; and he must have thought that there was some particular work of merit which, if he could do, eternal life would be the result.

And he said unto him, Why askest thou me concerning that which is good? One there is who is good: but if thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments. The Lord's question here was apparently intended to lead the inquirer on to the lesson which he needed to learn. Bruce calls this the teacher's way of leading the pupil on. The question regarding the *good thing* which is necessary to be done in order to have eternal life is superfluous; and the answer is self-evident, namely, Since God alone is good, the "good thing" about which the man asked can be nothing more nor less than obedience to his will. So, if thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments which he has given.

He saith unto him, Which? This implies that the young man was still under the impression that there was some "one thing," something which was good, which would bring him eternal life, if he would do it. The New Testament nowhere teaches that men can earn salvation—"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: 5.) God removes sin and imparts life to those who obey him. The obedience is but a demonstration that they have surrendered themselves to him.

And Jesus said, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. These six commandments are the last six of the Decalogue (Ex. 20: 12-17), with the last one being substituted for "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's. No one could love his neighbor as himself without keeping this commandment.

We are not told why Jesus gave the last six commandments of the Ten, rather than the first four; or, why he did not give all ten. McGarvey supposes that the last six were given, rather than the others, because they were more frequently violated than the first four; and that they would

therefore form a better test of character. One needs only to read all of the Ten Commandments in order to see that the first four pertain primarily to one's duty to God, while the others cover man's duty to his fellow men.

The young man saith unto him, All these things have I observed: what lack I yet? There is nothing in the text to indicate that this statement was not true, insofar as he understood the import of the commandments. This, however, does not imply perfect obedience. He evidently spoke with a refreshing earnestness which caused Jesus, as Mark notes, to look upon him and love him. Notwithstanding his erroneous view regarding the method of obtaining eternal life, there was a nobleness and openness about him which stood in marked contrast with the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees. But even so, he still thought that there was some meritorious act which this new Teacher could bring to his attention.

Jesus said unto him, If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. When we read all three accounts of this incident, it is necessary to assume that Jesus regarded the young man, up to this point, as being sincere: and now, on the assumption that you are sincere, I will tell you, replies the Lord, what the one thing is that you still lack. This shows, of course, that it is possible for one to be sincere in some areas of life, while not realizing what may be required of him in others.

The commandment to sell that which he had, and give to the poor, was not a general command; it was a test of obedience which Jesus saw to be necessary in this particular case. Cf. Matt. 6: 24; Luke 19: 8, 9; 1 Tim. 6: 17-19. This man was in quest of eternal life, and he must know the truth about himself. He had a serious defect of which he seems to have been totally unaware. One fault often counterbalances all of one's virtues. If an otherwise perfect watch lacked only one thing—the mainspring, it would be of no service in the sense in which it was expected to function, that is, record the time of day. Cf. James 2: 10.

But when the young man heard the saying, he went away sorrowful; for he was one that had great possessions. The manner in which Jesus dealt with this young man enabled him to see himself as he really was. He probably would not have believed it, if someone had told him that he had greater love for his possessions than he did for God and his own soul: but that was the truth of the matter. He had a great lack which he did not realize; but it came clearly into view when he was put to the test. Dante called this "the great refusal," and although sorrow filled his heart, yet he knowingly and deliberately turned away from Jesus. Cf. 2 Kings 5: 8-14.

The Peril of Riches

(Matt. 19: 23-26)

And Jesus said unto his disciples. Verily I say unto you, It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. The original for "hard" means *with difficulty*. Jesus does not say that a rich man cannot enter the kingdom of heaven: but he does say that it is difficult for him to do so. This is true because of the perilous attachment which men have for riches; an attachment which makes it extremely difficult for them to renounce their great possessions and keep themselves free from the evils which riches tend to heap upon them. The sure way to avoid this is to follow the instructions given in Matt. 6: 19-34; 1 Tim. 6: 17-19.

And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. The explanation of this passage is not to be found in regarding the "needle's eye" as a gate in the wall of the city by that name. The original word for "needle" in this passage is *raphidos*, and it means, according to Arndt and Gingrich, Thayer, et al, "the eye of a needle." Luke (Westcott and Hort, *The New Testament in Greek*) has *belonēs* which means exactly the same thing. Arndt and Gingrich notes that there is no good evidence that this is figurative language for a narrow gate.

The Lord's purpose in saying that it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven,

was, it appears, to set forth by means of a well known proverb the greatest human impossibility. This is made clear, as we shall see, in verse 26. The great danger in a rich man's losing his soul is not to be found in the simple possession of the wealth, but in the difficulty which he experiences in subordinating it to the will of God.

And when the disciples heard it, they were astonished exceedingly, saying. Who then can be saved? The amazement of the disciples must be understood in the light of the situation which was then before them. They had just seen a rich man who lacked only "one thing" turn away from Jesus; and that was the occasion for the Lord's remark about the seeming utter impossibility of a rich man's being saved. If they had been thinking about rich men who oppress the poor, they would not have been surprised: but inasmuch as most people seek for riches, they were greatly astonished to hear that not even a "good" rich man can be saved without extreme difficulty. They had never fully understood the Lord's teaching.

And Jesus looking upon them said to them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. The probable antecedent of "this" is salvation in general, suggested by the question, "Who then can be saved?" The Lord replies that the salvation of any man, in any way, is alike impossible to any but God. And in the case of a wealth-loving person, God can, through his word and providential working, so influence him so as to make him a dispenser of blessings. The rich man therefore should consider it a blessing from heaven when opportunities for using his wealth are presented to him. Of course, if the rich man is unwilling to yield himself to God, even God would be powerless to save him in *harmony* with his righteous will. This was true in the case of the rich young ruler. He was allowed to turn away in sorrow.

The Reward of Self-sacrifice

(Matt. 19: 27-30)

Then answered Peter and said unto him, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee; what then shall we have? The failure of the rich young ruler

to make the sacrifice which would have made him acceptable to the Lord, and the subsequent remarks of Jesus regarding riches, seemingly caused Peter to think of his experience and that of his fellow disciples, in giving up all they had to follow Jesus; and he very naturally asks regarding their reward.

And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. The period of the "regeneration" is here described as being coextensive with the period during which the disciples will sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. There can be but little doubt that the reference is to the Messianic age or the Christian dispensation, beginning with the Pentecost of Acts 2, and continuing to the close of his reign, or when ire comes again at the end of the world. It is during this period that the great spiritual reformation is taking place, that is, men are being converted to Christ—are being born again; and at the close of the age, the redemption from the grave will take place, and all of God's children shall be made to inhabit the "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Christ took his seat upon the throne of his glory on Pentecost, and his reign will continue until all his enemies, the last of which is death, have been destroyed; and when that has been accomplished, he will then re-

turn the kingdom to the Father, and himself become subject to him. See

1 Cor. 15: 24-28. David Thomas describes the promise made to the disciples to sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, as a spiritual and Christian idea enrobed in material and Jewish costume. The apostles are now judging through their written word, and the twelve tribes refer to the true Israel of God, that is, all Christians. Cf. Rom. 2: 28, 29; 9: 6ff.

And every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life. It often happens that when one loses a friend in serving Christ, he gains a hundred others; and if he is forced to give up his home for Christ's sake, a hundred other homes will open their doors to him. But no Christian should expect to go through life without being persecuted. Cf. Mark 10: 29, 30; 2 Tim. 3: 12. The real reward is eternal life.

But many shall be last that are first; and first that are last. Many who seem to be first in prospect of eternal life, shall be last; and many who seem to be last in this respect, shall be first. The rich young ruler's prospects seemed bright, but he went away sorrowful. Others whom people least expect to be saved will be among the redeemed. The parable contained in the first sixteen verses of the next chapter illustrates this saying by Jesus about the first and the last.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Why do we call the man spoken of in the text the rich young ruler?
What important lesson does this three-fold account illustrate?
Why would Jesus love a man like this?
What important lesson does the rich young ruler illustrate?

The Golden Text

In what connection were these words spoken?
Did Jesus teach against prudence in connection with the material things of life? Give reasons for your answer.
What was the real lesson which he was emphasizing?
What would happen to people if they always worked with heaven in mind?

Discuss the meaning and use of the term "consume" in this text.
How may one lay up treasures in heaven?

In Quest of Eternal Life

What must have been in the young ruler's mind when he came to Jesus?
How did the Lord answer him? and why?
What is the "good thing" which one must do in order to be saved? and why?
Why can't people earn their salvation? Give reasons for your answer.
Why did Jesus list the commandments which he did?
What about the young man's answer to this?
Does this imply perfect obedience? Give reasons for your answer.
How would selling what he had, and giving to the poor, make him perfect?
Is it possible for one to be sincere about some things, without realizing what is involved in others. Illustrate fully.

Does every one have to sell all he has, and give to the poor, in order to be saved? Why?

What does one fault frequently do to an otherwise perfect life?
What did the young man learn about himself on this occasion?

The Peril of Riches
Why is it hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven?
What is the lesson regarding a camel's going through a needle's eye?
Why were the disciples astonished at this saying?
What is the meaning of Christ's answer to them?

The Reward of Self-sacrifice

Why did Peter ask this question?

What is meant by the "regeneration"?

When did Jesus take his seat upon his throne?

In what sense are the apostles sitting upon twelve thrones?

What judgment are they rendering?

Who are the twelve tribes of Israel? Give reasons for your answer.

What is the reward for self-sacrifice?

What is the meaning of the last shall be first, and the first, last?

How do you know that your answer to the above question is correct?

Lesson VIII—August 21st, 1959

THE ROAD TO TRUE GREATNESS

Lesson Text

Matt. 20: 17-28

17 And as Je'-sus was going up to Je-ru'-sa-lem, he took the twelve disciples apart, and on the way he said unto them,

18 Behold, we go up to Je-ru'-sa-lem: and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes; and they shall condemn him to death,

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

20 Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zeb'-e-dee with her sons, worshipping *him*, and asking a certain thing of him.

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

22 But Je'-sus answered and said. Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about

to drink? They say unto him. We are able.

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

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

25 But Je'-sus called them unto him, and said. Ye know that the rulers of the Gen'-tiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

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

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

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant."* (Matt. 20: 27.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Phil. 2: 1-9.

Daily Bible Readings

August 17. M.

August 18. T.

August 19. W.

August 20. T.

August 21. F.

August 22. S.

August 23. S.

Right Attitude in Prayer (Luke 18: 9-14)

Humility in Service (Luke 14: 7-11)

Religion Pure and Undeified (James 1: 19-27)

..... Aid to Others (James 2: 1-26)

The Motive of Service (1 Cor. 13: 1-13)

The Right Design (Phil. 4: 4-9)

Rewards of Humility (1 Pet. 5: 1-7)

TIME.—Probably A.D. 30.

PLACE.—On the way to Jerusalem from Perea.

PERSONS.—Jesus, James and John, their mother, and the other ten disciples.

Introduction

It will be necessary from time to time, as we continue our study of the divine record, to consider the essence of true greatness. It will frequently be noted that the desire for greatness is characteristic of human beings. Although depravity has turned this principle into an evil direction, it was implanted in mankind for the noblest of purposes; and it is, even in our present state, a witness to the immortal progress for which the human race was originally designed.

It is not proper therefore to denounce this desire without reservation; for if it is directed in the right channel, it serves as the mainspring of the soul, and will result in enor-

mous good. It is easy to see, therefore, that man in his present state needs wholesome teaching regarding this vital subject; and that is what Jesus proposes to do.

The standard of true greatness which Jesus discusses in this lesson must always be kept in mind, if we are to understand his point of view; and it goes without saying that this is the type of greatness which is pleasing to God. This is true because those who follow this pattern are helping to lead men back to God. Let us give our attention, then, to the standard of greatness which is pleasing to God, and seek to discover the road which leads to it.

The Golden Text

Comments on the golden text will be made in the regular order of the

lesson text, since that is where it is found today.

The Text Explained

The Third Prediction of His Death

(Matt. 20: 17-19)

And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples apart, and on the way he said unto them, Jesus had finished his ministry in Peraea, east of the Jordan, and was now making his final journey to Jerusalem before his suffering and death. Mark says, "And they were on the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them: and they were amazed; and they that followed were afraid." (Mark 10: 32a.) Trench notes that there are few pictures in the gospel more striking than this of Jesus going forth to his death, and walking alone along the path into the deep valley, while behind him in awful reverence and mingled anticipations of dread and hope—their eyes fixed on him, as with bowed head he preceded them in all the majesty of sorrow—the disciples walked behind and dared not disturb his meditations.

Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify: and the third day he shall be raised up. Jesus endeavored to prepare his disciples for the

coming ordeal in Jerusalem; and in doing so, he uttered one of the most remarkable predictions to be found in the Bible. 1. He was to be delivered, not into the hands of the Romans who were the ruling authority, but into the hands of the Jewish leaders, the chief priests and scribes. 2. He was to be condemned by these religious leaders. 3. He was then to be delivered to the Gentiles to be mocked, scourged, and crucified. 4. He would be raised from the dead on the third day.

This minute prophecy furnishes strong proof that Jesus fully understood that which was before him, and that the death which he was about to accomplish would be voluntary; and if voluntary, then vicarious. Luke adds, in spite of the plainness of the words of Jesus, "And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, and they perceived not the things that were said." (Luke 18: 34.)

A Request Made in Ignorance

(Matt. 20: 20-23)

Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, worshipping him, and asking a certain thing of him. The "mother of the sons of Zebedee" was Salome, and the sons were James and John.

The fact that she is referred to as the mother of the sons of Zebedee, rather than as the wife of Zebedee, has caused some Bible students to think that Zebedee was probably dead at this time. Of course, since the sons, and not their father, were directly concerned in the present situation, it would be natural to refer to Salome as their mother.

The worship mentioned here was in the nature of humble prostration before Jesus, rather than rendering divine honors. See marginal note. Mark represents these brothers as trying to commit Jesus in their favor before making known their real desire. No mention is made in the second gospel of Salome, but even in Matthew Jesus directs his remarks, not to her, but to her sons. Luke does not record this incident. Alford thinks that James and John directed their request to Jesus through their mother because they remembered the rebuke which followed their former contention about precedence.

And he said unto her, What wouldst thou? She saith unto him, Command that these my two sons may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy kingdom. In view of the prediction of his approaching death, which Jesus had just made, this request seems to reveal a lack of feeling on the part of the two brethren and their mother. A short time before this, Jesus had told all the apostles that "when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (19: 28.) This may have suggested to them the idea of making the request: and presuming upon their high standing among the apostles (17: 1), and their near relationship to Jesus, they were emboldened to ask for the special seats of honor among the promised thrones. Of course, it is possible that they may have had a higher motive in making this request, but even so, the request itself was out of place.

But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? They say unto him, We are able. Jesus made it plain to these two disciples that they did not know what was involved in the request

which they were making. They were not aware that the highest stages of reigning together with Christ cannot be reached without first sharing in his sufferings. How many of us today are continually asking for things, the nature of which we do not understand; and if we should receive them, we know not where they might lead us. Israel asked for a king in order to be like the nations about them; but how many of them *expected* their kingdom to end as it did? The following remarks by Marcus Dods is well worth remembering: "Perhaps no form of ruin covers a man with such shame or sinks him to such helplessness as when he finds that what he has persistently clamored for and refused to be content without, has proved the bitterest and most disastrous element in his life."

After asking them if they were able to drink the cup which he was about to drink, Mark adds, "or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" and to both they answered, "We are able." It was customary in ancient times to execute criminals by compelling them to drink a cup of poison, and assassinations and suicides were often accomplished in the same way. The "cup" therefore, and "baptism" too, became a symbol of suffering and death, and that was evidently what Jesus had in mind here. It is doubtful, however, if James and John understand the Lord's meaning. It is possible that they may have thought of some battle which would attend the setting up of the kingdom; and since they were not wanting in courage, they were ready enough to pledge themselves to take part in it. Later on they caught the martyr's spirit, and suffered grievously for his sake.

He saith unto them, My cup indeed ye shall drink: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left hand, is not mine to give: but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared of my Father. It has been suggested that the "cup" referred more to the inward and spiritual bitterness, while the "baptism" signified more the outward persecution and trial. It is a recorded fact that these two brethren did drink the cup of suffering, and were baptized with the baptism of affliction; and it is no doubt true that when their suffering did come they

were cheered by this prediction. James and John had asked for fellowship in Christ's throne, but he promised them fellowship in his suffering. They desired a kingdom, but he proposed for them a quest. Even Jesus himself cannot give one a place in his kingdom for which he is not prepared; and from this we should learn that heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.

The Essence of True Greatness (Matt. 20: 24-28)

And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation concerning the two brethren. The ten evidently felt that the two had taken an unfair advantage of them. The circumstances seem to imply that the ten entertained the same ambition as the two did; for only a short time before they were all quarrelling and contending as to who would be the greatest. McGarvey notes that nothing moves the indignation of men more than to know that one of a company of equals is plotting to get an undue advantage over the others. It became necessary therefore for Jesus to interfere as a peacemaker: and he did so, not only by teaching them the meaning of true greatness, but also by citing his own example to illustrate it.

But Jesus called them unto him, and said. Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Worldly governments are usually established and maintained by force; and so, in order to present the contrast between his kingdom as it would be and as they expected it to be, Jesus pointed out the nature of Gentile rule. Later on, as Jesus stands before Pilate, he will say, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." (John 18: 36.) It seems that many people today have just about as much trouble in learning what the true nature of Christ's kingdom is, and his people's relationship to it, as the disciples did at the time of this lesson.

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

and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: Jesus plainly states that there can be no such lordship in his kingdom. His words are a stinging rebuke of all such ambition; and, as Johnston observes, men prominent in the church should be the first to heed this admonition. The term "minister" is from the same word from which we have the word "deacon." McGarvey renders it *domestic servant*. It indicates one's activity in behalf of another, rather than his relation to him. True greatness is based on real service, and the greater and more beneficial the service, the greater is the one rendering it. Jesus does not discourage, but rather encourages, greatness based on this principle.

It is not necessary for one to perform great deeds, according to the standard of the world, in order for his life to be a success. Jesus says, "He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much." (Luke 16: 10a.) This principle is illustrated by the parable of the talents. The man who had the two talents did not accomplish half as much, according to actual results, as the man did who had the five; but the man who had the two was just as faithful as the man with the five; and their lord spoke to them identical words of commendation.

Too many people have the idea that intelligence, authority, power, courage, eloquence, and the like, are the necessary ingredients of greatness and success, but any one who understands the teaching of Jesus now under consideration knows that they are not necessarily the marks of true greatness. Jesus, however, does not disparage nor ignore such traits. Instead, he would have them all used in service to mankind, being properly motivated in all things by love.

With this view of the nature of true greatness before us, let us observe that it is possible for one to attain this greatness anywhere. This, obviously, is not true of worldly greatness; for all men are not born equal, and the paths to earthly honors are greatly circumscribed. Not every boy can be president of the United States; not everyone can reach the top in his profession; and not everyone can become wealthy. But

in the kingdom of Christ there is room for everyone to serve, if he so desires and will follow the rule of Christ. Read the parable of the talents.

And, too, the greatness which Christ enjoins is satisfying to its possessor. This is not always true of those who have attained worldly greatness; for it often happens that when the prize has been won it ceases to charm. That which in the distance seemed good frequently fails to satisfy when it has been reached. But that is never true of the greatness of Christ. Hear the testimony of Paul when he was about to reach the end of his journey. Read 2 Tim. 4: 6-8.

The reason why those who serve as Christ directs are great is because they are engaged in the work for which Christ gave his life, namely, the salvation and improvement of men and women, and boys and girls. And inasmuch as human souls are the most valuable things in the world, it follows that those who serve best in this capacity are engaged in life's greatest work, and are the most like Christ. And while this kind of service is intended primarily for others, the character of him who performs it must not be overlooked. A small, selfish person cannot render the service which Christ requires. Cf. Matt. 5: 43-48; Rom. 12: 17-21; Matt. 16: 24.

Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. Meyer notes that here is a manifestation of the consciousness, which Jesus had from the very beginning, that to *sacrifice himself* was his great divine mission. These words state the vicarious nature of Christ's death. He died for every man (Heb. 2: 9), but the sacrifice will benefit only those who appropriate its blessings by accepting his offer of salvation (Heb. 5: 8. 9; Mark 16: 15, 16).

Thus, Jesus enforces the lesson on

true greatness by his own example. He did not come to earth to have men serve him, but that he might serve them. By citing this example, he suppressed both the ambition of the two brothers, and the indignation of the ten. This is a lesson which is sorely needed today, and it would be impossible for elders, preachers, teachers, and all other church workers to study it too much. In speaking of the manner in which the greatness of Christ shall for ever endure, the skeptical Ernest Renan, in his *Life of Jesus*, said:

"But whatever may be the surprises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceasing; this legend will call forth tears without end; his suffering will melt the noblest hearts; all ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus.

"Repose now in thy glory, noble Founder, thy work is finished; thy divinity is established. Fear no more to see the edifice of thy labors fall by any fault. Henceforth, beyond the reach of frailty, thou shalt witness from the heights of divine peace the infinite results of thy acts. At the price of a few hours of suffering, which did not even reach thy grand soul, thou hast bought the most complete immortality. For thousands of years the world will depend on thee. Banner of our contests, thou shalt be the standard about which the hottest battle will be given. A thousand times more alive, a thousand times more beloved, since thy death than during thy passage here below, thou shalt become the cornerstone of humanity so entirely that to tear thy name from this world would be to rend it to its foundations. Between thee and God there will no longer be any distinction. Complete Conqueror of death, take possession of thy kingdom, whither shalt follow thee, by the royal road which thou hast traced, ages of worshippers."

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is the lesson now before us so important?
Is it wrong for people to desire to be great? Give reasons for your answer.

The Third Prediction of His Death

Under what circumstances was this prediction made?

What light does Mark throw on the scene?

Analyze this prediction and show why it was and is remarkable.

What is meant by the "vicarious" death of Jesus?

Why couldn't the disciples understand the Lord's saying?

A Request Made in Ignorance

Whose request was this and through whom was it made?

What does Mark say about it?

To whom did Jesus direct his reply? and why?

What did James and John want?

Why would they make such a request under such solemn circumstances?

What was the probable basis for the request?

Why didn't James and John know what they were asking?

What is always necessary before reigning with Christ? and why is this true?

What is the danger of persistent requests for things about which we do not understand?

What did Jesus mean by drinking of his "cup"?

When did they drink of it? and was it what they expected?

The Essence of True Greatness

What was the reaction of the other ten to the request of the two brethren? and why?

How did Jesus deal with this situation?

Why did he mention the nature of the rule of Gentiles?

How are Christians related to the kingdoms of the world?

Why can't there be "lords" in the kingdom of Christ?

In what sense are the great in his kingdom "ministers"?

On what is true greatness based? and why?

How is faithfulness to the Lord related to greatness in his sight?

How does the parable of the talents illustrate this lesson?

Does Jesus disparage the traits which the world usually calls great? Discuss fully.

Where does one have to go in order to find true greatness?

Why is it always satisfying to its possessor?

What is implied regarding the character of a person who is great in God's sight?

Why is this true?

What did the example of Jesus reveal concerning his own thoughts?

If Jesus tasted death for every man, who then will be saved? Why?

Who should profit by the Lord's example? Why?

Lesson IX—August 30, 1959

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

Lesson Text

Matt. 22: 15-22, 34-40

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

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

17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cae'-sar, or not?

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

19 Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a dé-narius.

20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?

21 They say unto him, Cae'-sar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cae'-sar the things that are Cae'-sar's; and unto God the

things that are God's.

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

34 But the Phar'i-sees, when they heard that he had put the Sad'-du-ces to silence, gathered themselves together.

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

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

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

38 This is the great and first commandment.

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

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Cae-sar's and unto God the things that are God's.*" (Matt. 22: 21b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 13: 1-14.

Daily Bible Readings

August 24.	M.....	Obligations of Citizenship (Rom. 14: 1-7)
August 25.	T.....	Respect for Authority (Acts 19: 35-41)
August 26.	W.....	Duty of Rulers (Job 34: 10-20)
August 27.	T.....	A Citizen of Zion (Psalm 15)
August 28.	F.....	Jehovah's Gracious Ways (Deut. 8: 1-10)
August 29.	S.....	Citizens of Heaven (Phil. 3: 17-21)
August 30.	S.....	Fulfilling the Law (Rom. 13: 8-14)

Time.—Probably Tuesday, A.D. 30.

Place.—The temple in Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jesus, the Pharisees, their disciples, and the Herodians.

Introduction

The lesson for today finds its setting during the last week of the ministry of Jesus before his crucifixion; and it is well to get a bird's eye view of the happenings of that eventful week. This will require somewhat of a survey of that which took place between the last lesson and this one. For the benefit of teachers and any others who are interested in a rather full outline of this brief period, the main events, along with the references in all four of the gospel narratives, are listed. The subject of this section may be given as the Lord's last public ministry in Jerusalem.

Our last lesson left Jesus and the disciples on their way to Jerusalem from a brief stay in Peraea, east of the Jordan. Their arrival in the vicinity of Jerusalem was at Bethphage, on the mount of Olives; and it was from there that he sent two of his disciples for the ass and the colt, to be used by Jesus in making his

triumphal entry into the city. (Matt. 21: 1-11; Mark 11: 1-11; Luke 19: 29-44; John 12: 12-19.) The cursing of the barren fig tree and the cleansing of the temple. (Matt. 21: 12-22; Mark 11: 12-25; Luke 19: 45-48.) The authority of Jesus formally challenged by the Jewish leaders. (Matt. 21: 23-46; Mark 11: 27; 12: 12; Luke 20: 1-19.) The Parable of the Royal Marriage Feast. (Matt. 22: 1-14.)

It should be noted that the three parables which Christ spoke in this connection, that of the two sons, the wicked husbandmen, and the royal marriage feast, were all intended as his answer to the challenge of his authority. The last one, however, stressed the indolence and indifference of those who received the Lord's gracious invitation. This brings us to the last great encounter which Jesus had with the Pharisees, the group who had been his most persistent critics during his ministry.

The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson will be since there is where it is found, considered in the body of the text.

The Text Explained

A Captious Question

(Matt. 22: 15-17)

Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might ensnare him in his talk. It has been noted in the preceding chapter that the chief priests and elders tried to entrap Jesus by a question regarding the authority of John the Baptist as a teacher. That effort ended in a dismal failure; and now, in this chapter, three more efforts prompted by the same diabolical motive are made to entangle the Lord. McGarvey notes that the task of a detective who seeks to entangle a bad man in his

talk for the sake of exposing him, is not an enviable one; but to lay such snares for a good man is truly diabolical. Yet this is what the Pharisees deliberately took counsel to do, and the wonder is that they could look each other in the face while plotting such a deed. It is to be regretted that such a spirit did not die with the Pharisees of that day.

It will be helpful to those who are studying this lesson to observe the nature of the three questions which are put to Jesus in this chapter. The first was of a *political* character and referred to the claims of Caesar; the

second of a *social* character and referred to the marriage relationship in the resurrection: while the third was more directly *religious* and referred to the primary obligation of mankind. All of these questions could have been put to a good use, but that was not the purpose of those who asked them.

And they send to him their disciples, with the Herodians, saying, Teacher, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, and carest not for any one: for thou regardest not the person of men. The "disciples" were the students or pupils of the Pharisees, or those who were their followers. Cf. Mark 2:

18. The party of the "Herodians" was probably founded during the time of Herod the Great. Edersheim calls them *Nationalists* and says that they were in fact a revival of the Maccabean movement, perhaps more fully in its national than in its religious aspect. It appears that they undertook to uphold the dynasty of the Herods in opposition to the principle of a pure theocracy. While differing from the Pharisees in this respect, they were quite willing to unite their efforts with that powerful body, if it would be to their advantage.

Luke says that the men who were sent to question Jesus were "spies who feigned themselves to be righteous, that they might take hold of his speech, so as to deliver him up to the rule and to the authority of the governor." (Luke 20: 20.) The plotters of this movement evidently thought that by the union of these to hostile parties, and by their efforts to feign themselves righteous, it would be easier to deceive Jesus. It is also obvious that that was also the purpose of their flattery. Someone has said that the devil never lies so foully, as when he speaks the truth.

Theirs was a skillfully laid plan, and it may be summed up in this way: They would put the question as if to settle a dispute which had arisen between the two groups regarding the paying of taxes to the Roman government. In case the answer should be in the negative, then the Herodian, the supporters of the government, would report it to the authority of the governor. Cf. Luke 23: 2. But if the answer should be

in the affirmative, then that would give the Pharisees an excuse to show that he was compromising with the Romans, and that he could not therefore be the promised Messiah or Deliverer; and that would be all that they needed for a pretext to stir up the multitude against him. Cf. Deut. 17: 14, 15.

Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? Julius Caesar was the first to become Emperor of Rome, and so all who followed him in that position were called "Caesar," just as the rulers of Egypt were called "Pharaoh." The tribute which the Romans exacted from the Jews, along with other conquered provinces, was exceedingly galling to Jewish pride. Many among the Jews had grave doubts about its being allowed by their law, that is, the law of Moses. Josephus speaks of Judas of Galilee as raising a revolt on this account, and saying that taxation was no better than an introduction to slavery. Cf. Acts 5: 37; Luke 2: 1ff.

The Lord's Reply (Matt. 22: 18-22)

Blit Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said. Why make ye trial of me, ye hypocrites? Thus, before answering them, Jesus exposed their hypocrisy and showed them that he could read their very thoughts. The term "hypocrite" literally means a pretender, such as a stage-player who acts the part which he is not. This exposure on the part of Jesus must have greatly disarmed his would-be destroyers.

Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a denarius. As already indicated, the tribute money was a tax which the Romans exacted from subjugated people, including the Jews. The "denarius" (an anglicized Greek word) was a Roman silver coin worth normally about seventeen or eighteen cents, a workman's average daily wage. See Matt. 20: 2; cf. 18: 28. Arndt and Gingrich note that the debasement of the coinage under Nero reduced it in value to about eight cents.

And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. This shows that the coin in question was not the Jewish coin which was used by them

in paying the temple tax, but a Roman coin, probably the ordinary coin used for the capitation tax, or head-money. It had the emperor's image and a suitable superscription engraved or stamped upon it, thus making it the property of Caesar. Alford calls attention to a quotation by Lightfoot and Wetstein of a saying of the Rabbis which declared that "wherever any king's money is current, there that king is lord." The Pharisees and Herodians in question evidently knew this, and that knowledge must have proved embarrassing to them.

Then saith he unto them. Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. The very fact that they had the emperor's "current" money was enough to convict them; they were in subjection to the then reigning Caesar, Tiberius, and the coin was due recognition of that subjection. In speaking of the Lord's answer to them, Alford says, "These weighty words, so much misunderstood, bind together, instead of separating, the political and religious duties of the followers of Christ. See Jer. 27: 4-18; Rom. 13: 1; 1 Pet. 2: 13, 14; John 19: 11. The second clause comprehends the first and gives its true foundation: as if it had been, 'this obedience to Caesar is but an application of the general principle of obedience to God, of whom is all power.' The latter clause reaches infinitely deeper than the former: just as our Lord in Luke 10: 41, 42 declares a truth reaching far beyond the occasion of the meal. *Man is the coinage, and bears the image, of God* (Gen. 1: 27); and this image is *not lost by the fall* (Gen. 9: 6; Acts 17: 29; James 3: 9. See also notes on Luke 15: 8, 9). We owe then *ourselves* to God: and this solemn duty is implied, of giving ourselves to him, with all that we have and are. The answer also *gives them the real reason why they were now under subjection to Caesar: viz., because they had fallen from their allegiance to God.* . . . They had again and again rejected their theocratic inheritance;—they refused it in the wilderness;—they would not have God to reign over them, but a king;—therefore they were subjected to foreigners (see 2 Chron. 12: 8)."

And when they heard it, they marvelled, and left him, and went away. Luke says, "And they were not able to take hold of the saying before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace." McGarvey notes that they had several causes for astonishment: his instantaneous discovery of their plot, his skillful escape from their dilemma, his loyalty to Caesar while proposing himself to establish a kingdom, and his insusceptibility to flattery. Amazed and baffled, they left him and went their way. The humiliating defeat which these would-be destroyers of Jesus met reminds us of a statement in the Book of Job. from which Paul one time quoted (1 Cor. 3: 19). The passage is as follows: "He frustrateth the devices of the crafty. So that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness; And the counsel of the cunning is carried headlong. They meet with darkness in the day-time, and grope at noon-day as in the night." (Job 5: 12-14.)

A Final Desperate Effort

(Matt. 22: 34-40)

But the Pharisees, when they heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, gathered themselves together. The Sadducees were the traditional opponents of the Pharisees, and so, after the signal failure of the Pharisees and the Herodians to involve Jesus in a dilemma, the Sadducees came forward to try their hand. See verses 23-33. The Sadducees did not believe in a personal existence beyond death. Acts 23: 8 says, "For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both."

The Sadducees had a favorite argument which they were fond of making, and they did not believe that anyone who believes in the resurrection of the dead could answer. The argument concerned the seven brothers who, in accordance with the law of Moses, had married the same woman; and their so-called unanswerable question was, "In the resurrection therefore whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her." It appears that the Sadducees were trying to go a step further than the Pharisees had gone; not only did they intend to involve Jesus in a

dilemma, but God too. But Jesus quickly showed them the root of their trouble, and answered their question with astonishing clarity.

And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, trying him: Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? Notwithstanding the fact that both the Pharisees and the Sadducees were aiming at the destruction of Jesus, the former, as Robertson thinks, could not restrain their glee when they heard that their traditional rivals had gone down in defeat. They apparently felt themselves sufficiently recovered from their defeat regarding the tribute money to try again; but this time they appear more cautious. A lawyer was selected from among them to ask the question, thus insuring a trained expert in the art, not only of questioning, but also of judging as to the accuracy of the answer.

It should be noted, however, that a "lawyer," as that term was then used, was not an attorney, as with us. The lawyers of the New Testament were men who were well versed in the law of Moses; and who, because of their familiarity with the law, were the teachers and interpreters. Mark calls the man now in question a "scribe." They were expert teachers of the law (cf. Luke 5: 17; Acts 5: 34), sometimes referred to as "Mosaic jurists."

Bible students are of the opinion that the question which the lawyer asked should be rendered, "What kind of a commandment is great in the law?" that is, what must be the nature of a commandment in order to constitute it great? See Thayer, Vincent, Meyer, Alford, et al. Vincent notes that "the scribes declared that there were 248 affirmative precepts, as many as the members of the human body; and 365 negative precepts, as many as the days in the year; the total being 613, the number of letters in the Decalogue. Of these they called some *light* and some *heavy*. Some thought that the law about the fringes on the garments was the greatest; some that the omission of washings was as bad as homicide; some that the third commandment was the greatest. It was in view of this kind of distinction that the scribe asked the question; not desiring a declaration as to which

commandment was greatest, but as wanting to know the *principle* upon which a commandment was to be regarded as a *great* commandment."

This viewpoint, of course, implies great skill in the art of polemics. The lawyer was endeavoring to ask a question which no one could answer correctly who did not possess a perfect knowledge of all the law of God. It evidently seemed to them impossible that a young Galilean peasant, who had not been trained in any of their schools of learning, would be able to give a suitable answer to the question. But again, as in all other instances, they were doomed to a most surprising disappointment.

And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. Mark adds, "and with all thy strength." Taken together, these denote that we must love God with our whole being. Cf. 2 Kings 23: 25. We have thus an enumeration of the different elements which are necessary to the complete harmonious self-dedication of the entire inner man to God, as to its highest good. This command is great because it necessarily includes all others, and it is first because it precedes the other which he mentions next. The fact that Jesus quoted this great and first commandment, not from the Decalogue, but from Deut. 6: 5, may have also greatly surprised his critics.

And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. See Lev. 19: 18. The New Testament teaches that a neighbor is one who stands in need of our assistance. He may be a friend or in enemy, an acquaintance or a stranger. See Luke 10: 25-37. Just as the first commandment which Jesus named sums up our whole duty to God, so this one sums up our whole duty to our fellow men. No one can love his fellow men as he is taught to do without seeking their best interests.

On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets. In the very nature of the case, no commandment can be greater than these, that is, there is no higher principle upon which a commandment

can be regarded as great. These two commandments contain the fundamental principles of the whole law. Cf. Mark 12: 28-34.

Calhoun observes that as simply and as easily as he had answered all their other questions, he answered this one, and with such manifest truth in his answer that not even the greatest cavalier among them could even question the correctness of its answer. It brought confusion to them who blindly refused to see in him anything but a man. Nothing but the wisdom of God could possi-

bly have guided him into an answer so superb in its meaning and so laconic in its extent and so comprehensive in its meaning. This answer has ever since remained the admiration of the friends of Jesus as showing the wonderful sweep of his knowledge of the law of God and the perfect command that he had of all its wondrous truths when called upon to apply these truths to the instruction of humanity. This, incidentally, was the last question which any of them dared ask him. See verse 46.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Give the general setting of this lesson.
Briefly summarize the events of the week up to the time of the lesson.
What was the principal purpose of the three parables which Jesus spoke?

A Captious Question

Why were so many efforts made to entangle Jesus? and by whom?
What can you say of the motives which prompted them?
What was the nature of the three questions which they asked Jesus?
Who were the disciples of the Pharisees? and who were the Herodians?
Why did the Pharisees and the Herodians unite their forces in this effort?
What question did they ask Jesus?
Who was "Caesar" and why was he so called?
Why would the question regarding tribute money be of general interest?

The Lord's Reply

What did Jesus do before answering their question?
Who is a "hypocrite" and why is he so called?
What was the coin which they displayed?
What question did Jesus ask them about it? and why?

What did he then tell them to do? and why?
Discuss fully the lesson which Jesus taught by this incident.
How did his answer affect those who questioned him?

A Final Desperate Effort

When and why did the Pharisees make another effort to trap Jesus?
Why would the fact that the Sadducees had been put to silence encourage the Pharisees?
What special preparation did the Pharisees now make? and why?
Who were the "lawyers" of the New Testament period?
What did the lawyer mean by "the great commandment in the law"?
Why would such a question as this be asked?
What was the Lord's answer?
Why is the command to love God the great and first commandment?
Where was that command given?
What is the second commandment? and where is it found?
How did the whole law and the prophets hang on these two commandments?
Give your appraisal of the Lord's answer to this question.
Judging from Mark's account, how did Jesus evidently regard the lawyer's motive?
Why didn't they ask Jesus any more questions?

Lesson X—September 6, 1959

THE FINAL JUDGMENT

Lesson Text

Matt. 25: SI-48

31 But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory:

32 And before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats;

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was hungry, and ye gave

me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in;

36 Naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink?

38 And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39 And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you. Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, *even* these least, ye did it unto me.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from

me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 For I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink;

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me.

46 And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.

Golden Text.—*"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: 10.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalm 86: 1-7.

Daily Bible Readings

August 31.	M	Fact of Judgment (Eccles. 3: 1-7)
September 1.	T	Judgment Promised (Rom. 2: 1-12)
September 2.	W	Day of Judgment (2 Pet. 3: 7-12)
September 3.	T	Picture of Judgment (Rev. 20: 11-15)
September 4.	F	Measure of Responsibility (Luke 12: 41-48)
September 5.	S	Personal Accountability (Rom. 14: 2-13)
September 6.	S	The Merciful God (Psalm 86: 1-7)

Time.—Probably Tuesday afternoon, A.D. 30.

Place.—Mount of Olives.

Persons.—Jesus and his disciples.

Introduction

Most Bible readers readily accept the Sermon on the Mount as being a discourse which was delivered *by* Jesus during his personal ministry here among men; but other discourses which were delivered by him, and which are also recorded in the gospel records, are not so widely recognized. Among the latter group is the discourse from which the text for today is taken. No one will get the full force of the lesson which Jesus meant to teach who does not recognize his picture of the judgment, contained in our lesson text, as being a part of a discourse which he spoke on the occasion now before us.

The Sermon on the Mount, as all Bible readers know, is found in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of

Matthew. It was delivered by Jesus near the beginning of his ministry, probably on mount Hattin, or some other mountain in the vicinity of the sea of Galilee; while the discourse found in the 24th and 25th chapters of Matthew was spoken by him near the close of his ministry on the mount of Olives. Those who want to get the lesson which Jesus taught should read both of these chapters together at one sitting, which will take only a very few minutes.

There are three major parts of the sermon from which our text for today is taken, and an outline of it would run something like this: I. The Destruction of the Temple Foretold, 24: 3-28; II. The Second Coming of Christ, 24: 29-51; and III. The Second Coming Illustrated, 25: 1-

46. The lesson for today is found in the third section, which also is divided into three parts, namely, 1. The necessity of being ready when Christ comes, 25: 1-13; 2. The manner

in which preparation should be made, 25: 14-20; and 3. A picture of the judgment itself, 25: 31-46. It is with this last division that we are concerned today.

The Golden Text

"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." It is said that someone once asked Daniel Webster what was the most solemn thought which ever entered his mind, and he promptly replied by saying, "The fact that he must stand in the presence of God and be judged for that which he did while here on the earth. Any person who will stop and think will very likely agree with Mr. Webster. That, in fact, is the solemn affirmation of the golden text which is now under consideration."

Any worthwhile discussion of the future judgment should include a word regarding the present judgment. The purpose of the judgment at the last day is not to determine whether or not we are pleasing to God, but rather give out rewards and punishments. That is what Paul says in the passage now before us. In the closing chapter of Revelation, Jesus

says, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is." (Rev. 22: 12.) It will be too late to make any changes when that day of judgment arrives.

The matter of one's standing in the sight of God belongs to the judgment of the present. "Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, *The Lord knoweth them that are his*: and, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness." (2 Tim. 2: 19.) The very fact that the Lord knows them that are his is proof that they are meeting his standard of judgment: and that condition will continue as long as we have our ability to do right or wrong. But when this life is over we must meet the Lord face to face for a final reckoning, at which time we shall receive the things done in the body, according to that which we have done, whether it be good or bad. Cf. Acts 17: 30, 31.

The Text Explained

The Setting for the Judgment

(Matt. 25: 31, 32a)

But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations. There are several facts in this statement which shows beyond any doubt that the reference is to the end of the dispensation, the time when Jesus shall come to judge the world prior to his delivering the kingdom back to the Father. 1. He shall come in his glory. 2. All the angels shall be with him. 3. He shall sit on the throne of his glory. 4. All the nations of the earth shall be gathered before him. This is a majestic picture with which the Lord brings his sermon to a close.

In a description of the judgment at the last day, John says, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that

sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne: and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works." (Rev. 20: 11, 12.)

The coming of Christ will be in glory, because of the full manifestation of his power and majesty; and his throne is called the throne of his glory, because from it shall come decisions of wisdom and righteousness. Cf. Acts 17: 30, 31. The awfulness of the scene is described by Paul when he says, "At the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that

obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day." (2 Thess. 1: 7b-10.)

No human being has the power to conceive of the vast number of people who will be at the judgment. In the words of Bryant, "All that tread the globe are but a handful to the tribes that slumber in its bosom." But regardless of the number, all the people from the day of Adam to the last person who shall live on the earth shall be there. "Marvel not it this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment," that is, condemnation. (John 5: 28, 29.)

The angels in the Scriptures are frequently associated with Jesus in descriptions of the judgment. In the parable of the tares, they are called "the reapers," and we are told that "the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." See Matt. 13: 36-43. And then in the parable of the drag-net, it is said, "So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous." See Matt. 13: 47-50. Truly, there is a great day coming!

The Division of the People

(Matt. 25: 32b-45)

And he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. In the expression "he shall separate them," the pronoun "them," in the original, is masculine, while its antecedent "nations" is neuter. This clearly shows that the separation has reference, not to the nations, as such; but to the individuals who make up

the nations. This separation will be made with unerring penetration, and with infinite equity. The vast multitudes will move to the right or to the left under the influence of his mighty power. The metaphor is taken from the practice of shepherds of ancient times in keeping the sheep and the goats in separate flocks.

In the matter of judgment, the right hand is always represented as the place of honor and preferment, while the left is the place of the less favored or the despised. It is said that when criminals were tried by the Jewish Sanhedrin, those who were acquitted were placed on the right hand, while those who were condemned were stationed on the left. The separation which is here made is not the result of caprice or arbitrary power, but according to a settled principle in the government of God. "He will judge the world in righteousness." This principle shall be further discussed in this section of our lesson.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. This is the first and only time in which Jesus plainly calls himself the "King." See verse 40. Those on his right hand are the blessed of the Father, that is, their character demonstrated that they have lived according to the will of God, and under his benediction. Jesus spoke at length regarding the character and blessedness of his disciples in the opening part of the Sermon on the Mount. See Matt. 5: 3-12. Paul speaks of this blessedness when he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ: even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." (Eph. 1: 3-6.)

In saying that the kingdom was prepared for the righteous from the foundation of the world, the mean-

ing, of course, is not from the beginning of the material world, as set forth in Gen. 1; for if that were true, then the statement of Christ in John 14: 1-3 would have no meaning. It was and is the eternal purpose of God that none but the righteous could inherit his eternal kingdom, or live with him eternally.

For I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. After describing the glory and majesty of the judgment scene, the Lord next gives the reason for the public acknowledgement of the righteous. The acts which are mentioned here are all deeds of mercy, and they fall in the category of good works. Being deeds of mercy, they presuppose a background of faith and love. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this 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: 14-18.)

This is the principle which determines our destiny, the principle of godly and practical benevolence; and without it there is no conformity to God, no fitness for the eternal courts of heaven. These acts of mercy which are here enumerated are given as manifestations of character; and they are specified to show the importance which are attached to them. Cf. James 1: 27. It should be remembered, however, that good deeds alone will not save anyone; the deeds of mercy must be prompted by love. See 1 Cor. 13: 3.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink? And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? And

when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? It is not likely that this conversation will actually take place; it is simply a part of the drapery of the parable.

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me. The manner in which Christ replies to the righteous, as if they had ministered unto him personally, excites their astonishment, and emphasizes the unconsciousness of merit which characterizes the noblest deeds, when their performance is motivated by faith in and love for God and man. The reply of Jesus also shows that whatever is done for the needy, according to his will, is also done for him. Cf. Mark 9: 41.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels. Even the vilest sinner, while here upon the earth, is in a certain sense always before the Lord, but there will come a time when every unprepared person will be forever banished from his presence. The "cursed" are those who are devoted to destruction. This state is the very opposite of the "blessed." It implies the negation of all the blessings which are promised the faithful, and a positive infliction of eternal suffering.

The "eternal fire" denotes both the nature and duration of the punishment which will be inflicted. It was prepared for the devil and his angels, but it will also be the lot of all men who partake of the ways of the evil one. For one to suffer the same kind of punishment which was originally meant for the devil shows something of the enormity of sin. Adam Clarke notes that we see here, plainly, why sinners are destroyed, not because there was no salvation for them, but because they neglected to receive good, and do good. They are cursed, because they refused to be blessed; and they are damned, because they refused to be saved.

For I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. It should be

observed that in the three examples which Christ gave to illustrate the second coming, the virgins, the talents, and the judgment, not a single one of those who were condemned was charged with any sin but that of neglect. Cf. Heb. 2: 3. Neglect alone is sufficient to condemn the soul.

Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? This is self-justification by endeavoring to repel the accusation as being unwarranted. The man who sees only with the eyes of the flesh seldom sees Christ in the person of a man who is destitute of the necessities of life, and it is usually the lack of faith which produces hard-heartedness toward the poor. Some people pretend not to know of the distress of others, because they have no desire to relieve them; but, as this lesson plainly teaches, such

ignorance will not be of any benefit at the judgment day.

Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me. The only difference between this answer and the one given to the righteous is the word *not*. Their failure in this respect was the ground for their condemnation. No other sins or acts of disobedience are taken into consideration. Simple neglect is sufficient to cause eternal condemnation.

The Final Rewards

(Matt. 25: 46)

And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life. Efforts have been made to show that the punishment of the wicked is not eternal, but one has only to read this text to see that the punishment of the wicked is co-extensive with the life of the righteous. The same Greek word measures both; they are both *eternal*.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, persons.

Introduction

What is the full context of the scripture we are studying today?

Where, when, and why did Jesus deliver this discourse?

Give an analysis of the discourse now before us.

The Golden Text

Why is the fact that one must stand before the judgment of Christ a most solemn thought?

What is the purpose of the judgment at the last day?

What is the purpose of the judgment which is going on now?

How do you know that there are two such judgments?

The Setting for the Judgment

How do we know that the judgment of this lesson is the final judgment?

How does John describe the last judgment?

Why are the coming of Christ and his throne described as glorious?

What does Paul say about this same event?

Who will be at the judgment?

What will be the work of the angels at that time?

The Division of the People

Who is it that is to be separated? Give reasons for your answer.

What will be the basis of the separation?

Why will the righteous be on the right, and the wicked on the left?

Why did Jesus refer to himself as the "King"?

Why are those on the right hand called blessed?

What is meant by saying that the kingdom was prepared for them from the foundation of the world?

What was the reason for this public acknowledgment of the righteous?

Why will the principle herein set forth determine destiny?

Why will good deeds alone not save anyone?

What reply will the righteous make? and why?

What does the answer of Christ to them show?

Why are the ones on the left hand called cursed? and what does that mean?

How? can they be driven from the Lord's presence?

What does the expression "eternal fire" denote?

For whom was it prepared? and why?

Why, then, will men be punished there?

In the three examples which Christ gave to illustrate the second coming, what was the sole sin of condemnation?

Why is this true?

What answer will the wicked give? and why?

Why is it that so many people fail to see their duty to help the needy?

What is the sole difference between the answers given to the righteous and the wicked?

The Final Rewards

Why do people try to show that the punishment of the wicked is not eternal?

What is wrong with their effort?

Lesson XI—September 13, 1959

JESUS IN GETHSEMANE

Lesson Text

Matt. 26: 31-46

31 Then saith Je'-sus unto them. All ye shall be offended in me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

32 But after I am raised up, I will go before you into Gal'-i-lee.

33 But Peter answered and said unto him. If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended.

34 Je'-sus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

35 Peter saith unto him, Even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

36 Then cometh Je'-sus with them unto a place called Geth-sem'-a-ne, and saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray.

37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zeb'-e-dee, and began to be sorrowful and sore troubled.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Golden Text.—*"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane. and saith unto his disciples. Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray."* (Matt. 26: 36.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalm 42: 1-5.

Daily Bible Readings

September 7.	M.....	Prophecy of Christ's Sufferings (Isa. 53: 1-6)
September 8.	T.....	Humiliation of Christ (Heb. 2: 10-18)
September 9.	W.....	Perfect Through Suffering (Heb. 5: 1-10)
September 10.	T.....	Rejoicing in Suffering (1 Pet. 4: 12-19)
September 11.	F.....	The Father's Will (Heb. 10: 7-18)
September 12.	S.....	Turning to God in Trouble (Psalm 42: 1-5)
September 13.	S.....	Remembrance of His Suffering (1 Cor. 11: 23-34)

Time.—Thursday, the day before the crucifixion, A.D. 30.

Place.—The garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives.

Persons.—Jesus and his disciples.

Introduction

We have reached the point in our study of the life of Jesus where we may speak of it as being in the shadow of the cross. Our last lesson was based on the Lord's great sermon regarding the destruction of Jerusalem, or, more specifically, the

temple, and his second coming at the end of the world. The events between the delivery of that discourse and the lesson for today are both interesting and profitable for study. Jesus himself tells us that the pass-over was only two days away, when

"the Son of man is delivered up to be crucified."

Following the discourse just referred to, a meeting of the chief priests and elders of the people was called in the house of Caiaphas, the high priest, for the purpose of devising ways and means of killing Jesus; and they decided that subtlety would have to be employed if they were to avoid a tumult among the people. And about that time Jesus was anointed by Mary, and her action provoked a criticism on the part of Judas, which, in turn resulted in his being rebuked by Jesus. It was then that Judas, smarting under that rebuke and giving way to his pent-up feelings, made his plans for betraying Jesus.

The Golden Text

This part of the lesson for today is found in the passage which serves as a basis for our study; and it will

We next see Jesus at the passover supper, where he washed the disciples' feet and instituted the Lord's supper. This brings us up to within one day of his tragic death, and all of these facts should be carefully and prayerfully read before an effort is made to teach this lesson. This setting should impress upon our minds anew the meaning and significance of the Lord's supper. It is a memorial institution which was given by Jesus to his followers; and its simple elements are emblematic of the body and blood of Jesus which was shed for the sins of the world. Its weekly celebration by all faithful disciples is a part of the worship which the Lord has ordained for the church. See Acts 20; 7.

therefore be considered in the regular order.

The Text Explained

Desertion and Denial Predicted

(Matt. 26: 31-35)

Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended in me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd., and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. The term "then" indicates that the events of this lesson came soon after those of the "upper room" (cf. Matt. 14: 15), with the Lord's farewell discourse to his disciples and his intercessory prayer (John 14-17) coming in between. The marginal reading of "be offended" is "caused to stumble," indicating, perhaps, their partial defection. The literal meaning is to take offense at someone, in this case Jesus; because of his voluntary and unexpected surrender to the soldiers who arrested him. The scripture cited by Jesus is Zech. 13: 7, a Messianic prophecy. The smiting of the shepherd and the consequent scattering of his flock of sheep is a graphic description of the scene at the arrest of Jesus.

But after I am raised up. I will go before you into Galilee. This statement appears to be a continuation of the figure of the shepherd and his sheep. The flock indeed would be scattered when the shepherd was smitten, but as a Good Shepherd (cf. John 10: 4) he would gather

them together again. This appointment was referred to by the angel at the sepulchre, and by Jesus himself, both here and after his resurrection. See Matt. 28: 7, 10, 16.

But Peter answered and said unto him. If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended. One of the chief characteristics of Peter was his impulsiveness. He had a way of speaking up "on the spur of the moment;" and, as we gather from Luke's record, he sometimes spoke without "knowing what he said." But notwithstanding this trait in Peter, Jesus loved him from their first meeting, and confidently predicted for him a stable future. See John 1: 42. One has only to consider the facts in Peter's life in order to see that the Lord's love for, confidence in, and patience with him was fully justified.

If we read the parallel statement in Luke we will see that Jesus told Peter that Satan asked to have "you" (plural), that is, all the apostles, that he might sift them as wheat; but he assured Peter that he had made supplication for "thee" (singular), that is, Peter alone, that his faith would not fail. That was a gracious blessing from the Lord, and Peter should have been grateful for it; but instead of feeling that way about it, he regarded it as a reflection upon his

loyalty that the Lord should even think that he was in danger of deserting him. (See Luke 22: 31-34.)

Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. This was a solemn warning that before the dawning of the next day, Peter, instead of remaining firm and loyal to Jesus, would deny him three times. The parallel in Mark is more specific: "And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that thou today, even this night, before the cock crow twice, shalt deny me thrice." Cock-crowing, according to Bible scholars, occurred in the third of the four watches of the night, the period which lasted from midnight till three o'clock. It is the period which, in Mark 13: 35, is called "cockcrowing," the period which came between midnight and morning. Mark, in this connection, mentions all four of the watches of the night. "Watch therefore: for ye know not when the lord of the house cometh, whether at even, or at midnight, or at cockcrowing, or in the morning."

Peter saith unto him, Even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples. Mark says that Peter "spake exceeding vehemently." Those who read the account of Peter's experience will readily see something of the uncertainty of human resolution, and man's ignorance of himself. Peter's big mistake was in not listening to the Lord's warning, and trusting in him for the strength which he needed to overcome the temptation which was ahead of him. But, as it was, he did not even appear to appreciate the Lord's prayer for him.

Many people today are following Peter's example in this respect. It is quite easy to talk boldly and carelessly about death when we are at a distance from it, or so we think. Frequently one is heard to say, "I would rather die than to do so and so," but such statements are seldom heard in the shadow of death. But there is a proneness even in good men to think more of their own strength and stability than the facts warrant. How many people feel themselves strong enough to grapple with the strongest temptations, perform the hardest and most hazardous service, and endure the greatest

afflictions for Christ's sake, who have never been put to the test. It often happens that the ones who have the greatest confidence in themselves are the ones who fall the quickest and the lowest. This incident in the life of Peter should cause all of us to be more careful and to pray often, "Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Sympathetic Watchfulness Requested

(Matt. 26: 36-38)

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray. The garden of Gethsemane was an olive orchard on the western slope of the mount of Olives. The marginal note says that it was "an enclosed piece of ground." It is worthy of note that only John speaks of Gethsemane as a "garden;" the other three narrators call it simply a "place." John appears to have written his record much later than the other three, and it is entirely possible that the *place* was made into a *garden* before John wrote. See Rand McNally's *Bible Atlas*.

The garden of Gethsemane seems to have been a place where Jesus and his disciples visited often. "And he came out, and went, as his custom was, unto the mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation." (Luke 22: 39, 40.) John says that the garden was "over the brook Kidron" from Jerusalem. (John 18: 1.) It was about three quarters of a mile from the eastern wall of the city. This seems to have been the route which David took when he left Jerusalem in his flight from Absalom. See 2 Sam. 15: 30. The "garden of Gethsemane," along with the "hill of Golgotha," has become a symbol of intense suffering and agony. The shadow of the cross was hovering over Jesus, and it was natural for him to go to his Father in prayer.

And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and sore troubled. This is the third time that these three disciples were admitted into the "inner circle" of the Lord's ministry—first, in the death-chamber in

the house of Jairus, next, upon the mount of transfiguration, and now, in the garden of Gethsemane. It has been suggested that the eight other disciples were left near the gate of the garden as a kind of outer guard to watch for the coming of Judas, while the three would be able to give Jesus some human sympathy while he sought divine aid from his Father.

With regard to the statement "and began to be sorrowful and sore troubled," Adam Clarke notes that reference was to that exquisite sorrow, such as dissolves the natural vigor, and threatens to separate the soul and body. He further observes that the word for "sore troubled" was used by the Greeks to denote the most extreme anguish which the soul can feel—excruciating anxiety and torture of spirit.

Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: abide ye here, and watch with me. In this moment of intense agony, Jesus felt that he could not bear the pressure which was upon him, and he made a direct appeal for human sympathy. Jesus had been the comforter of his disciples when they were in trouble or danger, but now he calls on them for the help which their wakeful sympathy would afford him in this extreme hour of his agony. The reasonableness of this request and the heartbreaking tone in which it was made makes us desire most earnestly that humanity would arise to its opportunity, but we are doomed to disappointment as we continue to read the inspired narrative. There are times and occasions, of course, when human sympathy may be found, when humanity responds, but in the case now before us the need was too great for weary men to meet its demands.

Prayers Which Were Heard

(Matt. 26: 39-46)

And he went forward a little, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. Luke says that "he was parted from them about a stone's cast; and he kneeled down and prayed." The probability is that he knelt first, and then, in his exhausted condition, fell

upon his face, that is, lay prostrate upon the ground. McGarvey notes that this is the lowliest attitude of prayer, assumed only when the strength of man gives way under a load of sorrow, and some unutterable desire struggles within the soul.

The term "cup" is interpreted by Mark to mean "hour," the reference, of course, being to his suffering and death on the cross. Mark also quotes Jesus as saying, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee." It was, of course, possible for God to remove the cup from his Son, but it could not be done without abandoning the purpose for which Jesus came into the world, namely, to die for the redemption of mankind. A short time before this, Jesus had said, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour." (John 12: 27.) These words were spoken during the Lord's last public discourse. Jesus was always willing to do God's will. Cf. John 8: 29.

And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. The Lord spoke to Peter, but it appears that the remark was meant for James and John as well. However, in Mark the address is in the singular, and Jesus, as his custom was, called his disciple Simon, for he had not yet become Peter. Cf. John 1: 42. The words which Jesus spoke seemed to have expressed disappointment; he had found them asleep after earnestly exhorting them to remain awake. But the Lord's rebuke was quickly turned to sympathy; for he added, "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." The probable reason for addressing Peter, rather than one of the others, is seen in the fact that Peter had boasted of his superior loyalty to Jesus. See verse 33.

Again a second time he went away, and prayed, saying, My Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done. Luke says that angel from heaven appeared to Jesus and strengthened him, and he adds, "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat be-

came as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground." See Luke 22: 43, 44. Matthew's report of the second prayer seems to indicate that the Lord spoke words of composure and meek resignation. It is possible that this was the result of the strength which came from the angel.

And he came again and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. Their sleep, according to Luke, was a sleep of sorrow. "And when he rose up from his prayer, he came unto the disciples, and found them sleeping for sorrow." (Luke 22: 45.) Profound sleep has been spoken of as a symptom of grief, and this explains to some extent why the disciples could not remain awake. The physical exhaustion and the agonizing grief made sleep more or less inevitable.

And he left them again, and went away, and prayed a third time, saying again the same words. Jesus continued to pray as the disciples continued to sleep; and we are told that these prayers were heard. "Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of

eternal salvation; named of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek." (Heb. 5: 7-10.)

This experience of Jesus shows that God can and does hear and answer prayer without giving the specific thing requested. Jesus prayed three times that he might be spared the ordeals of his hour of suffering; and while these petitions were not granted, he, nevertheless, was heard and received the strength which he needed to endure that which was before him. Paul had a similar experience, as recorded in 2 Cor. 12: 7-10, with similar results. God is never indifferent to the prayers and supplications of his people. See Phil. 4: 6, 7.

Then cometh he to the disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now. and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that betrayeth me. At this point Jesus apparently had received the strength for that which lay ahead, and seeing the condition of the sleeping disciples, he sympathetically said to them. Take your rest, since you are not physically able to give the sympathy which I so much wanted. But as he spoke, he saw the multitude which Judas was leading coming for him; and so he bade the disciples to "arise, let us be going." See Matt. 26: 47: John 18: L.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, persons.

Introduction

Give the vital facts which connect this lesson with the last one.

How could the rulers justify their desire to take Jesus by subtlety?

Discuss the motives which led Judas to betray Jesus.

What should the weekly observance of the Lord's supper mean to the Lord's people?

Desertion and Denial Predicted

What did Jesus mean by saying that all the disciples would be offended?

Why would they be offended in Jesus?

What did he do to cause that?

What was the Lord's purpose in going before them into Galilee?

How did Peter react to the Lord's announcement? and why?

What special interest did Jesus take in Peter? and why?

What did Peter think of that? and why?

When was "cockcrow"? Give reasons for your answer.

What did Peter's action demonstrate regarding human resolution and knowledge regarding itself?

Why do so many professed Christians today follow Peter's example?

What often happens to those who have the greatest confidence in themselves? and why?

Sympathetic Watchfulness Requested

Where was Gethsemane? and in what sense was it a garden?

Why would Jesus and the disciples visit there often?

What was the Lord's purpose in going there at the time of this lesson?

What has "Gethsemane" come to mean to Christians today? and why?

Why did he take three of the disciples with him and leave the others?

What was meant by saying that he began to be sorrowful and sore troubled?

Why did Jesus tell the disciples how he felt?

In what way would their sympathy benefit him?

Prayers Which Were Heard

What bodily attitude did Jesus assume in prayer? and why?

What did he mean by "this cup"? Give reasons for your answer.
 What did Jesus say when he found the disciples sleeping? and why?
 Why did he single Peter out?
 In what way was Jesus strengthened during his agony while praying in the garden?
 How were the disciples able to sleep during such a trying hour?
 Why would Jesus offer the same prayer repeatedly?
 Did God hear his prayers? Give reason for your answer.

How could he hear without granting that for which he made request?
 How does Paul's experience illustrate this principle?
 What effect should this knowledge have on us?
 Why did Jesus say to the disciples. "Sleep on now, and take your rest"?
 Why, then, did he immediately say. "Arise, let us be going"?
 Did he mean to leave the place himself?
 What did Jesus mean by being betrayed into the hand of sinners?
 Is it possible for people to betray Jesus today? Give reasons for your answer.

Lesson XII—September 20, 1959

THE CRUCIFIXION

Lesson Text

Matt. 27: 33-50

33 And when they were come unto a place called Gol'-go-tha, that is to say. The place of a skull,

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

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

36 And they sat and watched him there.

37 And they set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JE'-SUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

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

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

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

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

42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. He is the King of

is'-ra-el; let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him.

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

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

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

46 And about the ninth hour Je'-sus cried with a loud voice, saying, E-li, E-li, la'-ma sa-bach-tha'-nî? that is, My God, my God. why hast thou forsaken me?

47 And some of them that stood there, when they heard it, said. This man calleth E-li'-jah.

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

49 And the rest said, Let be; let us see whether E-li'-jah cometh to save him.

50 And Je'-sus cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit.

Golden Text.—"Jesus . . . endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12: 2.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalm 22: 1-31.

Daily Bible Readings

September 14.	M.....	Condemnation of Jesus (Luke 23: 13-25)
September 15.	T.....	Fulfillment of Scripture (John 19: 17-24)
September 16.	W.....	Jesus Lays Down His Life (Matt. 27: 45-56)
September 17.	T.....	A Voluntary Death (John 10: 7-18)
September 18.	F.....	A Death for Others (Rom. 5: 1-11)
September 19.	S.....	Reconciliation Through Christ (2 Cor. 5: 14-21)
September 20.	S.	Burial of Jesus (Luke 23: 50-56)

TIME.—Friday, A.D. 30.

PLACE.—Golgotha, near Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jesus, the Jewish leaders, the two robbers, the soldiers, and the multitudes.

Introduction

Our last lesson left Jesus and his disciples in the garden of Gethsemane, with Judas and the crowd he was leading on their way to take him. Jesus could see them coming, or so it appears, and was fully aware of the ordeal which was before him. The betrayal by Judas and the Lord's arrest came in swift order, and this was followed by the flight from him of his disciples. Jesus was first taken to Annas, the former high priest, and was then hurriedly tried and condemned by Caiaphas, the then reigning high priest, and the Sanhedrin. "Then did they spit in his face and buffet him: and some smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ: who is he that struck thee?" (Matt. 26: 67. 68.)

The events which have just been referred to all took place during the night and early morning. After the dawn of morning Jesus was formally condemned by the Sanhedrin (see Matt. 27: 1; Mark 15: 1; Luke 22: 66-71), and was then led away for his first trial before Pilate. It was about this time that Judas, seeing that Jesus was actually being condemned, returned the money to the Jewish leaders and went out and hanged himself. Pilate found no fault in

him, but because of the pressure of the crowd, and having learned that Jesus was a Galilean, the governor sent the prisoner to Herod, where he was again acquitted.

Jesus was again brought before Pilate and was a second time declared innocent of the charges which had been brought against him. But the question of how to release him in the face of serious opposition from the Jewish leaders still confronted him. It seems that Pilate decided to take advantage of his custom of releasing unto the Jews, during the passover feast, any prisoner whom they might desire. See Mark 15: 6. He, accordingly, selected one of the worst prisoners (Luke 23: 18, 19), and presenting him with Jesus, asked, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ." Pilate knew the motive which was behind the Jewish leaders, and he evidently expected the people to ask for what they would consider the lesser of two evils, that is, if they actually considered Jesus as being evil. But in this the governor was mistaken; for the leaders stirred up the people and they asked for Barabbas. This led to the final condemnation of Jesus.

The Golden Text

"Jesus . . . endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

The three propositions which are affirmed in this short text are all beyond the full comprehension of finite minds. Jesus *endured the cross*; he *despised shame*; and he *sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*. The first of these propositions, *endured the cross*, refers primarily to the physical suffering which Jesus underwent in his sacrifice for sin. Dean Farrar gives a mental picture of this terrible punishment in these words: "For indeed a death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death *can* have of horrible and ghastly—dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation. sleeplessness, traumatic fever,

tetanus, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation. mortification of untended wounds—all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at all, but all stopping just short of the point which would give the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness." But Jesus endured all this that we might be saved. But he did more—

He despised shame, which involved more of mental anguish. Today we glory in the cross, and are happy to sing of the old rugged cross; but there was no such sentiment attached to the cross when Jesus died for us. It was the death designed for common criminals, and especially for people who are not citizens of the empire. It had all the dishonor, in-

famy, stigma of disgrace, and ignominy of the guillotine, the block for beheading, and the gallows, and more; but Jesus despised, that is, he cared nothing for, was unafraid, or disregarded all the shame which attached itself to his horrible and disgraceful death.

But Jesus endured and despised all these things because of "the joy that was set before him," and his Father did not allow him to go unrewarded; for *he was given a place at the right hand of God's throne*. "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an

equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2: 5-11; cf. Matt. 28: 18; Eph. 1: 20-23.)

The Text Explained

The Crucifixion Executed

(Matt. 27: 33-38)

And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, The place of a skull. The term "Golgotha" is from the Aramaic "Gulgotha," and it equals the Hebrew "Gulgoleth" which is translated *skull* in Judg. 9: 53 and 2 Kings 9: 35. The English "skull" is a literal translation of the original. The place was called Golgotha or skull probably because of the shape of the mound or hill.

The place of the crucifixion is frequently referred to by people today as "Calvary," but that is not a New Testament word. It is true that it is found in the King James Version in Luke 23: 33, but all the other references in the gospel records have the term "skull." The original word is "*kranion*," and it is the Greek translation of the Aramaic "Golgotha." Young observes that "the place of crucifixion is by each of the four evangelists called *Kranion*, and is in every case translated by *Calvaria* in the Vulgate, and in every place but that in Luke the English version translates the word by 'scull.' There is no sanction for the expression 'Mount Calvary,' for it is only 18 feet high." Calvary therefore comes to us through the Latin version, and it is not an English equivalent for the New Testament original.

They gave him wine to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted it, he would not drink. Mark says, "And they offered him wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not." It appears to have been a humane custom to give a stupefying

drink to criminals just before their crucifixion to alleviate their sufferings to some extent, or to affect their intellect so that they might not be keenly sensible to their torture. But when Jesus tasted the drink which was offered to him, he refused it; choosing rather to endure all the suffering which was incident to the offering of his body for the sins of the world.

And when they had crucified him. Albert Barnes says that "the manner of the crucifixion was as follows: After the criminal had carried the cross, attended with every possible jibe and insult, to the place of execution, a hole was dug in the earth to receive the foot of it. The cross was laid on the ground; the person condemned to suffer was stripped, and was extended on it, and the soldiers fastened the hands and feet either by nails or thongs. After they had fixed the nails deeply in the wood, they elevated the cross with the agonizing sufferer on it; and in order to fix it more firmly in the earth, they let it fall violently into the hole which they had dug to receive it. This sudden fall must have given to the person that was nailed to it a most violent and convulsive shock, and greatly increased his sufferings. The crucified person was then suffered to hang, commonly, till pain, exhaustion, thirst, and hunger, ended his life. Sometimes the suffering continued for days; and when friendly death terminated the life, the body was often suffered to remain—a loathsome object, putrefying in the sun, or devoured by birds."

They parted his garments among them, casting lots. It seems that the Roman law provided that the clothing of the condemned person would go to the persons who crucified him. John gives a fuller account of this incident. "The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also the coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore one to another, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my garments among them, And upon my vesture did they cast lots." (John 19: 23, 24: see Psalm 22: 18.)

And they sat and watched him there. That is, the soldiers, probably a centurion and three enlisted men (cf. John 19: 23; Matt. 27: 54), remained on guard to see that no attempt was made to take Jesus down from the cross. This seems to have been the usual custom in such case.

And they set up over his head His accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Taking all four of the records together, this accusation reads, THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH. THE KING OF THE JEWS. No two of the gospel writers has the exact wording. Alford observes concerning this, "On the difference in the four Gospels as to the words of the inscription itself, it is hardly worthwhile to comment, except to remark, that the advocates for the verbal and literal exactness of each gospel may find here an undoubted example of the absurdity of their view, which may serve to guide them in less plain and obvious cases." It was not the purpose, therefore, of the gospel writers to give a literal and exact reproduction of the inscription, but simply to state that such a title was written and placed about the head of Jesus.

The "accusation" literally means the reason or cause for his death. In the case of Jesus, the inscription specified the following: 1. The name of the victim—Jesus; 2. the place of his birth—Nazareth; 3. the charge against him—the king of the Jews. We learn from John 19: 20 that the title was written in three languages, namely, 1. Hebrew, that is, Aramaic, the language of Palestinian Jews; 2.

Latin, the official language of the Romans; and 3. Greek, for the benefit of the Jews outside of Palestine who spoke that language, and anyone else who might know that tongue.

Then there are crucified with him two robbers, one on the right hand and one on the left. These men were robbers (*lēstai*), not thieves (*kleptai*). Some one has suggested that they may have been members of the band of Barabbas on whose cross Jesus was then hanging. Nothing is said about why the robbers were crucified with Jesus, but whatever the reason, it was a fulfillment of prophecy (cf. Luke 22: 37; Isa. 53: 12), and it added materially to the indignity which was heaped upon Jesus.

They Railed on Him

(Matt. 27: 39-44)

And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself: if thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross. Bruce notes that to us it seems incredible that even his worst enemies could be guilty of anything so brutal as to hurl taunts at one suffering the agonies of crucifixion. The remark about the temple grew out of that which Jesus said in John 2: 18-22 during the early part of his ministry; and it was also used against him during his trial. See Matt. 26: 59-62. "If thou art the Son of God" were the very words used by Satan when he tempted Jesus, and they were no doubt prompted by him here. If Jesus had descended from the cross he would have frustrated his own purpose in coming to the earth, and would have left unaccomplished his sacrificial plan for saving the race. And neither would this have convinced them of the rightness of his claims. Rising from the dead would be better evidence than coming down from the cross.

In like manner also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others: himself he cannot save. He is the King of Israel; let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him. He trusteth on God, let him deliver him now, if he desireth him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The religious leaders could

not refrain themselves, and they too gathered around and exulted in the success of their machinations: but in doing so, they were unconsciously fulfilling the Scriptures. "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, Commit thyself unto Jehovah; let him deliver him: let him rescue him, seeing he delighteth in him." (Psalm 22: 7, 8.)

And the robbers also that were crucified with him cast upon him the same reproach. It appears that both of these men hurled their taunts at Jesus at first, perhaps because they felt that his execution hastened their own; but we learn from Luke that one of them repented and pled with Jesus for mercy.

Darkness and Death

(Matt. 27: 45-50)

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. Jesus was crucified at the third hour of the day according to Jewish time (Mark 15: 25), which was nine o'clock in the morning, Roman time, the same as ours. The darkness was from noon till three in the afternoon. Jesus had been on the cross approximately three hours when the darkness came.

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? This shows that Jesus was allowed to tread the wine-press alone, and thereby offer himself as an atonement for sin: and in doing so, he was able to experience the terrible sense of the punishment which was due the sins which he was bearing. This was a deeper anguish than the physical suffering which he bore. The question which Jesus asked does not imply his reluctance to suffer, but expresses the deep internal agony which he felt. It was but the completion of that which was begun in Gethsemane, namely, the drinking of the last bitter dregs of the cup of wrath which he voluntarily agreed to do; and now he is being dealt with as if the sins for which he was

dying were really his. The words which Jesus spoke here do not imply a distrust in God; for soon thereafter he cried, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said this, he gave up the ghost." (Luke 23: 46.)

And some of them that stood there, when they heard it, said, This man calleth Elijah. It is possible that by this time the sufferings of Jesus had rendered his speech somewhat inarticulate, thereby causing the people to mistake "Eli" for "Elijah." Some have thought that their reply was but a continuance of their mockery of his claims to be the Messiah; since it was the common notion among the Jews that Elijah would precede the Messiah.

And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on the reed, and gave him to drink. We learn from John 19: 28 that Jesus said, "I thirst," and it is probable that the effort to give him a drink was in response to that statement. The vinegar was sour wine called posca, a cask of which was placed near the cross for the refreshment of the Roman soldiers. The fact that a reed was used to get the sponge to the mouth of Jesus indicates that he was beyond the reach of the man's hand. The reed was the stem of a hyssop plant. See John 19: 29.

And the rest said, Let be; let us see whether Elijah cometh to save him. According to Mark, the man who made this request was the one who gave him the vinegar (Mark 15: 36): and this has led some to think that a request was being made for all to be patient and see if Elijah would come. Others think that "the rest" included those who objected to his having this small relief.

And Jesus cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit. Thus, the Saviour of men died. John says, "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit." Luke adds, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction
Outline the principal events between the last lesson and this one.

How many times was Jesus tried before the Jewish leaders? Why?
 How many times was he tried before the Roman officials? Why?
 What last desperate effort did Pilate make to release Jesus?
 Why was Barabbas selected to be presented with Jesus to the crowd?
 Do you think that you would have had more moral courage than Pilate manifested?
 Does your present attitude toward Jesus and his cause justify your answer? Explain fully.

The Golden Text

What three propositions are affirmed in this text?
 What was meant by enduring the cross?
 In what way did Jesus despise shame?
 What motive was behind his attitude and action?
 What does the New Testament teach regarding his exaltation?

The Crucifixion Executed

Where was the place of the crucifixion? and what was it called?
 Discuss the term "Golgotha" and compare it with "Calvary."
 What drink did they offer Jesus? and why did he refuse it?
 How was a crucifixion carried out?
 What was done with the garments of the victim? and why?
 What is the significance of the prophecy regarding this incident?
 Why did they watch Jesus while he was

on the cross?
 What accusation was placed above the head of Jesus and why?
 What propositions did this accusation contain?
 In what languages was it written and why?
 What other people were crucified with Jesus? and with what result?

They Railed on Him

Why was such an attitude manifested toward Jesus?
 Discuss the remark about the temple.
 What would have been accomplished had Jesus descended from the cross? Give reasons for your answer.
 What was a better demonstration of his divinity? and why?
 Why did the Jewish leaders mock him? and with what result?
 What was the attitude of the robbers toward him?

Darkness and Death

What was the time of the crucifixion?
 When did the darkness come?
 Discuss the difference between Jewish and Roman time.
 What cry did Jesus utter on the cross at the ninth hour?
 Did that imply his reluctance to suffer? Give reasons for your answer.
 Did it imply a distrust in God?
 What was the reaction of those who stood by?
 What did Jesus do in his final moments on the cross?

Lesson XIII—September 27, 1959

THE RISEN LORD

Lesson Text

Matt. 28: 1-10, 16-20

1 Now late on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdale-ne and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

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

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

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

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

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

7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples, He is risen from the dead; and lo, he goeth before you into Gal'-i-

lee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

8 And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring his disciples word.

9 And behold, Je'-sus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and took hold of his feet, and worshipped him.

10 Then saith Je'-sus unto them, Fear not: go tell my brethren that they depart into Gal'-i-lee, and there shall they see me.

16 But the eleven disciples went into Gal'-i-lee, unto the mountain where Je'-sus had appointed them.

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

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

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

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

Golden Text.—*"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."* (Mark 16: 15, 16.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Mark 16: 1-16.

Daily Bible Readings

September 21. M..... The Empty Tomb (Matt. 28: 1-10)
 September 22. T..... The Great Commission (Matt. 28: 16-20)
 September 23. W..... The Promise of Christ (Acts 1: 1-8)
 September 24. T..... Christ, Firstfruits (1 Cor. 15: 20-28)
 September 25. F..... Risen with Christ (Rom. 6: 1-11)
 September 26. S..... Power Over Death (John 10: 11-18)
 September 27. S..... Deliverance from Death (Psalm 116: 1-9)

TIME.—First day of the week, A.D. 30.

PLACE.—Jerusalem and a mountain in Galilee.

PERSONS.—Jesus, the angel, the women, and the eleven disciples.

Introduction

The mighty preaching of the apostolic age was the preaching of the *resurrection gospel*, and it is significant that the preaching of the early Christians did not stress the resurrection of Jesus simply as a fact, although it was one of the most sublime facts of all time. And not only that—it was a fact so well attested that they were willing to give their lives in the preaching of it. What the first preachers of the resurrection gospel did (all Christians were proclaimed of the message then) was to emphasize the good news of Christ's resurrection as the basis for the hope of salvation.

Something of the place which the resurrection gospel had in the thinking and preaching of the early Christians may be learned by reading the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, a part of which is here quoted. "Now if Christ is preached that he hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we wit-

nessed of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable." (1 Cor. 15: 12-19.)

This passage has in it a wonderful ring of confidence. It may be regarded as a kind of challenge to those who had tried and broken their last weapon against the disciples of Jesus. People in those days were being killed for their faith in and their loyalty to Jesus. It required therefore great courage for a man to be a Christian, but Paul wanted his readers to know that there are worse things which can happen to people than to die prematurely for their faith in Jesus. Instead of death for Christ's sake being something to fear, Paul boldly affirmed that it was for Christians a victorious gain; for Christ has been raised from the dead, and there is therefore a resurrection for all who die in him. Read 1 Cor. 15: 33-38.

The Golden Text

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that be-

lieveth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." This is Mark's version of

the risen Lord's last commission to his chosen disciples. The impact of these words upon them may be seen by us today, if we will try to see the situation as they saw it. These men were made to realize that they were not to be simply possessors and holders of the truth which had been vouchsafed to them, but proclaimers of that matchless message wherever men are to be found. They came to understand that they must carry the gospel onward and onward and farther and farther, until all men had been blessed with the opportunity to know about it, and encouraged and persuaded to obey it. Cf. Acts 1: 8; Rom. 15: 19-23; Col. 1: 23.

These parting words of Jesus made Christianity a universal religion; a religion, not merely in the sense that it should be freely opened to all who might come to seek it, but universal in the sense that it should go out and seek for men—in their homes, places of business, or wherever they may be found. Such a religion is one of conquest and progress in all directions, a religion which should never be satisfied as long as anyone remains unsaved. The words of Christ were the guiding principle

of Paul in all of his great work; and when he was about ready to lay down his armor, he passed them on to his son in the gospel, and through him to all men who are devoted to Christ. See 2 Tim. 2: 2; 4: 1ff.

Verse 16 of this text contains that which in grammar is called a "complex declarative sentence," the principal statement of which is, "He shall be saved." If nothing else had been said, then any "he," or, which is the same thing, all men would be saved; but there is a *limiting* or *restrictive* clause which identifies the "he" who shall be saved. That clause is, [He] *that believeth and is baptized*. Furthermore, the fact that "believeth" and "is baptized" are joined by the coordinate conjunction forever settles the fact that both are essential to salvation. The final clause in the sentence gives the negative side of the proposition. The salvation mentioned in this text is the salvation which Paul referred to in Heb. 2: 3, when he asked, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?" This salvation was first spoken through the Lord, and it was confirmed unto us by them that heard." Read Mark 16: 14-20.

The Text Explained

The Empty Tomb (Matt. 28: 1-6)

Now late on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, The body of Jesus was placed in the tomb late Friday afternoon, and it remained there all day on the sabbath, and until early on the first day of the week. Robertson notes that this careful chronological statement according to Jewish days clearly means that before the sabbath was over, that is, before six o'clock that day, this visit by the women was made "to see the sepulchre." They had seen the place of burial on Friday afternoon (Mark 15: 47; Matt. 27: 61; Luke 23: 55); they had rested on the sabbath day after preparing the spices and ointments for the body of Jesus (Luke 23: 56); and then after the sabbath was over they apparently bought additional spices to take to the tomb. See Mark 16: 1.

Came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. The "other Mary" was the mother of James the Less. See Mark 15: 40;

16: 1. Mark also includes Salome with the two Marys. These women were coming to anoint the body of Jesus in pretty much the same spirit that we take flowers to the graves of those whom we love. It is, of course, not our privilege to go to the actual tomb of Jesus, but we can take our gifts of love and bestow them upon his body, the church. Cf. Matt. 25: 34-40.

And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it. McGarvey supposes that the earthquake was "great" in intensity, rather than in extent. The tomb of Jesus had been closed by a great stone, and the seal of the Roman authority had been placed upon it to make sure that the friends of Jesus did not attempt to remove the body. See Matt. 27: 59-66. This stone was so large and heavy that the women had been asking themselves who would remove it for them. See Mark 16: 3. When the stone had been re-

moved from the entrance to the tomb, the angel seated himself upon it, as if to show his utter contempt for the earthly powers which had entombed the Lord and attempted to keep his body there. The action of the angel was supported by the omnipotence of God, and omnipotence cannot be measured by any human standards.

His appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the watchers did quake and became as dead men. This was a majestic scene. It appears that the angel came in a manner which was suited to the message which he came to deliver. With a countenance like lightning, and clothing as white as snow; and with the power which he demonstrated, one can well understand why the watchers were affected as they were. Luke says that there were two angels who "stood by them in dazzling apparel," while Mark says that the angel was on the inside of the tomb. John says that there were two angels on the inside. All of this need not confuse anyone; for each writer could have referred to a different time.

And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, who hath been crucified. It appears from John that Mary Magdalene had gone to tell Peter and John that the Lord's body was missing (John 20: 1ff), but the other women remained and had the interview with the angels (or men, Luke) about the empty tomb and the risen Lord. They were assured that they had no reason to be afraid; for the angels knew their hearts and the motive which brought them there. It is well to note the expression "who hath been crucified." The grammatical form is the perfect passive participle, indicating a state of completion. That will always be true of Jesus—he "hath been crucified." Christ, and him crucified is the very heart of the gospel. Cf. 1 Cor. 2: 2.

He is not here; for he is risen, even as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. This was and is the most joyful and momentous announcement ever made. It is the proof of Christianity and the evidence of immortality. His promise to rise again was made and often re-

peated during his lifetime here among men. The women were not invited to see the sepulchre as such, for they were already in that; but the specific place where the body of Jesus had lain. A sepulchre was usually a rather large place cut out in the rock, generally under the ground; and then around the sides were niches or suitable locations for the dead.

A Special Commission

(Matt. 28: 7-10)

And go quickly, and tell the disciples, He is risen from the dead; and lo, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. The word for "disciples" is in the masculine gender, and it is possible that the reference was primarily to the eleven apostles. Mark says, "But go, tell his disciples and Peter." This, of course, does not imply that none of the women were to share in this announcement. Many of the disciples lived in Galilee, and it would be natural for them to return there after the passover feast. The arrangement to meet the disciples in Galilee was made before the Lord's death. See Matt. 26: 31, 32. This was in keeping with the scattering of the flock: the shepherd would go before his sheep. "Lo, I have told you" emphasizes the certainty of the angel's announcement, and gave solemnity to the command.

And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring his disciples word. The fear was the result of their having seen and heard the angels, and their joy was because of the message of the Lord's resurrection. They ran to bring the disciples word; for never before had such a message burned within the hearts of a human being. Cf. Mark 16: 8.

And behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and took hold of his feet and worshipped him. This was probably the Lord's second appearance to his disciples after his resurrection. See Mark 16: 9. Nothing is said about the time of this appearance, whether while the women were on the way to tell his disciples, or whether while they were on their way home after they had discharged that duty. The fact that they took hold of his feet, while

Mary was forbidden to touch him, indicates the latter. See John 20: 17, 18. The probable reason for Mary's not being allowed to touch the Lord was because such would detain her from discharging her duty to go and tell the disciples; for if she were allowed to touch him she would have lingered to worship, as the women did in the text now before us. The expression "All hail" was the common form of salutation.

Then saith Jesus unto them, Fear not: go tell my brethren that they depart unto Galilee, and there shall they see me. After quieting their fears, Jesus himself commissions these women to carry a message to his disciples. The use of the term "brethren" for his disciples (cf. John 20: 17) seems to have been used only after his resurrection. The probable reason for using the term here was to remove from their minds the thought that he might reproach them for their past cowardice and infidelity. It also may imply the beginning of a higher and more intimate spiritual fellowship than had been possible to them before. See Heb. 2: 11, 12.

The Tryst in Galilee

(Matt. 28: 16-20)

But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. We learn from the records of Luke and John (Luke 24: John 20) that at least several days had passed after the resurrection before the appearance in this instance. We are not told exactly when this meeting was held, nor the exact mountain on which he met his disciples. As already indicated, the arrangements for the meeting took place before the crucifixion. Cf. Mark 14: 27, 28. Judas, being dead, is no longer numbered with the twelve, hence only eleven now.

And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. It is generally thought that this was the time when the more than five hundred brethren met with Jesus (1 Cor. 15: 6), and it is possible that the doubters were some who were not of the eleven. It is reasonable to suppose that the apostles had been fully convinced by the appearances which were made in and around Jerusalem. Cf. John 20: 24-29; Mark 16: 14.

And Jesus came to them and spake

unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Jesus was commissioned to win the world from Satan and deliver it back to God, and this shows something of the resources which were given to him for that purpose. See 1 Cor. 15: 24-28. Robertson observes that Jesus spoke as one already in heaven with a world-wide outlook and with the resources of heaven at his command. He further notes that this is the sublimest of all spectacles to see the risen Christ without money, army, or state charging this band of five hundred men and women with world conquest, and bringing them to believe it possible to undertake it with serious passion and power. Pentecost is yet to come, but dynamic faith rules on this mountain in Galilee!

Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. The word "disciple" literally means a learner in contrast to the teacher, and that without reference to the nature of the subject matter taught. A disciple of Christ is one who accepts and puts into practice the teaching of Jesus. See Matt. 7: 21-23. The ones to whom Jesus spoke on this occasion were his disciples, and they, in turn, are commissioned to make disciples of all the nations. This is evangelism in its truest sense, and not merely revival meetings.

Baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: The pronoun "them" refers to disciples who were made, and not to nations; for "nations" is neuter, while "them" is masculine. McGarvey notes that the names of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit means the combined authority of all the manifestations of God. Thus, to be baptized into this authority, is to be brought into actual subjection to it. All those who are baptized in this manner are thereby made subject to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; and as a result of this subjugation they receive the remission of their sins, and are made partakers of the Holy Spirit. See Acts 2: 38, 39.

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: The word "teach" in this passage means to instruct, develop, nurture, ground in the faith, etc. Cf. Acts 2: 32: 2

Tim. 3: 16, 17. A statement of faith which is not wrought out in actions is empty (James 2: 24f); and conduct which is not informed and regulated by scriptural authority is unworthy of a man, to say nothing of a Christian.

And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. The word "always" separates Jesus from every other teacher the world has ever seen. Although not here in person,

but he is as truly with his people now as he was when he was here upon the earth. This promise should be regarded as the source of great encouragement to every faithful child of God. There is no fear in the heart of the King, and his final victory is clearly implied. This promise is precise and detailed, and however long and perilous the journey, Christians can count on having with them the presence of Christ.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place and persons.

Introduction

What place did the resurrection have in the preaching of the early Christians?
How did they look upon the resurrection?
Show how this type of thinking affected the first century Christians.

The Golden Text

In what light did the early disciples regard this commission? Why?
Show how it affected the life of Paul.
In what sense is the religion of Christ a universal religion?
Give an analysis of the proposition contained in verse 16.
Why do so many people disregard this basic teaching?

The Empty Tomb

When did the women first visit the tomb of Jesus?
Who were in the group?
What was their purpose in going?
What privileges in this connection is ours today?
What happened just before they reached the sepulchre?
What effect was produced by the appearance of the angel?
How many angels were seen at the tomb?
What did the angel say to the women?
What were the women invited to see?
Describe a sepulchre of that day.

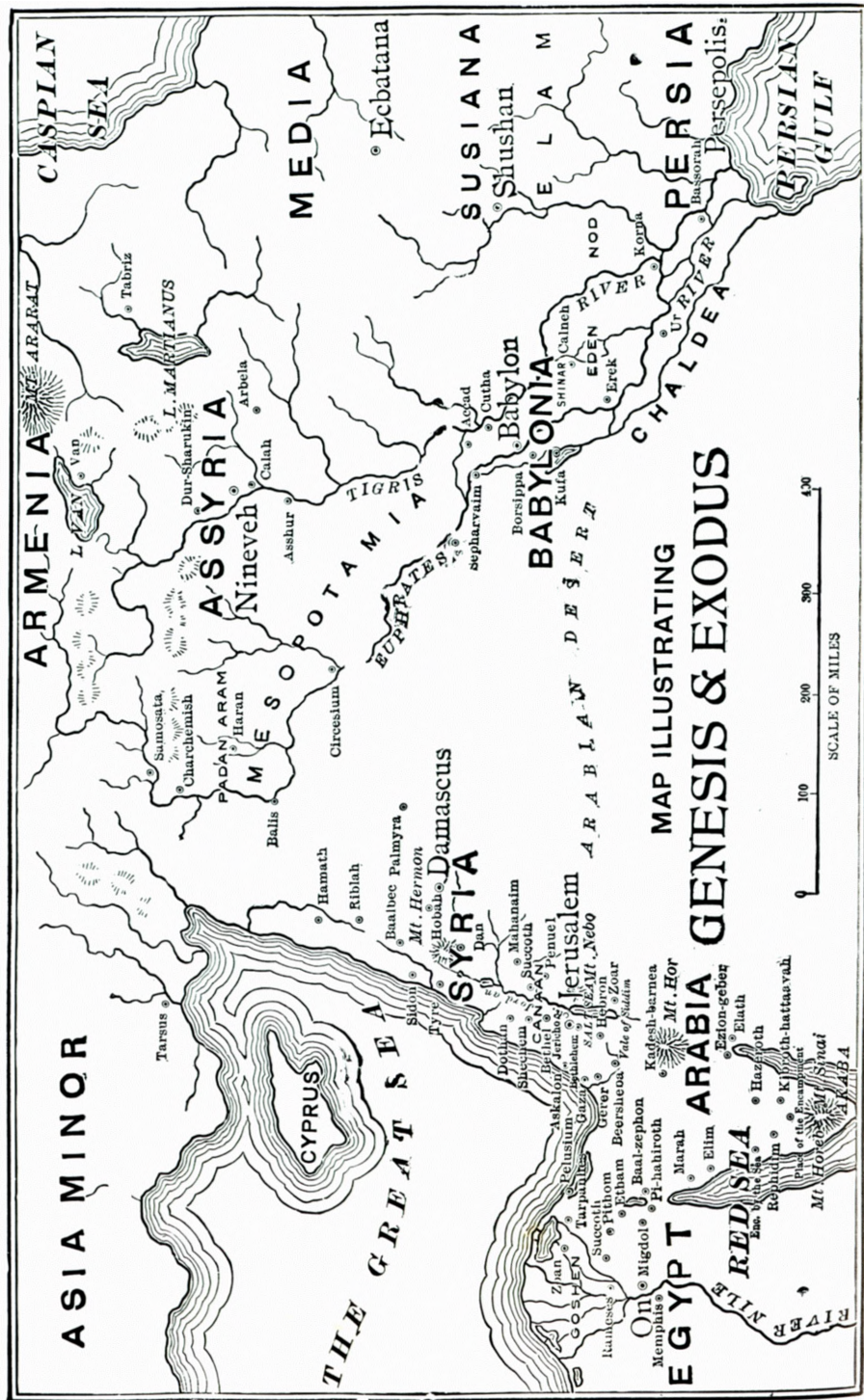
A Special Commission

What were the women told to do?

Why were the disciples told to go into Galilee?
When was this meeting provided for?
How did the women react to the command of the angel?
When and where did Jesus meet these women? and what did he say to them?
Why were they permitted to touch Jesus, while Mary Magdalene was not?
What is the significance of the term "brethren" as used here?

The Tryst in Galilee

What is known of the time and place of this meeting?
What happened when the disciples saw Jesus?
Who were probably the doubters? Give reasons for your answer.
What announcement did Jesus make to these disciples?
Why was all this authority given to Jesus?
What are some of the factors which make this scene so dramatic?
What does it mean to make "disciples" of all nations? Discuss fully.
Whom were they commanded to baptize?
Into what were they to be baptized? Why?
What is included in "all things whatsoever I commanded you"?
Why is it necessary for Christians to observe all these things?
What is the significance of the promise which Jesus made to his disciples?
How should it be regarded today?



FOURTH QUARTER

STORIES OF THE PATRIARCHS

Aim.—To consider carefully the stories of the ancient patriarchs, to observe the elements of weakness and strength which characterized their lives, and to learn lessons of faithfulness and fidelity which we may appropriate to our own lives.

Lesson I—October 4, 1959

BIRTH OF ISAAC PROMISED

Lesson Text

Gen. 17: 1-8, 15-19

1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, Je-ho'-vah appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be the father of a multitude of nations.

5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee.

6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee, throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.

8 And I will give unto thee, and to

thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Ca'-naan. for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

15 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sa'-rai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sa'-rai, but Sarah shall her name be.

16 And I will bless her, and moreover I will give thee a son of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations: kings of peoples shall be of her.

17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

18 And Abraham said unto God. Oh that Ish'-ma-el might live before thee!

19 And God said. Nay, but Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son; and thou shalt call his name I'-saac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his seed after him.

Golden Text.—*"In Isaac shall thy seed be called."* (Heb. 11: 18b.)

Devotional Reading.—Gen. 17: 9-14, 20-27.

Daily Bible

September 28. M.....	Birth of Isaac (Gen. 21: 1-7)
September 29. T.....	Sarah and Hagar (Gen. 21: 8-21)
September 30. W.....	Offering of Isaac (Gen. 22: 1-19)
October 1. T.....	Death of Sarah (Gen. 23: 1-20)
October 2. F.....	Isaac's Marriage (Gen. 24: 1-67)
October 3. S.....	Isaac's Wells (Gen. 26: 12-25)
October 4. S.....	Death of Isaac (Gen. 35: 28, 29.)

Time.—1897 B.C.

Place.—Hebron, by the oaks of Mamre.

Persons.—Jehovah and Abram.

Readings

Introduction

The entire life of Abraham is a continuous demonstration of the manner in which God deals with his people, and especially those who are willing to put their trust in him. Anyone who is acquainted with the life of this patriarch knows that his ruling aim was to please God; and, notwithstanding some serious mistakes which he made, he succeeded to the extent that he was called the friend of God. See Isa. 41: 8; James 2: 23. No greater honor could come to anyone than to enjoy such a relationship with Jehovah, and it is wonderful to know that such a privilege may be ours today, if we are willing to manifest the faith of Abraham. Cf. John 15: 13-15.

The last thing that was said regarding the life of Abram before this lesson was his troublous experience regarding Hagar and the birth of Ishmael—an experience which was brought on by a human effort to help fulfil a promise of God which he and Sarai decided upon. God had promised Abram an heir (see Gen. 15: 2-

4), and when Sarai decided that she could not become the mother of a child, she suggested that Abram take her servant Hagar to be his wife, and in that way she might obtain children. See Gen 16: 1, 2. The result of this union was Ishmael, and his entire history reveals nothing but something unpleasant, so far as Abraham and the chosen seed were concerned.

But Abraham did not cease to trust in Jehovah, and now, thirteen years later, God has a fresh surprise for his servant. God delights to frustrate human speculation; and when the pathway of his people becomes obscured because of the many problems which the average person encounters, and when it looks as if the day will pass away without the promise being realized, it is then that God will give them light, if they are willing to put their trust in him. It is in this way that human pride and reason are humbled, while God's love and glory are made to stand out alone and supreme.

The Golden Text

"In Isaac shall thy seed be called."

This statement is a part of Paul's argument regarding the strength of Abraham's great faith, and the full context is, "By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac: yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; even he to whom it was said. In Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence he did also in a figure receive him back." (Heb. 11: 17-19.)

The point which the writer of Hebrews makes is simply this: The very son which Abraham was about to offer as a sacrifice upon the altar was the one through whom the promised Seed, that is, Christ was to come, Ishmael, for all practical purposes, had been disinherited; and it was for that reason that Isaac could be properly called Abraham's only son. But the grand patriarch's faith was equal

to the occasion; for he believed that God was able to raise Isaac up from the dead, from whence also in a figure he received him back.

But in thinking of the faith of Abraham, we must not overlook that of Isaac. If he had been minded to do so, Isaac could have resisted the will of his father, and asserted his own right to live and enjoy life. But as it was, he meekly allowed himself to be bound on the altar, and with no effort to resist, he remained calm and dedicated until the knife was raised to slay him. The Bible has no finer portrait than this thoughtful, reverent, believing, and obedient boy who was willing to become a sacrifice because it was the will of his father: and in order to find another instance of a Son, voluntarily surrendering his life upon the altar because it was his Father's will, we have to go from Moriah to Golgotha.

The Text Explained

**Jehovah Appears and Makes
a Promise**

(Gen. 17: 1-4)

And when Abram was ninety years

old and nine, Jehovah appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect. As already stated, thir-

teen years had passed since the events of the preceding chapter; and so far as the record goes, Abraham had no direct revelation from God. It appears to have been a period of silence and may have been due, in part at least, to the hasty and unauthorized marriage of Abram to Hagar. Man must be taught to put his trust in God, and this long period of silence would tend to test and strengthen the faith of both Abram and Sarai: they would be taught to rely upon God's promise to them. See Heb. 11: 11, 12. Abram and Sarai no doubt enjoyed the continued blessings of God, as well as his providential guidance and protection during the intervening years; but they apparently did not have any direct communion with him.

When Jehovah appeared to Abram on the occasion now before us, he employed a new title in presenting himself, namely, "I am God Almighty." The marginal reading is *El Shaddai*. "El" means God, while the root idea of "Shaddai" seems to be that of power and ability—the All-Sufficient God. This is the first time the term "*Shaddai*" occurs in the Bible, and of the forty-seven other times the word is found in the Scriptures, the Book of Job has thirty-one of them. This special emphasis upon the power of Jehovah was very appropriate at this time, in view of the specific promise he was about to make about the birth of a son to this aged couple. Jehovah is "a mighty promiser of blessings," and the title which was used on this occasion would tend to strengthen their reliance upon that which he said.

New knowledge always carries with it new responsibilities, and it is not surprising therefore to hear Jehovah say to Abram, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." God in this way was calling upon Abram to live and move in the Divine presence, and to be sincere, genuine, and true-hearted. This patriarch is about to receive a great promise, and he is told to prove himself worthy of it. Some have thought that this call was given to Abram because he was becoming satisfied with Ishmael, and was no longer anxious about the special seed which Jehovah had promised him.

And I will make my covenant be-

tween me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be the father of a multitude of nations. Reference to this covenant was made in chapter 15, verse 18, but now, after a lapse of several years, Jehovah is ready to put it into operation. And, too, more of the details of the covenant are mentioned here. With reference to the statement, "and will multiply thee exceedingly," Jehovah had previously said, "Look now toward heaven, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." (Gen. 15: 5.) And Paul, in commenting on the outcome of the promise, said, "Wherefore also there sprang of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of heaven in multitude, and as the sand, which is by the sea-shore, innumerable." (Heb. 11: 12.)

The effect of Jehovah's appearance and announcement to Abram is seen in the latter's falling on his face. This was the eastern method of showing reverence. Clarke notes that in such prostration, the person first went down on his knees, and then lowered his head until the forehead touched the ground. This was a very painful posture, but it indicated great humiliation and reverence. The attitude which was manifested by Abram shows that he realized at once the solemnity of the occasion.

The fact that Jehovah talked with his servant Abram shows something of the high privilege which the latter enjoyed. God knew the heart of Abram, and was willing and ready to make the full revelation of the terms of the covenant known to him. The words "as for me" probably were intended to give assurance to Abram. "For when God made promise to Abraham, since he could swear by none greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." And then Paul goes on to show that that which was said and done by Jehovah was intended to be a source of strong encouragement for his people. See Heb. 6: 13-20. The expression "my covenant is with thee" seems to imply an already existing covenant, that is, the one re-

ferred to in chapter 15. One has only to consult the history of the nations of the earth in order to see how completely the promise that Abram would be the father of a multitude of nations has been fulfilled.

Some Details of the Covenant

(Gen. 17: 5-8)

Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee. In discussing the details of these promises we shall see that three great factors are involved, namely, (1) Abram himself, (2) his seed, and (3) the land of his sojourning. And if we go back to chapter 12 where the question is first mentioned, we shall see by comparison something of the growth in the details of the revelation. Chapter 12, "a great nation;" chapter 13, "as the dust of the earth;" chapter 15, "as the stars of heaven;" and chapter 17. "a multitude of nations."

A change in one's name, especially when God made the change, indicated a new circumstance in the life of the individual involved. That was true here; and if we can accept the marginal readings, the reason for the change was quite simple. Abram meant exalted father, while Abraham is father of a multitude. This change was necessary so that the name of the patriarch would correspond with the predictions which were made concerning him. It is well to keep in mind, however, that while many nations would come from Abraham, only one of them would be recognized as God's peculiar people, that is, the nation through which Christ would come. "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not. And to seeds, as of many; but as of one. And to thy seed, which is Christ." (Gal. 3: 16.)

And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. That this prediction was fulfilled to the letter may be seen by reading the historical books of the Old Testament. The long line of kings who ruled over the tribes of Israel descended from Abraham, and the nations of the Hebrews, Arabs, and others owe their origin to this

great patriarch. And then in the course of time when it pleased God to place an everlasting King over his people, his own Son, who, according to the flesh, came from Abraham, was the one who was chosen. Both his mother Mary and her husband Joseph were direct descendants of Abraham, as may be seen by reading Matt. 1 and Luke 3. There is a single line from Abraham to David where it divides, going through two of David's sons, Solomon and Nathan, both sons of Bathsheba. See Matt. 1: 6; Luke 3: 31; 1 Chron. 3: 5.

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. The term "everlasting" does not necessarily mean *endless*. The literal meaning of the word is *age-lasting* or of long duration. Of course the word everlasting can mean endless, if the age to which it is applied is endless, but that is not the meaning here. The reference was to the period before the coming of Christ; for it was then that a new covenant was made. The context must always be taken into consideration when trying to determine the meaning of *everlasting*.

And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. "So Jehovah gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein . . . There failed not aught of any good thing which Jehovah had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass." (Josh. 21: 43, 45.)

The Birth of Isaac Foretold

(Gen. 17: 15-19)

And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. While there must have been a distinct difference between the names which were given to Abraham's wife, but that information has not been clearly revealed to us. The marginal reading for "Sarah" is Princess, but we are not told what "Sarai" signified. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, in their *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, seem to indi-

cate that the term from which we have "Sarai" was the name of a barren mountain; and if that was true, then that name may have had some connection with the previous barren condition of this woman. It is, of course, sufficient for us to know that Jehovah made the change, and that there was a reason for it. Sarah enjoys a unique place in history. See Gal. 4: 21-31; 1 Pet. 3: 6.

And I will bless her, and moreover I will give thee a son of her: yea. I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be of her. This is the first direct statement which definitely says that the mother of Abraham's heir would be Sarah herself. Heretofore the language had been couched in somewhat general terms. That was probably the reason for the action of Sarai and Abram in trying to obtain the child through Hagar; but now there can be no doubt about who the mother would be. The same promise regarding the kings and nations which was made to Abraham is now repeated for Sarah. Cf. Gen. 25: 19-23.

Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart. Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? The term "laugh" is not used in the sense of doubt or unbelief. If that were true, it would clearly contradict that which Paul says in Rom. 4: 19-22. "And without being weakened in faith he considered his own body now as good as dead (he being about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, 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." It is possible that Jesus alluded to this joyous laughter in John 8: 56. Cf. Gen. 21: 1-7.

And Abraham said unto God, Oh that Ishmael might live before thee. This appears to have been a solicitous request for the welfare of his son who was now thirteen years old. See verse 25. Now that it had been made plain to him that the heir of the covenant would be the son of Sarah, Abraham was naturally concerned about the future of Ishmael.

And God said. Nay, but Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his seed after him. This is a repetition of the promise already mentioned. The son which was born to Hagar will not be the heir, but he who will be born of the wife who all her lifetime had been barren. As previously stated, the term "everlasting" means *age-lasting*, and covers the entire period to which it is applied.

The Lord's answer regarding the request about Ishmael is found in the next two verses—20, 21. "And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year."

Questions for Discussion

What is the general subject for this quarter?

What is the value of such lessons to us?

What is the subject for today?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What does the life of Abraham illustrate?

What was always the ruling aim in his life?

Is it possible for people today to be called friends of God? Give reasons for your answer.

What was the last event in the life of Abram before this lesson?

Why did Abram and Sarai undertake such a scheme?

How does God always deal with his people?

The Golden Text

Give the setting of this golden text.

How did Abraham demonstrate his great faith?

What can you say of the faith of Isaac in this connection?

Jehovah Appears and Makes a Promise

How old was Abram at the time of this lesson?

What seems to have characterized the past thirteen years? Why?

What new title did Jehovah use in presenting himself to Abram?

What is the meaning of "El Shaddai" and why was the term used here?

Why does new knowledge always bring new responsibilities?

Was this the first time this covenant was

mentioned? Explain.
 What was the purpose of bringing up the subject at this time?
 What effect did this appearance of Jehovah have upon Abram?
 Why did Jehovah say regarding himself, "As for me"?

Some Details of the Covenant

What change was made in Abram's name? and why?
 What progressive revelation was made regarding the posterity of Abram?
 What does a change in one's name usually indicate? Explain.
 What are some of the nations which have descended from Abraham?
 How is it that both Joseph and Mary were descendants of Abraham?
 In what sense was the covenant referred to here "everlasting"?
 Can you prove that the land promise was fulfilled?
 Why, then, do people teach that the Jews are yet to receive Palestine?

The Birth of Isaac Foretold

What change was made in the name of

Abraham's wife? and why?
 What specific promise regarding her was made here for the first time?
 How had the question been referred to on previous occasions?
 What should people always do when a Bible question is not clear to them?
 What promises were repeated here for Sarah?
 How was Abraham affected by this announcement?
 Why did he laugh? and what did his action indicate?
 How do we know that it was not a laugh of disbelief?
 What did Abraham say regarding Ishmael? and why?
 What question was made plain here regarding Ishmael and Isaac?
 Why was this covenant called an "everlasting" covenant?
 How did Jehovah answer Abraham regarding Ishmael?
 Who are the present-day descendants of Ishmael?
 How do the descendants of Ishmael and Isaac regard each other?

Lesson II—October 11, 1959

ABRAHAM INTERCEDES FOR SODOM

Lesson Text

Gen. 18: 23-33

23 And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked?

24 Peradventure there are fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou consume and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?

25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that so the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

26 And Je-ho'-vah said, If I find in Sod'-om fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sake.

27 And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes:

28 Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, I will not destroy it, if I find there forty and five.

29 And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for the forty's sake.

30 And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.

31 And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for the twenty's sake.

32 And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for the ten's sake.

33 And Je-ho'-vah went his way, as soon as he had left off communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working"* (James 5: 16b.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—John 17: 1-17.

Daily Bible Readings

October 5. M.....	Christ Intercedes for Us (Rom. 8: 31-39)
October 6. T.....	Christ Intercedes for the Disciples (John 17: 9-15)
October 7. W.....	Value of Intercession (James 5: 13-18)
October 8. T.....	Holy Spirit Intercedes (Rom. 8: 26, 27)
October 9. F.....	Daniel's Intercessory Prayer (Dan. 9: 15-19)
October 10. S.....	Paul's Intercessory Prayer (Phil. 1: 3-11)
October 11. S.....	God Is Able (Eph. 3: 20, 21)

TIME.—1897 B.C.

PLACE.—Between Hebron and Sodom.

Persons.—Jehovah, the angels, and Abraham.

Introduction

Our interest in Sodom began when Lot, upon being asked by his uncle Abraham to choose the portion of the land which he preferred, selected that area as his future home. "And Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the Plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of Jehovah, like the land of Egypt, as thou goest unto Zoar. So Lot chose him all the Plain of the Jordan: and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the Plain, and moved his tent as far as Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners against Jehovah exceedingly." (Gen. 13: 10-13.)

Lot's choice, of course, was a selfish one, and he placed the emphasis on the material rather than on the spiritual; and his experience thereafter is a classic illustration of the principle that a man will reap that which he sows. The many troubles which plagued him were the natural consequences of his association with wickedness; and although he apparently remained personally righteous, that

did not keep him from having to suffer many afflictions. Peter, in commenting on the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the deliverance of Lot, said, "And delivered righteous Lot, sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds)." (2 Pet. 2: 7, 8.)

Bible students generally agree that the Dead Sea is the former site of these cities of the Plain, although there has been discussion as to which end of the sea was the location. Modern scholars seem to prefer the southern end. But wherever its location was, Sodom was one of the most wicked cities about which anyone has ever read. Every reference to it in the Bible, whether literal or figurative, emphasizes its moral corruption. Cf. Ezek. 16: 46-50. Sodom was so closely associated with sex perversion that its very name has become permanently identified with perverts and their sin. Such perversion is called "sodomy." See Gen. 19: 5; 1 Kings 14: 24; Deut. 23: 17; Rom. 1: 26, 27.

The Golden Text

"The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." The primary purpose in the study of these lessons is not for their historical value, but for the practical application of the principles revealed to our own lives. And in doing this we should consider the fact that prayer is one of the most effective forces in the Christian's entire experience. But like many of the other great privileges which God has provided for his people, it has come to us with ideas and practices attached to it which

are foreign to the Lord's purpose regarding prayer. One of the common mistakes is to regard prayer as being primarily, if not altogether, a matter of petition or asking for something. Petition is indeed a vital part of prayer, but it lacks much of being all of it.

Those who pray effectively must realize that God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think;" and being wise and good, he will not fail to hear our prayers, if we live before him as we

should. This, of course, implies that our first concern should be to make sure that we are enjoying the fellowship and companionship of the Lord. This was the way it was with Abraham; he endeavored to walk before God in such a way at all times, with the result that he was called the friend of God. Abraham could therefore commune with his Friend at all times, and regarding any subject which affected the glory of God, his own welfare, and that of his fellow beings.

Such an attitude toward God and his righteousness is what is necessary in order for one to be righteous before him. The golden text does not teach that every request of even the

righteous man will be granted, but it does say that such a petition availeth much in its working. Jehovah never fails to give due regard to the prayers of his people; but in the final analysis, it is the will of God which must be done, rather than the will of those who pray. Both the attitude of God and that of his people with reference to prayer is expressed in the following passage. "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4: 6, 7.)

The Text Explained

In a Position to Pray (Gen. 18: 23a)

And Abraham drew near, From the preceding verses of the chapter from which our lesson is taken we learn that three angels (called "men" in the text) came to the place where Abraham was living. This had been his place of residence since his separation from Lot, and it was "by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron." (Gen. 13: 18; 18: 1.) Several years had passed since that eventful separation, and Lot was at the time of our lesson a permanent resident in the city of Sodom.

The visitors who came to Abraham, as already indicated, are referred to as "men" in the eighteenth chapter of Genesis, but they are called "angels" in the nineteenth, that is, two of them were. The term "angel," as used in the Bible literally means a messenger, and can be properly applied to either a heavenly or an earthly being. It is clear in the instance now before us that the three were celestial messengers, and they are probably referred to in Heb. 13: 2, where the writer speaks of some having "entertained angels unawares." If this reference was to Abraham, and Lot as well (chapter 19), it simply means that they thought they were human beings.

When the text says that "Abraham drew near," the meaning is that he drew near to Jehovah, as may be seen by reading verse 22. "And the men turned from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood

yet before Jehovah." One thing is clear from the facts of the chapter, namely, two of these messengers were what we ordinarily think of as angels, while the third was in some special sense called "Jehovah." It is useless to speculate as to the exact identity of this being, but it is not reasonable to suppose that he was Jehovah in person. Adam Clarke thinks that he was Jesus Christ, since the name "Jehovah" was never bestowed upon any human being. If this is not true, then the "angel" must have been one of exceedingly high rank.

It is interesting to note that the supplication of Abraham which forms the basis for our lesson today was the first prayer which the Bible records; and, as we shall see in our study, it is one of the most remarkable. It is the prayer of a good man, a friend of God, for men who had chosen to associate with worldly people rather than with God. This prayer breathes the very spirit of magnanimity, and is for others rather than for Abraham himself. Lot had not showed the right attitude toward his uncle Abraham, but that did not keep the latter from making a supplication in his behalf. "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against Jehovah in ceasing to pray for you: but I will instruct you in the good and right way." (1 Sam. 12: 23.) Abraham's character and attitude forcefully illustrate the spirit of our golden text. Cf. Prov. 28: 9.

Abraham's Petition

(Gen. 19: 23b-32)

And said, Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked? This question seems to imply that Abraham was not asking God to spare wicked men, but that he was primarily interested in the righteous. His reason for asking that mercy be shown the wicked by sparing the city was that the righteous would thereby be saved. It is a principle of justice that good people shall not be punished for the deeds of the unrighteous, but it often happens that the righteous have to suffer while God is working out his will regarding the wicked. The question of not destroying the righteous with the wicked was the basis of Abraham's intercession, and we should always keep in mind the fact that when we pray we should always be able to assign a reason, both to God and our own conscience, for the petitions we make.

Peradventure there are fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou consume and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? It is reasonable to assume that Abraham would not have asked Jehovah to spare the city of Sodom had it not been for the fact that his nephew and family were living therein; and it seems quite certain that Abraham knew of the righteous life of Lot. Cf. 2 Pet. 2: 7, 8. Moreover, Abraham must have realized that if the city should be destroyed, Lot and his family would almost certainly perish. Sparing the city from destruction was therefore the only way to save Lot, as Abraham saw it.

The principle involved in all this is of divine origin. Jesus told his disciples that they are the salt of the earth; and since salt is both a seasoning and preserving factor, it is evident that the world would be unacceptable and would perish, were it not for the righteous people who are in it. We have no way of knowing how often people are saved from catastrophe because of the presence of the saints of God among them. We are not told why Abraham began his plea for Sodom with the possibility of there being fifty righteous people there.

That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous

with the wicked, that so the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? This is an obvious appeal to the justice of God, rather than to his mercy; and it is in keeping with the idea that Abraham was interested in seeing that the "reputation" of Jehovah among the peoples of the earth would be of the highest order. This reminds us of a similar incident in the experience of Moses. Jehovah had threatened to smite the disobedient children of Israel with pestilence, disinherit them, and make of Moses a greater and mightier nation than they. Moses, however, was deeply concerned about what the Egyptians and others would say about Jehovah, and he, accordingly, made the following intercession.

"And Moses said unto Jehovah, Then the Egyptians will hear it; for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them; and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that thou Jehovah art in the midst of this people; for thou Jehovah art seen face to face, and thy cloud standeth over them, and thou goest before them, in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because Jehovah was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. And now, I pray thee, let the power of the Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, Jehovah is slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation. Pardon, I pray thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy lovingkindness, and according as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." (See Num. 14: 11-19.)

God's people should always be concerned about what others think of the Lord and his work; and since he is often judged by the conduct of his people, it is of the utmost importance

that every child of God do his best to live in harmony with the principles of truth and righteousness. God, of course, will always do right, regardless of what others may think or say; and his final judgment will be characterized by justice.

And Jehovah said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sake. This is further proof that Abraham's plea for Sodom was not for the city as such, but for the sake of the righteous who were in the city. God's answer to Abraham shows that he is both righteous and merciful.

And Abraham answered and said. Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes. These words tell us how Abraham felt in the presence of Jehovah. Humility of heart is one of the essential characteristics of those who are acceptable to the Lord. Adam Clarke notes that he who has high thoughts regarding himself, must have low thoughts of the dignity of God and the sinfulness of sin.

Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for the lack of five? And he said, I will not destroy it, if I find there forty and five. The earnest persistence of Abraham should be carefully observed. To continue steadfastly in prayer is one of the marks of a faithful child of God. See Rom. 12: 12. As long as Abraham continued to pray, Jehovah continued to answer him. This is the way Jesus taught his disciples to pray. See Matt. 7: 7-11.

Beginning with fifty, Abraham came all the way down to ten, and Jehovah said that he would spare the city if ten righteous people could be found therein. The question is often asked, Why did Abraham stop his intercession at ten? We have no clear-cut answer to this question, but a few observations in the light of the text may not be out of place. Beginning with forty, Abraham dropped ten with each additional petition; and when he reached ten, if he should continue with that procedure, the next point would have been zero, and that would have been equivalent to asking God not to destroy the city at all, that is, to save

it regardless of the number of righteous people who were in it, or whether or not there were any righteous at all. This, of course, would have been entirely contrary to the principles of righteousness and justice. And, too, it may have been possible that Abraham thought that if there were less than ten righteous people in the place, the city was so completely wicked that he could not conscientiously pray that it be spared. Cf. 1 John 5: 16.

When the Prayer Ended

(Gen. 19: 33)

And Jehovah went his way, as soon as he left off communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place. Jehovah did not leave Abraham until that patriarch had completed his intercession. And any faithful child of God may be assured of the same divine consideration. The Lord has solemnly promised to hear the prayers of his people, but that does not necessarily mean that he will always do exactly as he is requested. Cf. Phil. 4: 6, 7. Jesus and Paul both prayed and were heard; but neither received the specific thing which was requested. See Heb. 5: 7; 2 Cor. 12: 7-10. They did, however, receive strength to enable them to bear that which was placed upon them. Cf. 1 Cor. 10: 13; Heb. 4: 14-16.

The fact that Sodom was destroyed is ample proof that ten righteous people could not be found in the city. But God did demonstrate that he does not treat the righteous as he does the wicked. Reference has already been made to Peter's comment regarding Lot and Sodom, but now let us look at that again, and see how God delivers the righteous. "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, having made them an example unto those that should live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, sore distress by the lascivious life of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds): the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment." (2 Pet. 2: 6-9.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

When did our interest first begin in Sodom?

What prompted Lot to make his choice of that area? Discuss fully.

What vital scriptural principle did his action illustrate?

How was his life affected?

Where was Sodom located?

Tell something of its general character.

The Golden Text

Why are these lessons important to us?

What does the Bible teach regarding the efficacy of prayer?

Why do we make such a little application of it?

What should a child of God always do in preparing for prayer?

What is the meaning of "availeth much in its working"?

In a Position to Pray

What did Abraham do before making his intercession?

How is Jehovah represented here?

What happened to the angels who had visited Abraham?

What is peculiar about the prayer which Abraham offered here?

Why would Abraham want to pray for Sodom?

Was he interested in the city beyond his nephew Lot and his family?

Do we have an obligation to pray for others?

Abraham's Petition

Why did Abraham ask, "Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked?"

What divine principle applies here?

Why is it always necessary to have a solid basis for our prayers?

What effect do righteous people have on the world about them?

Upon what principle did Abraham make his appeal for Sodom? Why?

Why did he begin his intercession with the number fifty?

Why ask, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Is it right for people to be concerned about how others feel about Jehovah?

Give reasons for your answer.

How did Moses illustrate this principle?

If people are really sincere about the way others feel about the Lord, what should they always be careful to do?

What did Jehovah say about sparing the city for the sake of fifty righteous people?

How did Abraham manifest his deep humility?

What lesson do we learn here about steadfastness in prayer?

Why did Abraham stop his intercession at ten?

When the Prayer Ended

Gen. 19: 33

When did Jehovah leave Abraham?

What lesson should we learn from this?

What promise has God made to his people regarding the hearing of prayer?

Does he always give the specific thing requested? Why?

What does the fact that Sodom was destroyed prove?

What does God always do for the righteous?

In what way should this encourage us?

Name the important things you have learned from this lesson.

Lesson III—October 18, 1959

ABRAHAM'S FAITH TESTED

Lesson Text

Gen. 22: 1-13

1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Here am I.

2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even I'-saac, and get thee into the land of Mōd-ri'-ah: and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

3 And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and I'-saac his son; and he clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

4 On the third day Abraham lifted

up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder: and we will worship, and come again to you.

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon I'-saac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife; and they went both of them together.

7 And I'-saac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?

8 And Abraham said, God will

provide himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son: so they went both of them together.

9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound I'-saac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

11 And the angel of Je-ho'-vah called unto him out of heaven, and

said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

12 And he said. Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.

13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, behind *him* a ram caught in the thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son.

GOLDEN TEXT.— *"By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac."* (Heb. 11: 17a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.— Gen. 22: 14-19.

Daily Bible Readings

October 12. M.....	Abraham a Man of Faith (Heb. 11: 8-10)
October 13. T.....	Faith Without Works (James 2: 14-19)
October 14. W.....	Abraham Justified by Works (James 2: 20-26)
October 15. T.....	Abraham Blessed (Gen. 17: 1-8)
October 16. F.....	Abraham Approved of God (Gen. 18: 16-21)
October 17. S.....	God Commends Abraham (Gen. 22: 14-19)
October 18. S.....	Death of Abraham (Gen. 25: 7-11)

TIME.—1872 B.C.

PLACE.—Beer-sheba and the land of Moriah.

PERSONS.—Jehovah.

Abraham, Isaac, and two servants.

Introduction

The incident now before us is the one experience in the life of Abraham which is expressly characterized as a trial of his faith. This grand man of God had been a man of faith since he first learned of Jehovah, and responded to his call to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees. All Bible students know something of the importance of faith, and that faith is one of the greatest principles which is known to man. We are told in Heb. 11: 6 that no one can please God without faith, and that alone is sufficient to make the lesson now before us one which should receive our undivided attention.

But before faith is perfected it must be tried or tested, and that requires some kind of action on the part of the individual in question. But just any kind of action will not do; it must be action which has been ordained by God. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and

the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith." (James 2: 21-24.)

There were great things in store for Abraham and his posterity; and since no stream can rise higher than its source, Abraham, the father of the faithful, must be tested. The purpose of such a test is not to weaken and destroy, but to purify and strengthen. "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23: 10b.) Abraham must be made to realize that Jehovah is supreme, and that man's highest duty and blessedness lies in obeying him. He must be absolutely certain that Jehovah can be depended upon to fulfil his promises regarding Isaac, even though he is offered as a sacrifice upon the altar. This was a crisis in the life of Abraham, but his willingness to meet it plus Jehovah's power guaranteed his success.

The Golden Text

"By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac." When people read the inspired history which serves as the basis of our lesson today, they usually think of it as the sacrifice of Isaac, as indeed it was; but that is not where the emphasis belongs. The main thought and the idea which the narrative intends to portray is the proving or the testing of Abraham's faith. If we think of what was happening to Abraham, it will not be too difficult to understand why Isaac was being offered. All of this can be easily seen, if we look carefully at the three parts of the golden text. (1) Abraham's faith; (2) upon being tried; (3) led him to offer up Isaac. Or, to state the matter in other words, Abraham was called upon to do something which would put his faith to the test; and if his faith survived the test, the act commanded would be performed.

The Bible does not tell us in so many words just how old Isaac was at the time of this lesson, but if the generally accepted chronology is correct, he must have been about twenty-five years old.

If this is true, then it must have been necessary that Isaac enter into the transaction voluntarily and thereby show that he, too, could rely upon that which Jehovah had promised. From the touching confidence of each in the other which this narrative reveals, it is easy to imagine something of the fond intercourse of former years.

The manner in which Abraham met this great test should be a matter of encouragement to all of us; for all men of faith must be tried, if their faith is to be made perfect. And, too, the ways in which these tests are made are many and varied. But the great tests, as in the case of Abraham, may come only once in a lifetime. They are the memorable moments of life, the turning-points which will determine our course for the future. The great crises are not the final judgments in our lives, but they may, and often do, extend over many years and make it somewhat easy for us to walk in the path which has been marked out for us.

The Text Explained

The Command

(Gen. 22: 1, 2)

And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, "These things" refer to his experience with Abimelech, as related in the previous chapter. The great respect which Abraham enjoyed at that time gives us some idea of the character of this great man. His faith had evidently continued to grow, until now at length the time has come when it must be put to the supreme test. Testing time is never pleasant, but if it is successfully met it will yield "peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness." See Heb. 12:11.

Jehovah proved Abraham when he brought him into such circumstances as would bring into view and exercise or test his faith. No man can know what his faith will endure until it has been put to the test. This principle is seen everyday of our lives in one way or another. Engineers, for example, are not satisfied with respect to the soundness and durability of iron girders and ship's

cables merely because they look all right. Before such things are put to their intended use they are subjected to great pressure in order to see how much strain they can actually bear. And just so it is with people, and especially Christian people. The handling of the vexing problems of the world and the strain of trouble and sorrow are often used to show one just what he really is, or what he is capable of enduring—whether one's temper patiently endures this provocation, whether our pride will submit to that mortification, or our vanity to this slight, whether our faith can withstand that severe disappointment, or whether our love is equal to that heavy sacrifice.

And said unto him, Abraham; and he said. Here am I. The prompt manner in which Abraham answered the Lord should be carefully observed. Such an attitude will always help one in meeting any crisis which may come into his life. Promptness was evidently a habit with Abraham, as we shall see further on in this lesson.

And he said. Take now thy son,

thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah: and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. Adam Clarke quotes a statement which points out that the order in which the words of this command are arranged is intended to increase the sense, and raise the passions higher and higher. (1) Take now thy son, (2) thine only son. (3) whom thou lovest, (4) even Isaac. Thus point by point Abraham is reminded of the dearest possession of his life, and is commanded to offer it as a burnt-offering upon an altar. Trials which are put upon us with no reason assigned for them at the time are the severest tests of all. They call for faith which is absolutely without question, and when one rises to the occasion and cheerfully responds to the demands which are made upon him, he will invariably be blessed.

While Bible students are not agreed regarding the identity of location in Moriah where Abraham attempted to offer his son as a burnt-offering, many are of the opinion that it was in the vicinity of Jerusalem, that is, in the vicinity where Jerusalem was later built. The only other place in the Old Testament where "Moriah" is mentioned is 2 Chron. 3: 1; and if this is the same as that referred to in the text now before us, it is fair to assume that there is a strong probability that the temple was later erected upon the same location. Cf. 2 Sam. 24: 18ff.

The Preparation

(Gen. 22: 3-8)

And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. This is a further indication of the promptness which characterized Abraham. There was no delay when he had a task to perform. Not every person can be great, as that term is usually understood; but anyone can be prompt in meeting an obligation. The cheerful manner in which Abraham obeyed Jehovah should be carefully noted and emphasized in this study. Some people endeavor to make it appear that

Abraham kept all of this from Sarah, and himself moved in silent grief; but there is nothing in the record to justify such a conclusion. There was no hesitation on the part of Abraham, no doubt in his mind. In the words of the psalmist, he made haste, and delayed not, to observe God's commandment. See Psalm 119: 60. Abraham loved God and had implicit faith in him; and "this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5: 3.) Abraham had no doubt about the final outcome; why, then, should he be grieved?

There was, of course, a great strain on Abraham, and the thought of slaving his beloved son must have cut him to the heart. All of this is implied, or else there would have been no trial or testing; but Abraham was a man of faith, and that faith was being proved. If Abraham had doubted, there would have been grief; but "there is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love." (1 John 4: 18.)

On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. It was probably a little more than forty miles from Beer-sheba to the place which God designated for the sacrifice; and it is reasonable to suppose that the men walked, since the ass would carry the wood. It is not surprising therefore to learn that it took them that long to reach their destination.

And Abraham said unto his young men. Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and ice will worship, and come again to you. This shows something of the confidence which was in Abraham's heart. He fully expected Isaac to return with him; although he fully expected to kill him. This was true because he accounted "that God is able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence he did also in a figure receive him back." (Heb. 11: 19.)

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son: and he took in his hand the fire and the knife: and they went both of them together. There was evidently a sufficient reason in the mind of Abraham why he and the son should go alone to the place of

sacrifice; and since one of them would have to carry the wood, it was more fitting that the son should perform that task.

The thoughts contained in the expression "and they went both of them together" (repeated in verse 8) would be unbearable were it not for the faith of Abraham. It makes us think of another Man of faith who climbed a hill in that same vicinity; not with wood for a burnt-offering upon his shoulders, but a cross which was heavier and which pressed not only upon his body, but even more so upon his heart. This Man was going there because God had promised to save the world through his sacrifice; and he was going to his death, with not one person in all the world who understood what he was doing, or who believed; but he went on. And because of that undaunted faith, and that perfect obedience, both tested to the uttermost, he has destroyed our enemies and won our salvation. And in all the annals of history, there is, perhaps, no single act which parallels that great scene other than the one before us today.

And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? In commenting on this exchange of words, Adam Clarke notes that "nothing can be conceived more tender, affectionate, and affecting, than the question of the son and the reply of the father on this occasion. A paraphrase would spoil it; nothing can be added without injuring those expressions of affectionate submission on the one hand, and dignified tenderness and simplicity on the other."

And Abraham said, God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son: so they went both of them together. In giving this reply, Abraham was still speaking the language of faith and obedience. Bible students are not agreed as to his exact meaning. Did he refer to Isaac as the "lamb" which God would provide? or did he speak prophetically regarding the sacrifice of Christ? It is clear that Abraham expected to kill Isaac, but there is no indication that he was speaking of any other sacrifice than the one he was to make.

The Result

(Gen. 22: 9-13)

And they came to the place which God had told him of: and Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. If Abraham had not had supreme faith in God and no doubt about the ultimate outcome of this sacrifice, it is doubtful if he could have gone even this far in obedience to the command which he received. But with faith unmixed and hope for the restoration of life, Abraham could proceed with his duties without manifesting any misgivings whatsoever. But only a father in his place could explain the feelings which were in his heart.

As pointed out earlier in this lesson, Isaac was probably about twenty-five years old at this time. That is the view of Josephus. Clarke, who considers this whole transaction a type of Christ, thinks that Isaac was around thirty-three, or about the age of Christ when he was crucified. But whatever his age, it is plain to see that it was necessary for Isaac to submit to Abraham in order for his father to bind him. It is reasonable to suppose that Abraham explained the matter to his son after they leached the place where the offering was to be made, and that Isaac was obedient to his father's desire to bind him. The probable reason for binding the victim was to hold the body in place after the death stroke had been made. It is a well known fact that a dying body struggles involuntarily against death.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. This shows that Abraham fully intended to carry out Jehovah's command to the letter. Some Bible students see in this incident a primary lesson of showing that Jehovah did not approve of human sacrifices, such as were being offered by the people around Abraham. There can be no question but that Jehovah abhorred the burning of human beings on the altar, but there is no basis for supposing that he was dealing with that subject here. He was testing the faith of Abraham.

And the angel of Jehovah called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said,

Here am I. And he said, Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. This passage must be understood in the light of the principle of anthropomorphism, that is, the ascription of human feelings, conduct, etc., to Jehovah. In the literal sense, God knew before he gave the commandment what Abraham's reaction would be, but he wanted Abraham himself to meet the test. It was the patriarch's loyalty, not Isaac, that he wanted, and that was what he received. Cf. Gen. 18: 19.

And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son. While there is no evidence to justify the conclusion that Abraham expected to find a ram to offer instead of his son, this was a literal fulfillment of his saying that "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt-offering," or, as the margin has it, God will *see for himself*. "And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day. In the mount of Jehovah it shall be provided." (Verse 14.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is peculiar about this lesson as it respects the life of Abraham?
Why is faith such an important principle?
Why is a trial of faith necessary in order to please God?
What is always necessary in order to have the proper testing?

The Golden Text

What do people usually think of when they read this text?
Where does the emphasis really belong?
Why was it necessary to offer up Isaac in order to try Abraham's faith?
About how old was Isaac when this test was made?
What encouragement should all Christians receive from Abraham's example?
How often do "supreme tests" usually come in a lifetime? Why?
What do these crises ordinarily do for those who are successful in meeting them? Why is this true?

The Command

And it came to pass after what "things"?
Upon what principle was Abraham tried? that is, how was he tested?
Was this manner of testing peculiar to Abraham? Give reasons for your answer.
Why was Abraham so prompt in his action?

What does the word-arrangement of God's command to Abraham suggest?
When are such trials most severe?
Where was the land of Moriah? and what else is known of it?

The Preparation

Why is it important in being prompt in meeting an obligation?
What can you say of Abraham's attitude toward obeying God?
About how far did Abraham have to travel to make this offering?
Why did Abraham tell the young men that he and Isaac would return to them?
Who carried the wood for the sacrifice? and why?
What does this experience bring to our minds?
What question did Isaac ask his father? and what was the reply?
Was Abraham simply being evasive? Give reasons for your answer.

The Result

What enabled Abraham to proceed with the preparation for the sacrifice?
What was the purpose of binding Isaac before slaying him?
What evidence did Abraham give that he intended to obey God's command?
What message did he then receive? and why?
Why did God say, "Now I know"?
What was Jehovah seeking? and what did he receive?
What was the final outcome of this incident?
What name did Abraham give to the place? and why?

Lesson IV—October 25, 1959

ISAAC A MAN OF PEACE

Lesson Text

Gen. 26: 12-25

12 And I'-saac sowed in that land, and found in the same year a hun-

dredfold: and Je-ho'-vah blessed him.

13 And the man waxed great, and grew more and more until he became very great:

14 And he had possessions of Mocks, and possessions of herds, and a great household: and the Phi-lis'-tines envied him.

15 Now all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Phi-lis'-tines had stopped, and filled with earth.

16 And A-bim'-e-lech said unto I'-saac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we.

17 And I'-saac departed thence, and encamped in the valley of Ge-rar, and dwelt there.

18 And I'-saac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Phi-lis'-tines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

19 And I'-saac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.

20 And the herdsmen of Ge'-rar strove with I'-saac's herdsmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well E'-sek, because they contended with him.

21 And they digged another well, and they strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sit'-nah.

22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Re-ho'-both; and he said, For now Je-ho'-vah hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

23 And he went up from thence to Be-er-she'-ba.

24 And Je-ho'-vah appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

25 And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of Je-ho'-vah, and pitched his tent there: and there I'-saac's servants digged a well.

Golden Text.—*"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God."* (Matt. 5: 9.)

Devotional Reading.—Matt. 5: 1-12.

October 19. M.....Treaty of Peace Made (Gen. 26: 26-33)
 October 20. T.....The Way to Peace (Phil. 4: 1-9)
 October 21. W.....Peace with All (Rom. 12: 9-21)
 October 22. T.....Peace with God (Job 22: 21-30)
 October 23. F.....The Better Way (Prov. 16: 9-23)
 October 24. S.....Peace with Enemies (Prov. 16: 1-8)
 October 25. S.....Jesus Gives Peace (John 14: 25-31)

Time.—Probably about 1804 B.C.

Place.—Gerar and Beer-sheba.

Persons.—Jehovah. Isaac, Abimelech, and other Philistines.

Introduction

When we come to study the life of Isaac we are considering a man who was unique, but for a reason which is not usually associated with that term. The thing which makes him unusual is that whatever is said about him nearly always has to be considered in the light of a stronger character. If one should write a sketch of Isaac and then subtract from it all that belongs to Abraham and all that must be assigned to Rebekah, there would be very little left. If we sum up his record as it is found in the Book of Genesis, this is what we would have: He was born to very elderly parents; his father at-

tempted to offer him as a sacrifice at twenty-five; Abraham saw that he was married at forty: his two sons were born when he was sixty; Jacob deceived him when he was a hundred and thirty-seven; and he died at a hundred and eighty.

Those who are familiar with the history of the patriarchs feel that Isaac was a much less commanding figure than the men who stand on either side of him. No one regards Abraham as anything less than a towering mountain peak; and while Jacob was not nearly so great as his grandfather, he still rose to a much greater height than his father. Isaac

may be considered as having been good, rather than great. His life was quiet. Someone has said that he impersonates, as it were, the peaceful, obedient, and submissive qualities of an equitable trust in God, distinct alike from the transcendent faith of Abraham, and from the lower type which in Jacob was learned through discipline and purged from self-will.

To sum up our appraisal of Isaac, "he was peaceful, pleasant, harmless, useful, but in no sense romantic. There was not one thing in his life that in and of itself stirs the im-

agination. There was not a phase of his character the contemplation of which would lead one to an involuntary exclamation of admiration. Isaac is the representative of the unimportant but overwhelming majority, and his life and history stood to his descendants, and stand to us, for the glorification of the commonplace. A great master-brain, an Empire-making idealist in front; a daring, struggling, self-conquering hero behind, Isaac is the plain man of business between them."

The Golden Text

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God." An attribute like this can easily make up for the lack of greatness in any man's life. This is the one characteristic in the life of Isaac which is emphasized; and that is enough to make his life important to the student of the Bible. Someone has asked, Would anyone undertake to measure the heartaches in the world today? And if anyone could, is there a man who thinks that he would be strong enough to carry that knowledge? Surely it would be a tremendous load, and not a little of that burden is due to alienations, and acrimonious and belligerent conduct. There is room therefore for every Christian to be a peacemaker, and that is exactly what the Lord expects of them.

The golden text for today is taken from the sermon on the mount, and it is easy to see that in order to be a peacemaker, according to the Lord's meaning of the term, requires more than merely being peaceable, or amiable, or kindly in one's personal relationship. It means to make peace be-

tween God and man. and between man and man. Jesus pronounced a wonderful blessing upon peacemakers when he said that they shall be called sons of God; but it does not take a very close observer to see that many who undertake this great work today are called nearly everything else but sons of God by their contemporaries.

The business of being a peacemaker in this modern world is often both difficult and dangerous. One who would bring about peace must be willing to labor long and hard, endure pain and misunderstanding, and even die if necessary. Jesus may correctly be called the Prince of Peacemakers, and that is the route he took. No one is qualified to be a peacemaker until he is himself at peace with God; and he must also strive to be at peace with others. Cf. Rom. 12: 18. It is only when one is at peace with God and has done his best to be at peace with others, that he is equipped to be a peacemaker between his fellowmen and God, or between man and man.

The Text Explained

Prosperity and Envy

(Gen. 26: 12-17)

And Isaac sowed in that land, and found in the same year a hundred-fold: and Jehovah blessed him. Isaac was sojourning in Gerar (26: 1-11) which at the time, it appears, was the capital city of the Philistines, and which was located in the southwestern part of Palestine. The country consisted of a coastal strip about fifty miles long and fifteen miles wide which stretched along the Mediter-

anean from Joppa to a little south of Gaza. While living in Gerar Isaac cultivated a piece of ground; and, with the blessing of the Lord, he reaped an abundant harvest. Cf. verse 3a; Matt. 13: 8.

And the man waxed great, and grew more and more until he became very great: and he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and a great household: and the Philistines envied him. It seems that in addition to his agricultural activities,

Isaac also gave his attention to livestock; and he who blessed his farm work also increased his flocks and herds. Such extensive interests as Isaac had would require many servants to see after them and do the necessary work, and that, no doubt, accounted for the great household.

It seems to be a trait of our depraved nature that prosperity on the part of one often causes others to envy him. Envy is an evil condition of the heart which cause one to grieve and fret at the good and prosperity of others. Envy at the good of others, and malice, that is, wishing them evil, is a deep pollution of spirit, and the result is alienation from both God and man. Few sins are more sternly condemned in the Bible than the sin of envy. Cf. Prov. 14: 30; Rom. 1: 29; James 4: 5; Gal. 5: 21.

Now all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped, and filled with earth. This was the inevitable outcome of their thoughts toward Isaac. When envy fills the heart, then it is going to take action sooner or later. Water was indispensable to the raising of livestock, and these envious men probably thought that they could injure Isaac's business, or probably drive him out of their country. The filling up of these wells was not only an unprincipled act on their part; it was also a violation of the solemn pledge which they had made to Abraham. See Gen. 21: 22-34.

And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go front us; for thou art much mightier than we. Abimelech was the Philistine king of Gerar, and the term may have been applied to a line of kings, such as "Pharaoh" of Egypt. This king seems to have shared the envious spirit of his people. Clarke calls attention to the fact that this is the first instance on record of what the Greeks termed *ostracism*, that is, the banishment of a person from the state, of whose power, influence, or riches, the people were jealous. He then quotes Bacon as saying, "Public envy is *ostracism* that eclipseth men when they grow too great."

And Isaac departed thence, and encamped in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. We are not told how far away Isaac went from Gerar, but the record indicates that he remained in

that general area. Jamieson says that "the whole of the southern frontier of Palestine, called the Negeb or 'south country,' consisting of vast undulating plains which extend between the hills of Judah and the desert of Sinai, were neutral grounds, on the natural pastures of which the patriarchs fed their large flocks, before they had obtained a permanent abode. The valley of Gerar—now Wady el-Jerur—a bout fifty miles south of the city of Gerar, is perhaps the remote extremity of that pasture land. That the Wady el-Jerur is not without its attractions as a place of residence, and that its immediate neighborhood, partly arable and partly pastoral, was well adapted for an ancient settlement, is evident from the testimony of Dr. Robinson, who says, 'This whole basin was full of shrubs and vegetation, and seemed capable of tillage. Indeed, in several spots we saw traces of rude ploughing, and were told that in years of rain the Arabs are accustomed to plough and sow here. A thin, meagre grass was springing up in various places. At another point in Wady el-Jerur vegetation seemed more abundant, and camels were at pasture.'"

Redigging Wells and Seeking Peace

(Gen. 26: 18-22)

And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. Some Bible students hold to the view that the digging of a well on a piece of ground was the same as laying claim to the property; and if that is true, it is easy to understand why the Philistines would want to stop up the wells which had been dug by Abraham. They could by that method deny that he ever owned the land. But Isaac, being asked to leave Gerar, returned to the place where his father had dwelt; and, finding the location of the old wells, he set about to reopen them, and thereby establish his claim to the land. Calling them by their former names could have been for sentimental reasons, as well as for reviving the former claim which his father had made.

And Isaac's servants digged in the

valley, and found there a well of springing water. The margin has "living" instead of springing. This appears to have been a new well of living, bubbling, gushing water, in contrast with the cisterns or reservoirs which were used for storing rain and other waters which could be collected. We call such "wells" springs. Trench quotes Origen, one of the so-called church fathers, as giving to this incident an allegorical meaning, namely, that these living fountains are wells of salvation which the devil and his agents had choked, but which our Isaac, the son of gladness, opened anew for us. It is doubtful if the inspired writer had any such idea as that in mind; but the narrative does furnish the basis for an excellent lesson on *Redigging Old Wells*, that is, re-emphasizing Biblical truths which have been covered by neglect, human opinions, and false teaching.

And the herdsmen of Gerar strove with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him. This is what W. H. Griffith Thomas calls meeting difficulty with human patience. The Philistines were evidently trying to drive Isaac farther and farther from them. This patriarch simply gave the well a name in keeping with the circumstances surrounding it, and then moved on. *Esek* means "contention." See margin.

And they digged another well, and they strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah. The meaning of *Sitnah* is "enmity." Not only were the Philistines opposed to Isaac; they actually became his enemies, as may be seen by the name which he gave this well. Clarke notes that never did any man follow more implicitly the divine injunction, *resist not evil*, than did Isaac. Whenever he found that his presence and work became the subject of strife and contention, he gave place and chose to suffer wrong, rather than to have his own peace of mind disturbed. It was in this way that he overcame evil with good. Cf. 1. Cor. 6: 7; Rom. 12: 21; James 3: 18.

And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said.

For now Jehovah hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land. The name of this well means broad places or plenty of room. Jamieson calls attention to the fact that Rowlands discovered a well fitting this description in this area, "an ancient well of living and good water, bearing the name of Bir Rohebeh, or Ruheibeh," and goes on to say that if to Dr. Robinson's graphic description of the valley, with its ample expanse and cheerful verdure, and to Mr. Rowlands discovery of the well, still retaining its familiar title, we add the further coincidences, that the context shows Rehoboth to have been between the valley of Gerar and Beer-sheba: and that as Isaac *went up* from thence to Beer-sheba, as the next verse states, the long and gradual *ascent*, as Dr. Robinson, points out, the facts are sufficient to "convince any unbiased judgment that the identification is complete."

At Home in Beer-sheba

(Gen. 26: 23-25)

And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba. The term "Beer-sheba" means "the well of the oath," or "the well of the seven." See Gen. 21: 22-34. It was located in the southern part of Palestine, and the expression "from Dan even to Beer-sheba" became a classic phrase for indicating the north-south limits of the country. See Judg. 20: 1. It was a favorite dwelling place of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because of the abundance of water available for their flocks and herds. Beer-sheba was originally given to Judah when the children of Israel settled in Canaan (Josh. 15: 20, 28); but it was later assigned to Simeon (Josh. 19: 2, 9). We are told that "the persistence of water in and near the present town of Beer-sheba makes it a key to irrigation projects in this section of Palestine." (*Harper's Bible Dictionary*, p. 65.)

And Jehovah appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not. for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake. It seems clear from the first fourteen verses of Gen. 26 that Isaac had Jehovah's permission to sojourn in the land of the Philistines, that is, in Gerar; but

it may be that God used the opposition of those people to cause Isaac to return to Beer-sheba. At least the verse now before us seems to indicate that Jehovah was pleased to have him back there. There were two circumstances which seem to call for the encouragement which God gave to Isaac the first night he was in Beer-sheba, namely, that was where his father passed away, and the treatment which he had received from the Philistines. Isaac was told not to fear, because he could rely on both the presence and blessings of Jehovah.

And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of Jehovah, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well. It appears that this was the only altar which Isaac is said to have erected. He doubtless built others, but we have no record of it. Isaac built the altar before he pitched his tent, and before his servants dug the well. This was in keeping with the principle which Jesus announced later, "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his

righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6: 33.)

This verse of scripture is remarkable when we stop to consider its contents; for it contains the divinely ordained elements of a complete life. Here we have the altar, the tent, and the well, or, to express the same idea in other words, religion, home, and work. It has well been said that he who keeps faith with God in these three areas of life inherits true power and the nobleness which abides.

Isaac had been taught all of these principles by his father (cf. Gen. 18: 19), and we may be sure that they represent the order which is pleasing to God—first God, and then our own happiness and welfare. This is the pattern which is found throughout the Bible. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, the first petitions were related to God, and then they were told to ask for that which they needed. When people learn to live after this manner, they can be assured of God's blessings.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What can you say of the uniqueness of the life of Isaac?

Give a brief outline of his life.

How does he compare with Abraham and Jacob?

What is the most outstanding quality of his life?

Of what great class of people and things is Isaac the representative?

The Golden Text

In what way does this golden text apply to Isaac?

Why are peacemakers so desperately needed today?

What does it mean to be a peacemaker?

What are the qualifications of a peacemaker?

How do people generally regard peacemakers?

Prosperity and Envy

Where was Isaac at this time? and why was he there?

Where was Gerar and what is known of the place?

How did he find a hundredfold in one year?

Tell something of the prosperity of Isaac while in Gerar.

What is envy? and why do people allow it to take hold of them?

What does the Bible teach regarding it?

What direction did the envy of the Philistines take as it respected Isaac?

Why did they want to fill up the wells?

Why was the action of filling up the wells so unprincipled?

Who was Abimelech and what was his

attitude toward Isaac?

What precedent did this king inaugurate?

Where did Isaac go when he left Gerar?

Give a description of that part of the country in which he dwelt.

Redigging Wells and Seeking Peace

What wells did Isaac redig?

Why would the Philistines want to fill them up?

While digging in the valley, what did Isaac's servants find?

What is meant by "springing water"?

What valuable lesson can we get from the subject, "Redigging Old Wells"?

Discuss some of the truths which have been thus treated?

When the Philistines claimed the water as theirs, what did Isaac do?

What happened when his servants dug the next well?

What great truth did the action of Isaac illustrate?

What was peculiar about the third well they dug?

In what way has the location of that well probably been identified?

At Home in Beer-sheba

Where was Beer-sheba? and what is known regarding the place?

What experience did Isaac have the first night he was there?

What were the probable reasons for Jehovah's appearance to him?

What promise did God make to him?

What did Isaac do first?

What well known principle did he follow?

Discuss the scope of verse 25.

Where had Isaac learned these great lessons?

How do we know that God is pleased with such a life?

Lesson V—November 1, 1959

JACOB AT BETHEL

Lesson Text

Gen. 28: 10-22

10 And Jacob went out from Be-er-she'-ba, and went toward Ha'-ran.

11 And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep.

12 And he dreamed; and, behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

13 And, behold, Je-ho'-vah stood above it, and said, I am Je-ho'-vah, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of I'-saac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

14 And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

15 And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave

thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

16 And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said. Surely Je-ho'-vah is in this place; and I knew it not.

17 And he was afraid, and said. How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

19 And he called the name of that place Beth'-el: but the name of the city was Luz at the first.

20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Je-ho'-vah will be my God,

22 Then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

Golden Text.—*"Surely Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not."* (Gen. 28: 16b.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalm 139: 1-12.

Daily Bible Readings

October 26. M.....	Rebekah's Unwise Counsel (Gen. 27: 5-17)
October 27. T.....	Jacob's Deceit (Gen. 27: 18-29)
October 28. W.....	Elijah at Horeb (1 Kings 19: 9-14)
October 29. T.....	Isaiah in the Temple (Isa. 6: 1-10)
October 30. F.....	The Transfiguration (Luke 9: 28-36)
October 31. S.....	John's Vision of Christ (Rev. 1: 10-20)
November 1. S.....	Peter's Vision (Acts 10: 9-20)

Time.—Probably about

Place.—Beer-sheba and Bethel.

Persons.—Jehovah and

1779 B.C.

Jacob.

Introduction

Although Abraham was in reality the head of the Hebrew race, and it was through him that all the great promises came, yet when we speak of the founder of the Jewish race, the

reference is to Jacob rather than to Abraham. These people are called "Israelites," rather than "Abrahamites." This is true because other great people descended from Abra-

ham, but only the Israelites came from Jacob. The "wild son of the desert," as Ishmael is sometimes called, claims Abraham as his father, along with the Jew. The Midianites were also children of Abraham.

But Jacob is the typical "Jew," and his life is the epitome of that great people who are found in every country, and yet belong to none. They are the people who gave us our loftiest religious literature, and yet are a byword everywhere because of their scheming and their love of money. It is only in Jacob that we can understand these people. The extremes in them which startle us are all to be found in him. He was the greatest schemer of his times; and, although his beginning was not so good, he came to have that deep spirituality and far-reaching faith, which are the grandest of all qualities, and make one capable of the highest culture that a human spirit can receive. He, like his descendants,

spent a great part of his life in exile, amid the trying conditions of toil and sorrow; and, like them, he was inalienably attached to the land of Canaan, which was his only by the promise of God and the graves of his beloved dead.

The story of God's special dealings with Jacob begins with the lesson now before us. His life before this had not been very favorable, and it is only indirectly that we are able to gather anything of his relation to God. But from now on, as the inspired narrative unfolds itself, we shall see the building of his character as it is tested and trained by the wisdom and love of God. The story of his life may be described as one of discipline and mercy. This son of Isaac reaps again and again the fruits of his sins; but as we read on we are permitted to see what the grace of God can do for one of the most naturally unattractive and even forbidding temperaments.

The Golden Text

This part of the lesson for today is found in the body of the text, and we

shall reserve our comment on it until it is reached in the regular order.

The Text Explained

Jacob's Vision at Beth-el

(Gen. 28: 10-15)

And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. All of chapter 27 and the first nine verses of chapter 28 should be read before beginning the study of this lesson. When that is done it will be seen that the departure of Jacob from his father's house in Beer-sheba was an ignominious flight. Driven from home by the threats of Esau, the fear of Rebekah, and the command of Isaac, Jacob began the long and dangerous journey from Beer-sheba to Haran. See map. Jamieson thinks that because of fear of being pursued or waylaid by his vindictive brother, Jacob did not take the usual road, but went by lonely and unfrequented paths, which increased the length and dangers of the journey, until, deeming himself at a secure distance, he appears to have entered and travelled the main thoroughfare northward along the central mountainridge of Palestine.

It is difficult for people today to judge of the sorrowful feeling which this banishment would cause to rise

in Jacob's heart. It makes little difference where people may travel now, they will nearly always find themselves among people who claim to worship God, and who have a common interest in the better things of life. But this was not true in Jacob's case. When he left his father's house, he probably did not see anyone who shared his knowledge of and faith in Jehovah until he reached the home of his uncle Laban in Haran. He was, in a very real sense, going from one oasis to another across a burning sand.

And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. It was probably about fifty miles from Beer-sheba to Beth-el, and that means that Jacob had very likely been on the road two or three days when he reached the place now in question. We are not told why he did not enter the city to spend the night, but it may have been that he wanted to stop in the open, rather than to go

into the city; and, too, he may have arrived too late to enter before the gate was closed. That, however, is unimportant; we are given the facts about his night of rest, and the dream which he had: and that is what God wants us to know. Sleeping out in the open involved no hardship for a pastoral man like Jacob.

And he dreamed; and, behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. Many and varied ideas regarding the identity of this ladder have been advanced by men in their efforts to explain this unusual experience. Some have thought that the vision which Jacob had was no more than the picture of slabs of rock, piled one upon another and forming a whole hillside. To Jacob, accustomed as he was to the rolling pasture lands of Beer-sheba, they would appear almost like a structure built for superhuman uses, well founded in the valley below, and reaching to unknown heights.

But inasmuch as this was a supernatural vision, it seems reasonable to accept the narrative as a true account of a vision which God caused to appear to the sleeping wayfarer. It is not likely that Jacob saw a modern ladder, such as we are accustomed to; but that which he did see can best be described to us by our term "ladder," or possibly a staircase. But whatever the ladder may have been, its purpose seems fairly clear. It was intended to afford comfort and encouragement to the lonely fugitive, both in his present circumstances and his future prospects. It was meant to show⁷ him that he still had contact with God. Cf. Heb. 1: 14. It is generally thought that the ladder was a type of Christ, and that it had its perfect fulfillment in him. See John 1: 51; cf. 14: 6.

And, behold, Jehovah stood above it, and said, I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed: and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. This divine message would enable Jacob to understand the purpose of

the vision. The words were addressed to him, and he is made aware that the promises which were made to Abraham and Isaac are to have their fulfillment in him and his seed. The ultimate purpose of the promises looked to the coming of Christ: for it is in him that the greatest of all blessings are made available to the human race. Cf. Heb. 2: 9.

Although Jacob had obtained by fraud the birthright and the blessing which normally would have belonged to Esau, it is clear from a prediction which God made to Rebekah before their birth that it was his will that they should go to Jacob. "And Jehovah said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." (Gen. 25: 23.) It was not Jacob's deceit which secured for him the blessings, but the will of God; and it is equally true that Jacob was not selected as God's representative because of what he was at the time, but because of that which he would become.

And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. It would be difficult to find a passage of scripture which is more comprehensive in its contents than this one. Jacob must have felt largely forsaken as he began his forced journey to a far-away country; but with such a message as this coming to him from such a source and under such circumstances, his spirit must have been greatly revived. This passage contains a four-fold assurance, namely, (1) the presence of God—"I am with thee;" (2) divine protection—"and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest;" (3) divine preservation—"and will bring thee again into this land;" and (4) divine promise—"for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." This was the encouragement and assurance which Jacob received from the vision of God.

Jacob's Reaction to the Dream (Gen. 28: 16, 17)

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep and he said. Surely Jehovah is in this

place; and I knew it not. Jamieson notes that both the language and the conduct of Jacob were that of a man whose mind was pervaded by sentiments of solemn awe, fervent piety, and lively gratitude. Jacob had probably gone to sleep without any thought of God at the time, but this experience made him aware of his presence. This wanderer may have felt as Jonah did, hundreds of years later, that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord.

Jacob was a fugitive, and he knew it, notwithstanding the fact that he was going to Haran at his father's insistence. Jacob knew, and his mother knew, that he was compelled to go; for the home in Beer-sheba was no longer large enough for the two brothers to dwell together. But what Jacob did not know was that the providence of God was at work, and that the divine presence would go with him wherever he might go. This revelation startled him into a new consciousness; and it was the beginning of a new life for him.

And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. While Jacob slept that night he was permitted to see both the past and the future, the things of eternity and the things of time, all in one grand sweep. He saw the past generations of his people, and the distant families of those who were yet to be, all linked together in him. Fear followed surprise, but that was a healthy characteristic, and it was inherent in Jacob's character. It was that trait which made him want to soften those whom he had wronged with presents; and while it caused him a great deal of trouble in his earlier life, it finally changed his life. This was true because Jacob had power of will over his fear; he could subdue it for the sake of success. It never kept him from doing that which he desired, or at least trying; and then after years of discipline, he learned how to lift fear into reverence for God.

It is interesting to note that the word "afraid" is from the same word as "reverend" in Psalm 111: 9. This original word, that is, the Hebrew term, occurs 376 times in the Old Testament; and the corresponding Greek word, the one which was used

to translate the Hebrew in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, is found in the New Testament 143 times, making a grand total of 519 in the entire Bible. The basic meaning of the word is to be filled with awe or reverence. That was what happened to Jacob when he realized that he was in the house of God, and at the gate of heaven. There is a great lesson in this for us; because all too few stand in awe of God and tremble at his word. Cf. Isa. 66: 2.

A Memorial and a Vow

(Gen. 28: 18-22)

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. Placing the stone in an upright position would turn it into a memorial for the purpose of marking the spot where the vision was seen, and the oil would consecrate it. Cf. Gen. 35: 14, 15; Josh. 4: 8. 9. Dods observes that he felt, vivid as the impression on his mind then was, it would tend to fade; and it was for that reason that he set up the stone as a memorial. Cf. Josh. 4: 19-24. Dr. Dods continues, "One great secret in the growth of character is the art of prolonging the quickening power of right ideas, of perpetuating just and inspiring impressions. And he who despises the aid of all external helps for the accomplishment of this object is not likely to succeed."

And he called the name of that place Beth-el: but the name of the city was Luz at the first. The word "Beth-el" means the *house of God*, and as the name of a town it is mentioned in the Bible more often than any other except Jerusalem. We gather from the text now before us that its former name was "Luz," and from this circumstance it is natural to infer that one name replaced the other. But when Josh 16: 2 is read, it appears that Luz and Beth-el were different places. It seems quite certain that Jacob set up the stone outside the city; and the probability is that the two places, being in close proximity, were in time merged into one.

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to

put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Jehovah will be my God, then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee. Inasmuch as this vow has often been characterized by a charge of selfishness, and therefore injurious to Jacob's integrity, it is probably well that we consider it somewhat at length. Jamieson thinks that the "if" should be changed to "since." If he is correct in his view of the matter, then it will be easy to see that the language is a proper expression of Jacob's faith—an evidence of his having truly embraced the promise which God made to him. The following is Jamieson's view:

"But it should be borne in mind that it was *in consequence* of the vision, and of the promises made to him during the night, in the most unexpected manner, by the Divine Being, that he vowed his vow the next morning—a vow indicative of his profound feeling of gratitude, as well as of reverence, and intended to be simply responsive to the terms in which the grace of his heavenly Benefactor and Guardian was tendered. Nay, so far is he from betraying a selfish and worldly spirit, the moderation of his desires is remarkable; and the vow, when placed in a just light, will be seen to evince the simplicity and the piety of Jacob's mind. Our translators have given rise to the mistaken impressions that so gen-

erally prevail in regard to Jacob's vow, by the insertion of the word 'then,' in verse 21. But the apodosis properly begins in the verse following—'then this stone,' etc. The words of Jacob are not to be considered as implying a doubt, far less as stating the condition or terms on which he would dedicate himself to God. Let 'if' be changed into 'since,' and the language will appear a proper expression of Jacob's faith—an evidence of his having truly embraced the promise."

This then was Jacob's response to the marvelous vision which had been vouchsafed to him. He was overawed and afraid, but his nature was aroused by the vision, and it responded to the God who was drawing him. He gathered himself up, as it were, and resolutely determined to dedicate himself to God. He did not, as so often we do, when we come to see God's will for us, allow the effect to wear off, and do nothing. He came to an immediate decision, and it was equal to the occasion. True religion demands this kind of an attitude; for no man ever found himself, by accident or good fortune, in the kingdom of Christ. Cf. Josh. 24: 15. Jacob both vowed a vow, and set up a stone; or, to state the same thing in other words, he made an inward resolution, and set to it an outward seal. He placed in Beth-el, for all men to see, a monument of his having met with God. Cf. Gen. 14: 20; Heb. 7: 1-10; 8: 6.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Why was it that God's people in the Old Testament were called after Jacob, rather than after Abraham?

Discuss the characteristics of Jacob and the Israelites.

When did the record of God's special dealing with Jacob begin?

Compare his beginning with his end of life.

Jacob's Vision at Beth-el

From where did Jacob start on his long journey, and where was he going?

Discuss the factors which were responsible for his going.

Tell something of the feelings which must have been his.

At what place did he spend a night which is mentioned in the record?

What were his accommodations for sleeping?

Describe the dream which he had.

What was the significance of the ladder which he saw?

What message did Jehovah give to him? and why?

Why was such a man as Jacob selected for this high place?

What fourfold assurance did he receive? Discuss the significance of each.

Jacob's Reaction to the Dream

How was Jacob affected by his dream?

Why was he surprised to find God there?

What did Jacob know and not know about his situation?

How did this revelation affect him?

Why was Jacob afraid?

Discuss the effect which fear had in his life.

What is the meaning of "afraid" as used here?

What great lesson is there here for us?

A Memorial and a Vow

What did Jacob do upon rising the next morning? and why?

Why would he want a memorial?

Is there any place for such memorials in our life?

Why did Jacob call the name of the place "Beth-el"?
 Were Beth-el and Luz the same place?
 Give reasons for your answer.
 What was the nature of Jacob's vow?
 Why did he make it?
 Discuss the various details of the vow.
 Why have some people thought that Jacob was selfish in making this vow?
 What difference in meaning is seen when "if" is changed to "since"?
 What do you think would have been your reaction, if you had seen the vision under the same circumstances that Jacob did?

What does the average person today do when he sees a new vision of truth?
 What kind of an attitude does true religion demand on our part?
 Discuss the inward and outward effect all of this had on Jacob.
 Why did he promise to give a tenth to God?
 Under what circumstances had this been done before?
 What use did Paul make of the incident?
 Do you think that Christians are under obligation to give a tenth? Give reasons for your answer.

Lesson VI—November 8, 1959

JACOB AND ESAU RECONCILED

Lesson Text

Gen. 33: 1-11

1 And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, E'sau was coming, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Le'-ah, and unto Ra'-chel, and unto the two handmaids.

2 And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Le'-ah and her children after, and Ra'-chel and Joseph hindermost.

3 And he himself passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

4 And E'-sau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

5 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children: and said, Who are these with thee? And he said, The children whom God hath graciously given thy servant.

6 Then the handmaids came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves.

7 And Le'-ah also and her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Ra'-chel, and they bowed themselves.

8 And he said, What meanest thou by all this company which I met? And he said, To find favor in the sight of my lord.

9 And E'-sau said, I have enough, my brother; let that which thou hast be thine.

10 And Jacob said. Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found favor in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand; forasmuch as I have seen thy face, as one seeth the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me.

11 Take, I pray thee, my gift that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it.

Golden Text.—*"But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."* (Matt. 6: 15.)

Devotional Reading.—Matt. 6: 9-15.

Daily Bible Readings

November 2. M.....	Jesus Teaches Forgiveness (Matt. 6: 9-15)
November 3. T.....	Christ Forgave His Enemies (Luke 23: 33-38)
November 4. W.....	Attitude Toward Enemies (Matt. 5: 38-48)
November 5. T.....	Winning Our Enemies (Luke 6: 27-38)
November 6. F.....	Kindness Taught (Zech. 7: 8-14)
November 7. S.....	Dealing with Offenders (Matt. 18: 15-22)
November 8. S.....	An Unmerciful Servant (Matt. 18: 23-35)

Time.—1739 B.C.

Place.—Penuel, on the river Jabbok, not far from the Jordan.

Persons.—Esau and his servants, Jacob, his family, and servants.

Introduction

The entire thirty-second chapter of Genesis should be carefully read before beginning the study of this lesson; and when that is done it will be seen that some very important things happened to Jacob. He sent word to his brother concerning his prosperity in Paddan-aram, and informed him of his return. When his messengers returned to Jacob they reported to him, saying, "We came to thy brother Esau, and moreover he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him." This news filled Jacob with fear and struck consternation to his heart. It was this situation which revealed a great change in Jacob's life.

This change is seen in the manner in which he prayed. The discipline which he had received had taught him to depend entirely on Jehovah. His prayer, which is recorded in Gen. 32: 9-12, should be considered carefully in the light of his vow which was a part of our last lesson. This prayer is a classic example of praying when one feels his need of God. When Jacob finished this prayer, he then began to do that which he felt he could do to appease Esau. This, of course, was not necessary; for Jacob had misjudged his brother. Jacob remembered his sins against Esau, and the latter's anger and determination to seek revenge; but Jacob had not taken into account the possibility that Esau had changed, too, and that for the better: but, as is always the case-

"conscience doth make cowards of us all." The strategy employed by Jacob is worthy of careful consideration. See Gen. 32: 13-21.

And then came the never-to-be-forgotten experience of wrestling with the angel. See Gen. 32: 22-32. This struggle had an immense significance in Jacob's history. It may, in fact, be referred to as a concrete representation of the attitude which he had maintained toward God during his life up to this time; and it constitutes the turning-point at which he assumed a new and satisfactory attitude.

All during his life, Jacob had continued to maintain confidence in himself. He had never been thoroughly humbled, but had always felt that he was able to regain the ground which he had lost by his sins. And in the struggle with the angel now under consideration he continued to show the same determination and self-confidence. But before the night was over that spirit was broken. His Jacob nature, that is, his natural propensity to wrest from the most unwilling opponent that which he wanted, and to win that at which he aimed, was changed; and from henceforth he will be known as Israel. Jehovah at Beth-el was the author, and now at Penuel he is the finisher of the patriarch's faith. This is the man who was to be reconciled with his brother Esau.

The Golden Text

"But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." This is a statement which no thoughtful person will disregard; for anyone who believes the teaching of Jesus cannot possibly misunderstand that which Jesus says. He had just taught his disciples how to pray, and in doing so he mentioned certain needs which they had, and which could and would be supplied by the Father. Among these needs is the forgiveness of sins, and in telling them how to pray, he said, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." And then after concluding the model prayer, he made this observation: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive

not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Of all the petitions which this model prayer contains, the only one which has a condition attached to it is the one involving forgiveness. Not only is the condition mentioned and made a part of the petition; it is also stated in a positive and negative manner in the observation which Jesus made following the prayer. It is therefore impossible for anyone who reads this prayer and the words of Jesus following it to miss the point which he made. Forgiveness cannot be obtained from God by anyone who will not forgive those who sin against him.

Since Jesus is our great example with reference to the subject before us, we should endeavor to under-

stand his attitude toward offenses. When Jesus was offended, he did not regard the offense as a personal matter. Instead, he looked upon it as the revelation of a deep need in the person who committed it. That should also be our attitude toward the offenses which are directed toward us. In each of them God is giving us a twofold opportunity: (1) to spread

abroad the spirit of Christ through the magnanimity of our own conduct; and (2) to go to the offended, especially if he is a brother, and teach him that which is right. When people manifest the spirit of Christ, they are always ready to forgive sins, and they are happy when the opportunity comes to them to do so.

The Text Explained

The Dramatic Meeting of Jacob and Esau

(Gen. 33: 1-4)

And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau was coming, and with him four hundred men. As already noted, the night-long wrestle with the angel by the Jabbok was epoch-making in the life of Jacob. It was the moment in which he ascended to a new level in his experience—the level of Israel the Prince. It should be remembered, however, that it is one thing to step up to such a level, but quite something else to keep it. The record shows that Jacob's after-life was strong in comparison with the years which had gone before, and pure in comparison with the sins which had stained his earlier years; but his later life was not all that it should have been.

With the coming of the new day, the thing which Jacob had dreaded was coming closer—his meeting with Esau; and when he lifted up his eyes he saw both his brother and the four hundred men coming. It is generally assumed that Esau was leading an armed force for the purpose of destroying Jacob and his company, but there is no foundation in fact for that assumption. There is not the slightest indication that the men were even armed; and Esau's behavior gives no credit to the idea.

And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindmost. And he himself passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. There has been some question about Jacob's motive in the arrangement of his family for the meeting with Esau. The common opinion is that he placed the

least favored first, and so on until the dearest one came last, so that if the first should be destroyed, the others might escape. That was his purpose in dividing them at first (see Gen. 32: 7, 8), and it may have been his purpose here; but of that no one can be absolutely certain. After noting the first possibility, Adam Clarke asks, "Or did he intend to keep his choicest treasure to the last, and exhibit his beautiful *Rachel* and favorite *Joseph* after Esau had seen all the rest, in order to make the deeper impression on his mind?"

It was to Jacob's credit, of course, that he went over first. Anything less than that would have been to acknowledge that he was not worthy of the family which God had given him, nor of his place at the head of the household. Jamieson thinks that Jacob's faith was strengthened and his fears were gone (cf. Psalm 27: 3); and in keeping with the promise of Gen. 32: 28, he fully expected to prevail with Esau. We cannot, of course, always be certain about motives and attitudes in the absence of testimony, and for that reason we should not be dogmatic.

And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept. This was a dramatic meeting, and it should be noted that it was the man who had received the wrong who was the first to demonstrate his affections. Esau, at the sight of his brother, forgot the things which had been done against him, if indeed he had cherished the memory of them, and showed his desire to be friends again. Esau's conduct seems to have been both sincere and magnanimous. All resentment had been buried, and he had forgotten his injuries; and with a mind free from ill-will, he received his brother with the strongest of demonstrations, not only of forgiveness, but of fraternal affection.

We have no reason to think that Jacob was any less anxious to be reconciled to his brother, than Esau was; but most careful observers will testify to the fact that when two people have a difference, it is harder to get the one who did the wrong to be friendly with the one who was wronged, than it is to get the one who has suffered the wrong to be friendly with the one who has wronged him. There are two reasons for this attitude on the part of the sinner: (1) he does not want to admit his wrong, and thereby condemn himself. That, of course, is intellectual dishonesty, and anyone who stops to think knows that it is just as necessary to be honest intellectually, as it is to be honest in the material things of life. Cf. Phil. 4: 8, 9. (2) He does not have a deep sense of sin and its consequences. If this is not true, then he is depraved and has no desire to please the Lord.

The Homage of Jacob's Family

(Gen. 33: 5-7)

And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are these with thee? And he said, The children whom God hath graciously given thy servant. When Jacob sent word to Esau that he had returned from Paddan-aram, he made no mention of his wives and children, but only of his possessions. "And he commanded them, saying. Thus shall ye say unto my lord Esau: Thus saith thy servant Jacob, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed until now: and I have oxen, and asses, and flocks, and men-servants, and maid-servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in thy sight." (Gen. 32: 4, 5.) It was natural therefore for Esau to make inquiry about the people with Jacob.

Jacob's reply was a pious response, and acknowledge God as the giver of all good things. It was an oriental custom for people, in addressing others, to use the expressions "my lord" and "thy servant" instead of the personal pronouns which we ordinarily employ under similar circumstances.

Then the handmaids came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. And Leah also and her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came

Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves. Jacob's four wives and their twelve children (it is assumed that Leah's daughter Dinah—Gen. 30: 21—was in the group) came forward, according to oriental custom, and gave evidence of their respect. It is always refreshing to observe good manners on the part of children toward their elders, and it is a credit to their parents when they are well trained. Cf. Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6: 1-4.

Jacob's Gift to Esau

(Gen. 33: 8-11)

And he said, What meanest thou by all this company which I met? And he said, To find favor in the sight of my Lord. This was not an effort to buy the friendship of Esau. It was, as Jacob said, to find favor in the sight of his brother. He not only wanted to assure him that he desired to make the usual gesture of friendly recognition in the form of a present; but he also wanted to acknowledge his indebtedness to Esau. To express the same thing in other words, Jacob was trying to gain the friendship of his erstwhile estranged brother by a kind of an apology for the past injustices which he had done him. The principle involved in all of this is widely practiced by good people even today. Cf. Gen. 20: 14-16.

The present which Jacob sent to Esau is described in Gen. 32: 13-15: "And he lodged there that night, and took of that which he had with him a present for Esau his brother: two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milch camels and their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty she-asses and ten foals." All of these animals were placed in the hands of Jacob's servants, "every drove by itself," with instruction to put "a space betwixt drove and drove." The obvious purpose of this arrangement was for the psychological effect it would have on Esau. The driver of each drove was told what to say when they met Esau, each, apparently, using the same or similar language; and they were to add, "Moreover, behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept me." (Gen. 32: 19, 20.)

It should be noted that this present was sent before Jacob wrestled with the angel. It is very evident that Jacob had grave misgivings about his reception at that time, and was resorting to human strategy; but after his experience with the angel, his faith was no doubt greatly strengthened. But even so, Jacob was still under obligation to do the best he could, and then leave the result with the Lord.

And Esau said, I have enough, my brother: let that which thou hast be thine. And Jacob said. Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found favor in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand; forasmuch as I have seen thy face, as one seeth the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me. Take, I pray thee, my gift that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it. This entire conversation has the ring of sincerity and gratitude in it, and it must be understood in the light of Eastern customs. The two quotations which follow overlap in some of their details, but if both are read a broader view of oriental practices can be had. "In the East the acceptance of a present by a superior is a proof of friendship, and by an enemy, of reconciliation. It was on both accounts Jacob was so anxious that his brother should receive the cattle; and in Esau's acceptance he had the strongest proofs of a good feeling being established that Eastern notions admit of." (Jamieson.)

"Jacob could not be certain that he had found favor with Esau, unless the present had been received; for in accepting it Esau necessarily became

his *friend*, according to the custom of those times, and in that country. In the eastern countries, if your present be received by your superior, you may rely on his friendship; if it be not received, you have everything to fear. It is on this ground that Jacob was so urgent with Esau to receive his present, because he knew that after this he must treat him as a friend." (Clarke.)

In bringing about this reconciliation, we are not to assume that the character of Esau has been changed, as one would like to think. His mother's appraisal of him when she urged Jacob to leave home was quite correct. He was impulsive, hasty, passionate, but his anger did not last. He did not carry a grudge; and it was for this reason that Jacob's fears proved to be groundless. But even at that, good deeds which are properly motivated are never mis-spent. Jacob gives no evidence whatsoever that he regretted having given the present to Esau after he saw the latter's attitude; but he *urged* him to take it.

After the reconciliation, Esau offered to escort Jacob to his own country, or to leave some of his men with him; but Jacob declined both offers, and stated his reasons for doing so. Jacob did not tell Esau exactly where he was going, but did indicate that he would visit him in Seir. There is, however, no evidence that this visit was made. Esau then left Jacob so that the latter might go to the land of his inheritance; and as he did so, he soon disappeared in the wild mountains of the land to the South. Those who study this lesson will want to read the rest of the story.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Review and discuss the thirty-second chapter of Genesis.

What highlights in the life of Jacob does that chapter record?

Why was Jacob afraid to meet Esau?

What was the purpose of the wrestling with the angel?

What change is seen in him after that experience?

The Golden Text

From what part of the Bible is this text taken?

Why does it demand the attention of

every person today?

What is peculiar about the petition for forgiveness in the model prayer?

Why is it impossible to forgive an unforgiving person?

How did Jesus regard offenses? and how should we?

Why does the faithful child of God always want to forgive?

The Dramatic Meeting of Jacob and Esau

What great obligation always comes to the man who is elevated to a new level?

What can you say of Jacob's experience in this respect?

When did the meeting between Jacob and Esau take place?

Why did Esau have four hundred men with him?

What did Jacob do when he saw his brother coming? and why?
 What do you think his motive was? Give reason for your answer.
 Was Jacob better equipped to meet Esau after his experience with the angel? Give reasons for your answer.
 What happened when the two brothers met?
 Why would Esau make the first demonstration of a desire for reconciliation?
 Why is it usually more difficult to get the aggressor to make things right, than the one who suffers the wrong?

The Homage of Jacob's Family

Why do you suppose Jacob did not mention his family to Esau when he sent Paddan-aram?
 What characterized Jacob's response to Esau's inquiry regarding his family?

What training had the children evidently received?
 What is the value of such training?

Jacob's Gift to Esau

What was Jacob's motive in offering the gift?
 In what did the present consist?
 Was there anything morally wrong in giving and receiving the present? Give reasons for your answer.
 What do you think of the sincerity of the two men regarding it?
 Why was Jacob so insistent on Esau's taking the present?
 Is there any evidence that Esau had undergone a great moral change?
 Under what circumstances did the two brothers part?
 Where did each one of them then go?
 Where was the land of Seir?
 What further information do we have regarding Esau?

Lesson VII—November 15, 1959

JACOB WORSHIPS JEHOVAH

Lesson Text

Gen. 35: 1-15

1 And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth'-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, who appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of E'-sau thy brother.

2 Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the foreign gods that are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your garments:

3 And let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.

4 And they gave unto Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hand, and the rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by She'-chem.

5 And they journeyed: and a terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

6 So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Ca'-naan (the same is Beth'-el), he and all the people that were with him.

7 And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth'-el; because there God was revealed unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother.

8 A n d Deb'-o-rah Re-bek'-ah's nurse died, and she was buried below Beth -el under the oak: and the name of it was called Al'-lon-bac-uth.

9 And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came from Pad'-dan-a-ram, and blessed him.

10 And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Is'-ra-el shall be thy name: and he called his name Is'-ra-el.

11 And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins;

12 And the land which I gave unto Abraham and I'-saac, to thee I will give it. and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.

13 And God went up from him in the place where he spake with him.

14 And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he spake with him. a pillar of stone: and he poured out a drink-offering thereon, and poured oil thereon.

15 And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him. Beth'-el.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name."* (Gen. 35: 10.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gen. 35: 16-28.

Daily Bible Readings

November 9. M..... Bethel, House of God (Judges 20: 17, 18)
 November 10. T..... Jacob Names Bethel (Gen. 28: 18-22)
 November 11. W..... Jacob's Marriages (Gen. 29: 21-30)
 November 12. T..... Story of Jacob's Family (Gen. 29: 1-20)
 November 13. F..... Jacob's Love for Joseph (Gen. 37: 1-4)
 November 14. S..... Jacob Sojourns in Egypt (Gen. 46: 1-34)
 November 15. S..... Jacob Blesses His Sons (Gen. 49: 1-33)

TIME.—Probably about 1738 B.C.

PLACE.—Shechem and Bethel.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Jacob, and his family.

Introduction

When Jacob returned from Paddan-aram to the land of Canaan, he settled in Shechem, after a time spent in Succoth. that is, Booths, so called because Jacob "made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth." (Gen. 33: 17.) It appears that his destination was Shechem: "And Jacob came in peace to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram; and encamped before the city. And he bought the parcel of ground where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred pieces of money. And he erected there an altar, and called it El-Elohe-Israel," that is, God, *the God of Israel*, see margin. (Gen. 33: 18-20.)

It was in Shechem that Jacob's daughter Dinah was defiled, which resulted in her being given to Hamor's son Shechem to wife, on condition that the men of the city submit to circumcision. See 34: 15-17. Shechem and his father reported this to their people, along with the picture of what the gain in material wealth to them would be, and the men of the city readily agreed and were circumcised. "And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of

Jacob, Simeon and Levi. Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city unawares, and slew all the males. And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went forth." (34: 25, 26. See also verses 27-29.)

This treachery and cruelty on the part of Simeon and Levi played an important part in their later history. Cf. Gen. 49: 5-7. It appears that this action, along with Reuben's sin (35: 22), caused Jacob to pass over all three of these older sons, and give the birthright and its accompanying blessings to Judah his fourth son. Jacob's own irritated feeling, following the slaughter in Shechem, is revealed in these words: "And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me, to make me odious to the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and smite me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house." (Gen. 34: 30.) There is nothing in the record which seems to indicate that Jehovah approved the deeds of Simeon and Levi, but it does appear that the incident was used as the occasion to have Jacob move on to Beth-el.

The Golden Text

Comments on this part of the lesson will be made when it is reached in the body of the lesson.

The Text Explained

The Removal to Beth-el

(Gen. 35: 1-5)

And God said unto Jacob. Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there:

and make there an altar unto God, who appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. The crises which had come

into the life of Jacob while living in Shechem made it necessary for a change to be made; and, being himself unable to know just what to do, God graciously comes to his rescue. Jacob's sojourn among the worldly people of the land had brought him nothing but trouble; and the time had now arrived, in the providence of God, when he must separate himself from them, and return to a closer fellowship with Jehovah. Beth-el was about thirty miles south of Shechem. In Beth-el Jacob would not only be freed from the painful associations of Shechem, but would be established in a place which would tend to revive the most delightful and sublime memories which had ever been his.

In addition to the divine call, there seems to have been a personal reason why Jacob and his family should leave the environs of Shechem. It had probably been about ten years since the family had come from Paddan-aram, and during all that time they had been in an atmosphere which made it impossible for them to gain a true view of their real moral and spiritual condition. This is a lesson that parents, especially, and other mature members of a household should learn. It is exceedingly difficult to impress the realities of spiritual religion upon children and young people who are brought up in an atmosphere of worldliness, even though they may be regular in their attendance at the place of worship week by week. Six days of worldliness is much too powerful in the influence which is exerted, for it to be counteracted by the spiritual forces of a single day—the Lord's day.

Furthermore, Beth-el was the place where Jehovah appeared to Jacob, and announced to him that the promises which had been made to Abraham and Isaac would find their fulfillment in him and his seed. That had been many years before, at least thirty, if not fifty, depending upon the length of time he stayed in Paddan-aram; and it frequently happens that early impressions are greatly dimmed through the lapse of time. This had been, to a large degree, true of Jacob; and he is now to be reminded of what happened at Beth-el when he fled from the angry

Esau, and to establish himself there for a renewal of the covenant.

Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the foreign gods that are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your garments: Whatever may be said about Jacob's stay in Shechem, it will have to be admitted that he was not fully awake to the pernicious influence of idolatry; and this alone shows how much he needed to go to Beth-el. There does not seem to be any evidence that Jacob himself was engaged in idolatry, but it does appear that he regarded with an easy toleration the practice of his family and domestics. Cf. Gen. 31; 30-35. Most, if not all, of Jacob's servants were Syrians, and were doubtless devotees of the gods in question.

Jacob's determination to leave Shechem in obedience to God's command, may be likened to repentance—it was repentance; and the fruits of that repentance are seen in the reformations which they made. This sweeping purification and renunciation was commanded in order that the covenant made with Jacob when he first went to Beth-el in his flight from Esau might be confirmed in the same place, and also extended to include his entire household. It appears that the bodily cleansing and the change of apparel were intended to teach the need of atonement and sanctification.

And let us arise, and go up to Beth-el: and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. It appears that Jacob was thoroughly aroused to the urgency of the situation. It is interesting to note the number of altars which he built, in contrast with his father, and in comparison with his grandfather. He gratefully acknowledged that which God had done for him. It is natural to understand "the day of my distress" as being the time of his original visit to Beth-el; but it could, of course, be extended to include other times, such as his experience at the Jabbok.

And they gave unto Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hand, and the rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. The

ear-rings were evidently amulets or charms which had been consecrated to some god, and they, along with the foreign gods were discarded. It is interesting to note throughout the Bible that the more spirituality one has, the less use he has for such ornaments. Cf. 1 Tim. 2: 9, 10; 1 Pet. 3: 3, 4. In commenting on the passage now before us, W. H. Griffith Thomas has this to say, which should be carefully considered.

"Surrender is the supreme secret and condition of spiritual blessing. As long as there is any mental or moral reservation, there cannot be any real satisfaction in the soul, strength in the character, or service for God. It is noteworthy that there are certain things in connection with the spiritual life that must be entirely given up and destroyed, for it is impossible to sanctify or consecrate them. They must be buried and left behind, for they cannot possibly be devoted to the service of God. It is this that gives point to our Lord's well-known words, 'If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off.' There are things that have to be cut off and cannot be consecrated. Books have to be burned. (Acts 19: 19.) Evil habits have to be broken. Sin must be put away. There are things that are beyond all reclamation."

And they journeyed: and a terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob. God had commanded Jacob to move, and he saw to it that he was protected in his obedience. This was nothing less than the special providence of God. The implication is that if the Lord had not thus intervened, the Canaanitish tribes would have banded themselves together in an effort to wreak vengeance upon the departing caravan. Cf. Prov. 16: 7. This supernatural protection must have given great confidence to Jacob.

El-Beth-el (Gen. 35: 6-8)

So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan (the same is Beth-el), he and all the people that were with him. It would be difficult for anyone to describe adequately the memories which flooded the heart of this patriarch as he reviewed the past with all his varied experiences. And how thankful he must have been to

be back in the place which had meant so much to him; and especially since God had expressly told him to return there and dwell. He could therefore be assured of peace, rest, protection, and, most of all, the blessings of the promise. One can almost hear him relate the experiences of his first visit there to his household, as he exhorted them to put their trust in God.

But the time which had elapsed since Jacob first spent the night at Beth-el had seen changes come into the life of Jacob. At the first he was a fleeing fugitive, seeking to escape from the penalties of his own sin; and when night overtook him he made his bed on the bare ground, with a stone for his pillow. But the power of God overshadowed him while he slept, and he saw a vision of the way which leads from earth to heaven, and heard the voice of Jehovah speaking to him. It was in Beth-el that God claimed Jacob, and it was there on the morrow that Jacob gave himself up in covenant and vow to Jehovah.

But as Jacob returns to Beth-el, he comes as a shepherd chieftain, rich in flocks and herds and children. He had lived the intervening years in toil, disappointment, and success. His early self-surrender had not been fully kept. The duplicity which undermined his brother and caused his flight still clung to him in the land of the Syrians; and it was only after severe discipline that he was finally cured of his besetting sin. This lesson should mean much to us; for God never forsakes us, any more than he forsook Jacob. Even though we are at times faithless, he follows us where we wander, and abides with us when we stop; and he still goes on patiently to finish his work. This is the true meaning of discipline.

And he built there an altar, and he called the place El-beth-el; because there God was revealed unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother. There is an interesting contrast which should be noted here. When Jacob built the altar in Shechem, he called it "El-Elohe-Israel," that is, *God, the God of Israel*. This altar therefore bore witness to God's relation to Jacob. But in Beth-el, Jacob himself does not enter into the picture; it is "*El-beth-el* the *God of the house of God*. It is in-

teresting to note the place which the term "el" occupies in the life of Jacob. It would be a profitable exercise if some member of the class were assigned the task of collecting all the information which the Bible contains on this subject.

And Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried below Beth-el under the oak; and the name of it was called Allon-bacuth. Deborah was presumably the same nurse who was mentioned in Gen. 24: 59, and who was assigned to Rebekah as she left her home to go to Isaac in Canaan; and if this is true, then she was probably the only person in Jacob's household, other than Jacob himself, who was living on the occasion of both visits to Beth-el. Rebekah, who planned Jacob's deception of his father, and who advised his flight to Paddan-aram, was never mentioned again in the Bible, except for her burial (no mention is made of the time of her death); and this fact has led some Bible students to think that it is indicative of God's displeasure with her. This, of course, is beyond the realm of human knowledge.

God Blesses Jacob and Renews the Covenant

(Gen. 35: 9-15)

And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. It is not certain as to when the former appearance was made (the term "again" suggests one or more), whether at Peniel, where he wrestled with the angel, or at Shechem; but from the circumstances mentioned in the following verse, it would appear that reference was primarily to Peniel. See Gen. 32: 22-32.

And God said unto him. Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. This change in name was first mentioned when Jacob wrestled with the angel, as he was coming back to the land of his fathers; and now that he has reached the place where Jehovah told him to dwell, the change is confirmed. Such a change in name usually indicates advancement, and that was certainly true in the case of Jacob. This latter name meant supplanter, or heel-catcher. See Gen. 25: 24-26, and

the marginal reading. This younger son of Isaac and Rebekah lived up to that name until his return from Paddan-aram; and then, as a new life was opened to him his name was changed to "Israel" which linked him directly with God—the term "el" means God.

And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins: and the land which I gave unto Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. When Jehovah appeared to Abram to announce the covenant which he would make with him, and to foretell the birth of his son Isaac, he did so under the name "God Almighty," or *El Shaddai*, the All-Powerful God, or the God who has the ability to do that which he pledges himself to do. Isaac used the expression when he blessed Jacob and sent him to Paddan-aram (Gen. 28: 3); and Jacob himself referred to God's appearance to him at Luz (Beth-el) when Joseph and his two sons came to see his father during his final illness (Gen. 48: 3.) The promises which were made to Abraham and Isaac were here repeated for Jacob; and Jehovah wanted him to know that he had the power to fulfil them, and that he would do just that.

And God went up from him in the place where he spake with him. That which happened here was not merely a vision or a strong mental impression. God, no doubt in the person of an angel, actually talked with Jacob: and when he had finished speaking with him, he ascended back to heaven.

And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he spake with him, a pillar of stone: and he poured out a drink-offering thereon, and poured oil thereon. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Beth-el. The patriarch observed the same ceremony with which he consecrated the place during his first visit there with the addition of the drink-offering. The pillar was to commemorate the appearance of God to him, the drink-offering to express his gratitude to God, and the oil to consecrate the

pillar. Jamieson notes that the whole scene was in accordance with the character of the patriarchal dispensation, in which the great truths of

religion were exhibited to the senses, and were taught by the fathers in a manner suited to the weakness of the infantile condition of the race.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Where did Jacob and his family first settle in Canaan?

What did he do soon after arriving there?

What tragedy occurred while they lived there?

How was the matter finally settled?

What effect did this treachery have on the later lives of these men?

The Removal to Beth-el

When did Jehovah command Jacob to go to Beth-el and dwell there?

What else did he tell him to do? and why?

What had characterized Jacob's experience in Shechem?

What would a change from Shechem to Beth-el mean to Jacob?

What lesson should parents get from this circumstance?

Why is it so difficult to develop spirituality in an atmosphere of worldliness?

Did Jacob himself personally need the change that Beth-el would afford? Give reasons for your answer.

What command did Jacob give to his household at this time?

Why would he tolerate idols among his people?

What did the sweeping changes which Jacob ordered indicate?

Why did he tell his people to purify themselves, and change their garments?

What did Jacob mean by "the day of my distress"?

How did Jacob's building altars compare

with the work done by Abraham and Isaac?

Why did Jacob's family give him their "ear-rings"?

How are ornaments and spirituality related throughout the Bible?

Why is "surrender" the supreme secret and condition of spiritual blessing?

What are some of the things which cannot be consecrated?

How was God's providence manifested in the move from Shechem to Beth-el?

El-Beth-el

What must have been the feelings of Jacob when he arrived in Beth-el?

Discuss some of the changes which had come in his life since he was first there.

In what way had discipline been effective in Jacob's life?

What is true discipline? Discuss fully.

When Jacob built the altar, what did he call the place?

Discuss the place of "el" in the life of this patriarch.

Who was Deborah? and why was mention made of her here?

God Blesses Jacob and Renews the Covenant

When had Jehovah appeared to Jacob before this?

What is usually implied when a change is made in one's name?

Why did Jehovah speak of himself as "God Almighty"?

Was this appearance real? or only a vision?

In what way did Jacob commemorate and consecrate the appearance and place?

Lesson VIII—November 22, 1959

JOSEPH IS SOLD INTO EGYPT

Lesson Text

Gen. 37: 23-36

23 And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stripped Joseph of his coat, the coat of many colors that was on him;

24 And they took him, and cast him into the pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

25 And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a caravan of Ish'-ma-el-ites was coming from Gil'-e-ad, with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to E'-gypt.

26 And Ju'-dah said unto his brethren,

ren, What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood?

27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ish'-ma-el-ites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother, our flesh. And his brethren hearkened unto him.

28 And there passed by Mid'-i-an-ites, merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ish'-ma-el-ites for twenty pieces of silver. And they brought Joseph into E'-gypt.

29 And Reu'-ben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes.

30 And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?

31 And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a he-goat, and dipped the coat in the blood;

32 And they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their lather, and said, This have we found: know now whether it is thy son's coat or not.

33 And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat: an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without

doubt torn in pieces.

34 And Jacob rent his garments, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

35 And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him: but he refused to be comforted: and he said, For I will go down to She'-ol to my son mourning. And his father wept for him.

36 And the Mid'-i-an-ites sold him into E'-gypt unto Pot'-i-phar, an officer of Pha'-raoh's, the captain of the guard.

Golden Text.—*"And the patriarchs. moved with jealousy against Joseph, sold him into Egypt: and God was with him."* (Acts 7: 9.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalm 133.

Daily Bible Readings

November 16. M.....	Joseph a Dreamer (Gen. 37: 1-11)
November 17. T.....	Solomon's Dream (1 Kings 3: 4-15)
November 18. W.....	Jacob's Grief (Gen. 37: 29-36)
November 19. T.....	Strife Sinful (Col. 3: 18; 4: 1)
November 20. F.....	The Providence of God (Psalm 105: 7-24)
November 21. S.....	Favor of Jehovah (Prov. 3: 1-12)
November 22. S.....	Love Described (1 Cor. 13: 1-13)

TIME.—1728 B.C.

Place.—Dothan and Egypt.

Persons.—Joseph, his brethren, the merchantmen, and Potiphar.

Introduction

The story of Joseph is one of those immortal narratives which have been of deepest interest to all classes of readers for more than thirty centuries, and there is every reason to expect that it will continue so as long as time shall last. It is said that with the sole exception of that of Abraham, the story of Joseph occupies more space than any other personal narrative in the Old Testament Scriptures. One of the chief reasons for the unusual interest in the story of Joseph is the fact that his life contained all the elements of true greatness. The average person is not particularly interested in a life which is all sunshine, happiness, and success. True greatness does not come until one has experienced the fires of pain, and his soul has felt the touch of iron.

When one reads the story of Joseph, he will soon realize that all the elements of a great story were part and parcel of his life—youth, ambition, beauty, temptation, sorrow, suffering, jealousy, hate, and forgiveness. The whole story of Joseph, from the time we see him going to

visit his brothers, as they were feeding their father's flock, and onward, is one of divine providence. No one can read this delightful narrative without seeing the hand of God as he cares for and develops his own, and endeavors through benevolent discipline to bring the wayward into the fold.

Joseph was the son of Jacob and his beloved Rachel, and it was no doubt because of his mother that Joseph became the favorite of his father; and it is likely that little harm would have come of that relationship, had Jacob not been unwise in the manifestation of his preference. One would think that the recollection of his own experience might have kept him from falling into such a mistake. He might have asked himself how he felt about his father's preference for Esau, and what good came from his mother's favoritism for him. But he apparently forgot the consequences of the folly of his own parents, and repeated the same mistake himself. But such is life.

The Golden Text

And the patriarchs, moved with jealousy against Joseph, sold him into Egypt: and God was with him. This passage is taken from Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin. His purpose was to recount the circumstances which resulted in the bringing of the family of Jacob into Egypt. He did this by showing that it was through the one whom his brethren rejected that salvation was finally brought to all the Israelites; and that, of course, was a direct parallel of that which happened in the case of Christ. People have a habit of rejecting the very thing which God has ordained for their good; and it seems that they will never learn better.

"Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a coat of many colors. And his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren: and they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. . . . And his brethren envied him." (Gen. 37: 3, 4, 11a.) By comparing this quotation with the golden text it will be seen that both "envy" and "jealousy" characterized the feeling of the brothers toward Joseph. *Envy* is a selfish and unfriendly grudging of

that which another enjoys, while *jealousy* is to be apprehensive of being displaced by a rival in affection or favor. The two words are practical synonyms, and are so used with reference to Joseph.

When envy has fully formed its purpose of cruelty, it quickly sees and seizes an opportunity for carrying it through. The cause for the envy of Joseph's brethren is fully set forth in the first part of the chapter from which our lesson today is taken. And as the story unfolds itself, we can see that the brothers soon had the opportunity of working their will upon him. "Revenge is sweet," is a saying with which most people are familiar; and whether we are willing to admit it or not, it is true that most of us like at least a little of it. Perish the thought that we ourselves would personally and directly inflict it, but if our enemies could, in some way or another, be tripped up and fall at least part of the way into the pit, we should not experience any great sorrow or distress of the soul because of it. This, of course, is directly opposed to the spirit of Christ. Sec Rom. 12: 19-21; cf. Prov. 20: 22: 24: 29; 25: 21ff.

The Text Explained

The Process at Work

(Gen. 37: 23-28)

And it came to pass, when Joseph came unto his brethren, that they stripped Joseph of his coat, the coat of many colors that was on him; It is well to keep in mind the fact that Jacob's twelve sons were the children of four different mothers—all the women living in the same household at the same time, until the untimely death of Rachel, who was, and had always been, Jacob's favorite wife. From the facts which may be gathered from the history of this family, it appears that Joseph's half-brothers did not hesitate to disregard the feelings and wishes of anyone who stood in their way; and especially if they did not like him.

Joseph, as we have already seen, was the son of Jacob's old age, and of his beloved Rachel, and that, coupled with the fact that he was motherless, would make him a welcome companion of his father; and

being no doubt wise for his years, his father bestowed upon him a coat which would mark him as a youth of distinction or superiority. But instead of pleasing his brethren, this mark of favoritism embittered them; and this feeling of resentment was further aggravated by Joseph's report to their father of their sinful conduct, and by telling the dreams which he had had involving not only the brothers, but his father and mother as well.

The brothers of Jacob were away from home at the time of this lesson. They had gone to Shechem to feed their father's flock, which was some sixty miles from their home in Hebron. When Joseph reached Shechem, he was unable to find his brothers, and when a certain man found him wandering in the field, and learned why he was there, he told him that he had heard them say, "Let us go to Dothan." Joseph therefore "went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan," a few miles

farther north. The conspiracy which the brothers plotted against Joseph is set forth in the verses immediately preceding the lesson text.

Adam Clarke thinks that the probable reason for stripping Joseph of his coat of many colors was to keep him from being recognized as a person of distinction, and there would therefore be no inquiry made regarding him, should he be seen by strangers. It is also possible that the brothers hated the coat, just as they hated Joseph; and they did not want him to have the pleasure of wearing it.

And they took him, and cast him into the pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. Some of the brothers wanted to kill Joseph on the spot, but "Reuben heard it, and delivered him out of their hand, and said, Let us not take his life. And Reuben said unto them. Shed no blood; cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but lay no hand upon him: that he might deliver him out of their hand, to restore him to his father." (Verses 21, 22.) The pit or cistern was one of many in Palestine. and which, when dry, were sometimes used as a prison, as in the case of Jeremiah. Cf. Jer. 38: 6. William M. Taylor quotes Lieutenant Anderson, of the Palestine Exploration Enterprise, as saying,

"The numerous rock-hewn cisterns that are found everywhere would furnish a suitable pit in which they might have thrust him; and as these cisterns are shaped like a bottle, with a narrow mouth, it would be impossible for any one imprisoned within it to extricate himself without assistance. These cisterns are now all cracked and useless; they are, however, the most undoubted evidences that exist of the handiwork of the inhabitants in ancient times."

And they sat down to eat bread: It would be difficult to find an expression which would describe in a more forceful manner the brutish and diabolic nature of the ruthless souls of these brothers. Their hatred of Joseph must have had a deeper seat than the envy because of their father's favoritism, and the resentment of Joseph's dreams. The excellent character of their younger brother must have been a constant censure upon theirs, and on account of which they found that they could

never be at ease until they had rid themselves of his hated presence. Cf. 1 John 3: 12.

And they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother, our flesh. And his brethren hearkened unto him. And there passed by Midianites, merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they brought Joseph into Egypt. It will be noted that the merchantmen are called both Ishmaelites and Midianites. both descendants of Abraham. Ishmael was the son of Hagar, while Midian was the son of Keturah. This caravan was evidently made up of men from both tribes, and they were probably travelling together for greater safety.

The sight of these travelling merchants brought about a sudden turn in the views of these conspirators. It appears that they did not care to commit a greater crime than was necessary to accomplish their purpose; and since selling Joseph into slavery would get him out of their sight, they readily approved of Judah's suggestion. These brothers evidently understood that these merchants dealt in slaves, and they felt that they could make an immediate sale; and they, accordingly, had the victim ready by the time the caravan reached them. The twenty pieces of silver would be about fifteen dollars in our money. It appears from Josephus and other writers that the price of a slave in Egypt was thirty pieces of silver, and if this is correct, then the merchants made a profit of ten pieces in their transaction.

Crime and Deception

(Gen. 37: 29-33)

And Reuben returned unto the pit: and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not: and I, whither shall I go? Reuben apparently was not present when the caravan arrived

and Joseph was sold; and from what is said in the text one would gather that he returned to the pit without the others knowing about it. This would be in keeping with his intention to rescue Joseph and restore him to his father. See verse 22. It is natural to infer from Gen. 42: 21, 22 that Reuben was told of their deed, and that he acquiesced in their plot to deceive their father. If Reuben had been more determined in his effort to save Joseph, he might have succeeded; but he seems to have been true to his character, "boiling over as water," or "unstable as water," as the Authorized Version has it.

And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a he-goat, and dipped the coat in the blood; and they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father, and said, This have we found: know now whether it is thy son's coat or not. These wicked brothers apparently found that it was to their advantage that they did not allow Joseph to wear his coat of many colors into bondage. Not only would it have aroused suspicion, and perhaps prevented the sale: but it could now be used by them to cover up their sin.

The commission of one sin on the part of those whose hearts are evil necessarily leads to another in an effort to conceal the first one. The scheme of deception which the sons of Jacob planned and practiced on their aged father was a necessary consequence of the atrocious crime which they had committed. One can almost detect their sneer when they said, "Know now whether it is *thy son's coat* or not." Jacob, as well as Joseph, must suffer as a result of their cruel vengeance. This merciless deed can be described only as deliberate cruelty to torture the feelings of their aged father, and thus harrow up his soul, as Clarke expresses it.

And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces. The probability is that the brothers had reduced the coat to shreds, in addition to dipping it in blood, so that it would better appear that a vicious beast had attacked Joseph. And what must a father's heart have felt in such a case! He could picture the body of his son in

the same condition as the tattered coat.

Unallayed Grief

(Gen. 37: 34-36)

And Jacob rent his garments, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. These were the common symbols of Oriental mourning. It appears that a rent was made in the garment according to the afflicted feelings of the mourner, and a course piece of black sackcloth or camel's hair cloth was placed around the waist.

It might be well to observe here that Jacob's grief would have been no more genuine, had Joseph actually been dead. This circumstance proves that a lie, if believed, has the same effect on a man's mind that would have resulted, had the story been true. This should be an impressive lesson to those who depend upon their feelings as evidence of their salvation. People should *feel* that they are right because they *know* they have done that which is commanded, instead of knowing (?) that they are right because they *feel* good.

And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down to Sheol to my son mourning. And his father wept for him. So far as the record goes, Jacob had only one daughter, Dinah; so the reference must have been also to his daughters-in-law, and his granddaughters. When the text says that all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, that means that the sons who committed the crime against Joseph were included. Instead of remaining silent and saying nothing about the disappearance of Joseph, they pretend that he was dead, and extend their sympathy and seek to comfort their father. One has only to read the closing chapters of Genesis in order to see what the effect of this hypocrisy had in their later lives.

When Jacob said that he would go down to Sheol to his son mourning, he was not speaking of the grave, as the King James Version has it, but to the realm of departed spirits. Sheol in the Old Testament is the same as Hades in the New Testament. The body of Joseph had been destroyed, as Jacob thought, but he knew that his soul had not been

touched, and he would therefore meet him in the spirit world.

And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, the captain of the guard. As the caravan neared the land of Egypt, Joseph no doubt kept wondering what would happen to him; but he did not have to wait long; for he was soon exposed for sale in the open slave market. Any one who views this scene intelligently can

only abhor the very thought of human slavery. It was a pitiful plight in which Joseph found himself—facing the peering looks of possible purchasers, and then finally led away by a total stranger who called him his property. But Joseph still belonged to God, and regardless of where he might be, and under what circumstances he might have to serve, he would remain true to his heavenly Father.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What can you say of the story of Joseph from the standpoint of general interest?

What is the reason for this great interest?

What are the elements of true greatness?

How is the life of Joseph related to Divine providence?

In what peculiar family relationship did Joseph find himself?

Why would Jacob make the mistake of showing favoritism, in view of his own boyhood home-life?

The Golden Text

Who were the "patriarchs" who sold Joseph?

Why do people continuously reject that which God has chosen for them?

Why were Joseph's brethren envious of him?

Discuss "envy" and "jealousy" in the lives of people.

What happens when envy forms its purpose?

Why should Christians seek to be free from the thoughts of envy?

The Process at Work

Give a general idea of the home-life of Jacob's sons.

Why did Jacob give Joseph a coat of many colors?

Discuss the various traits in Joseph which his brothers resented.

How did Joseph come to be with his brothers at the time of this lesson?

How did they greet Joseph on his arrival?

Why would they want to remove his coat from him?

Why did they put him in the pit? and what kind of a pit?

What is implied in the expression "and they sat down to eat bread"?

How can you account for such cruelty?

What circumstance caused them to change their minds about Joseph?

Who were these merchantmen?

Why would the brothers so readily agree to Judah's suggestion?

What was the sale price? and why that amount?

Crime and Deception

Why was Reuben so upset when he failed to find Joseph in the pit?

Why didn't he tell his father what happened?

Why would the sons want to deceive their father?

How could they be so cruel?

What was Jacob's verdict regarding the coat?

Unallayed Grief

How did Jacob manifest his grief?

Why will faith in a falsehood produce the same result as faith in the truth?

What should cause people to feel that they are right?

Why would these wicked sons try to comfort their father in his grief?

What effect will such hypocrisy have on such people?

Where did Jacob say he would go to his son mourning?

What did the merchantmen do with Joseph when they reached Egypt?

What must have been his feeling there?

What is your reaction toward human slavery?

Lesson IX—November 29, 1959

JOSEPH MADE RULER OF EGYPT

Lesson Text

Gen. 41: 46-57

46 And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pha'-raoh king of E'-gypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pha'-raoh, and went throughout all the land of E'-gypt.

47 And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by

handfuls.

48 And he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of E'-gypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same.

49 And Joseph laid up grain as the

sand of the sea, very much, until he left off numbering; for it was without number.

50 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the year of famine came, whom As'e-nath, the daughter of Pot-i-phe'-ra priest of On, bare unto him.

51 And Joseph called the name of the first-born Ma-nas'-seh: For, *said he*, God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

52 And the name of the second called he E'-phra-im: For God hath made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.

53 And the seven years of plenty, that was in the land of E-gypt, came to an end.

54 And the seven years of famine

began to come, according as Joseph had said: and there was famine in all lands; but in all the land of E-gypt there was bread.

55 And when all the land of E-gypt was famished, the people cried to Pha'-raoh for bread: and Pha'-raoh said unto all the E-gyp'tians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.

56 And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the E-gyp'tians; and the famine was sore in the land of E'-gypt.

57 And all countries came into E-gypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was sore in all the earth.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings.*" (Prov, 22: 29a.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 105: 16-22

Daily Bible Readings

November 23. M.....	Joseph in Slavery (Gen. 39: 1-6)
November 24. T.....	Joseph Is Faithful in Temptation (Gen. 39: 7-20)
November 25. W.....	Joseph Is Faithful in Prison (Gen. 39: 21-23)
November 26. T.....	Joseph Interprets Dreams (Gen. 41: 1-24)
November 27. F.....	The Reward of Diligence (Deut. 11: 13-17)
November 28. S.....	A Good Conscience (1 Pet. 3: 8-17)
November 29. S.....	Avoiding Temptation (Prov. 4: 10-18)

TIME.—1715 B.C.

PLACE.—The Land of Egypt.

PERSONS.—Pharaoh, Joseph, and the Egyptians.

Introduction

There is nothing in the history of Joseph which does not make interesting and profitable reading; and it is hardly necessary to urge serious-minded students to read the entire account of this ancient worthy in preparation for class work in this series. We are not informed as to the length of time Joseph served Potiphar as the overseer of his house before he was cast into prison, as the result of a malicious falsehood which his master's wife told her husband; but the one thing which stands out clearly throughout the entire history of Joseph is that Jehovah was with him. See Gen. 39: 20, 21. It was not long after Joseph was placed in the prison until the other prisoners were committed to his care.

It was during the time that Joseph was in prison that his ability to interpret dreams was made known, although it was two full years before the matter became the knowledge of

responsible officials. The chief butler and the chief baker offended Pharaoh, and were placed "in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound." These men were also committed to Joseph's care, and continued a season in ward. While they were there both of these men had a dream which troubled them, and Joseph, their watchful attendant, seeing that something was wrong, asked them why they looked so sad. After learning that they were disturbed because of their dreams, he asked that they tell him what they were, and he promptly gave their correct interpretation. It is difficult to understand why the chief butler remained silent regarding this matter after his restoration, but it was not until Pharaoh became disturbed about his own dreams that the chief butler remembered his own faults. See Gen. 41: 9.

When the chief butler disclosed his information regarding Joseph, events moved rapidly; and it was not long until Joseph was in the presence of Pharaoh, and was telling him the meaning of his dreams. Following the interpretation, Joseph made some wise recommendations, which resulted in his becoming the Prime

Minister of Egypt. A few hours before he was in prison, with his prospects for the future both vague and uncertain. Suddenly he finds himself the most powerful man in Egypt, apart from Pharaoh himself; and he bent his head respectfully when Pharaoh placed the golden chain around his neck.

The Golden Text

"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings." Mankind has been endowed by his Maker with many and varied traits and capacities, and a character which is based upon these natural endowments is recognized in the Scriptures. The Lord does not glorify men simply because of their beauty and strength, and great mental powers; but the Bible does take note of the fact that these characteristics, when properly used, may be turned to the good of men and the glory of God. This was characteristic of Joseph.

As the golden text implies, there must be diligence in the use of these natural endowments, if proper recognition is to be had and adequate blessings enjoyed. It is not enough for one to be satisfied with the possession of certain mental and physical capacities and faculties; they must be put to their proper use. This requires discipline and diligence. The man who is careless and indifferent, and who disregards the opportunities which come to him, must suffer the stigma of foolishness and be deprived of the blessings which could have been his. The paragraph which immediately precedes our lesson text for today is a splendid commentary on the golden text.

"And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he set him over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On. And Joseph went out over the land of Egypt." (Gen. 41; 37-45.)

The Text Explained

The Years of Prosperity

(Gen. 41: 46-49)

And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. We gather from Gen. 37: 2 that Joseph was seventeen years old, or thereabout, when he was sold into Egypt; and since he was thirty when he was made ruler over the land of the Pharaohs, he had been in that country about thirteen years. We have no way of knowing just how long he remained in prison, but it was certainly more than two years.

Cf. Gen. 41: 1. Joseph, as already noted, was falsely accused and unjustly imprisoned, but that did not keep him from trusting in God and making a model prisoner.

Trials may be viewed from two standpoints, and the viewpoint which we adopt will make all the difference in our spiritual progress and peace of mind. From the human side Joseph's suffering was the result of injustice on the part of Potiphar's wife, and the ingratitude of the chief butler; but from the Divine side these

experiences were used in training Joseph for the work which lay ahead of him, both in administering the affairs of Egypt, and in dealing with his own brethren. If one looks only at the human side of trials, he is likely to become irritated and discouraged, and even angered; but if he will view the matter from the Divine side, he will eventually be able to see the hand of God, and will be made to realize that all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. The expressions "stood before Pharaoh" and "the presence of Pharaoh" imply the close relationship which Joseph had with the monarch. To stand in his presence indicated that Joseph had the privilege of going to the very throne of Pharaoh, and of enjoying the king's unlimited confidence. And it was so, that when Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, he simply left the seat of government, and travelled throughout the country itself. His purpose, no doubt, was to survey the situation which was before him, and to formulate plans for putting into practice his recommendations to the king.

And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. It is not entirely clear as to what is meant by "handfuls," but the probable reference is to the great abundance of the harvest, and to the fact that the grain was taken into the hand when it was cut by the sickle.

And he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. It is easy to see that Joseph operated upon the principle of economy. The only proper way to provide for the future is to economize in the present; for it is certain that waste in the plentiful years will bring want during the time of famine. It is the waste of our abundance which breeds want and poverty. Joseph demonstrated that by proper management the produce of the earth is sufficient to supply the needs of all men, taking years of plenty and years of scarcity together. It is the will of God that we should

learn how to manage our substance, so that in the years of plenty there shall be no waste, in order that in the years of famine there shall be no lack. It would be well for people to think of this before they charge God with the failure to keep his promise when people are hungry.

And Joseph laid, up grain as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left off numbering; for it was without number. This tremendous program of caring for the surplus grain, so that it would be available for later use, required great industry and patience on the part of Joseph. A vast amount of planning and preparation had to be undertaken, contracts had to be made, and transportation had to be provided. But Joseph had his authority from Pharaoh, and the work went on without interruption.

Seven years was a long time to follow a single goal, and especially where there did not appear to be any need; but Joseph had faith in God, and he had learned to wait. He had already waited thirteen years for his own dreams to begin to be fulfilled, and he certainly had the patience to wait seven years longer. It was very likely that the people of Egypt were blinded by their great prosperity, and it would be natural for them to think that Joseph was a visionary dreamer. But he had long since been accustomed to that kind of an attitude, and he lived long enough to see his faith and patience rewarded.

It appears that at the beginning, and probably for considerable time, efforts were made to keep track of the amount of grain which was stored; but at length the quantity became so great that they gave up trying to keep a formal register. Jamieson notes that it appears from the paintings that the Egyptians officers kept an account of the quantity of grain stored in the magazines, for at the side of the windows of one of them there are figures indicating the amount deposited in that storehouse.

The Birth and Names of Joseph's Two Sons

(Gen. 41: 50-52)

And unto Joseph were born two sons before the year of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-phera priest of On, bare unto him. These domestic events increased his

temporal happiness, and they had a profound effect upon his character, as may be seen later on in this study; and it will be interesting to see the part which the descendants of these two sons played in the history of the children of Israel.

And Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh: For, said he, God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath made me fruitful in the land of my affliction. Bible students have had difficulty in giving a satisfactory explanation as to the exact reason which prompted Joseph in naming his sons as he did. Many commentators argue that what is said here is not to be taken literally; that Joseph did not actually mean that God had enabled him to forget his father's house. Instead, he now could view things from a new standpoint, that of his own home, rather than that of his father's. Clarke thinks that he meant that God had enabled him to forget all his toil, disgrace, and affliction, and had made him fruitful in the land in which he had suffered the greatest misfortune and indignities. But whatever Joseph had in mind, his acts here should be interpreted in the light of his conduct when his brothers came to Egypt to buy grain.

McGarvey calls attention to Joseph's hopes for deliverance from Egyptian bondage when his father heard what had happened to his beloved son; but when the years passed and no word from his father had been received, and perhaps knowing of the avaricious spirit which characterized his father during his earlier days, and thinking that maybe the old feeling had returned, with the effect that Jacob loved money more than he loved his son, it was natural for his attitude towards his father's house to change. McGarvey continues,

"And when that feeling took possession of him, did he want to see his father any more? Or any of them? Could he bear the thought of ever seeing those brothers again? And could he at last bear the thought of seeing that father who had allowed him to perish, as it were, without stretching out a hand to help him. The way he did feel is seen in one

little circumstance. When he was married and had his first-born son placed before him, he named him Manasseh, *forgetfulness*, 'Because,' he says, 'God has enabled me to forget my father's house.' The remembrance of home and brothers and father had been a source of constant pain to him; he could never think of them without agony of heart; but now, thank God, I have forgotten them."

The Stark Realities of Famine

(Gen. 41: 53-57)

And the seven years of plenty, that was in the land of Egypt, came to an end. And the seven years of famine began to come, according as Joseph had said: and there was famine in all lands: but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. It often takes the facts of reality to bring people to the realization that what God says is true; and if we are wise today we will get the lesson. This was a temporal experience in the lives of the people of Egypt. They had been told of what to expect, but they were not willing to heed the warning. We are told of what to expect at the last day, but are we any wiser than the Egyptians were? See Rom. 15: 4; 1 Cor. 10: 11.

And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried unto Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; and what he saith to you, do. And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the store-houses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine was sore in the land of Egypt. Joseph indeed may be called the saviour of Egypt; and in order that we may have some idea of the terrible privations from which the people were spared through Joseph's instrumentality, we quote from *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible* regarding a similar famine, which occurred in A.D. 1064-1071.

"This famine exceeded in severity all others of modern times, and was aggravated by the anarchy which then ravaged the country. Veheement drought and pestilence (says Es-Suyootee, in his *Hosn el Mohadarah*, MS.) continued for seven consecutive years, so that they [the people] ate corpses, and animals that died of themselves; the cattle per-

ished; a dog was sold for 5 denars, and a cat for 3 denars . . . and an ardebb (about five bushels) of wheat for 100 denars, and then it failed altogether. He adds that all the horses of the Khaleefeh, save three, perished, and gives numerous instances of the straits to which the wretched inhabitants were driven, and of the organized bands of kidnappers who infested Cairo and caught passengers in the streets by ropes furnished with hooks and let down from the houses. This account is confirmed by El-Makreezee (in his *Khitat*), from whom we further learn that the family, and even the women of the Khaleefeh fled, by the

way of Syria, on foot, to escape the peril that threatened all ranks of the population." (Vol. I, p. 811.)

And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was sore in all the earth. It appears that the purpose of this statement is a kind of transition, so that it will be easy to introduce the coming of the sons of Jacob. We should keep in mind, when reading the history of the Old Testament, that the primary purpose in discussing the affairs of other countries was to make the history of the Lord's people intelligible. Joseph had been sent to Egypt to prepare the way for the coming of Jacob and his family.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What impression does the story of Joseph make on Bible readers?
Why does this narrative always make interesting reading?
What attitude and determination always characterized Joseph?
How did Joseph's ability to interpret dreams become known?
Why was this information so long in reaching Pharaoh?
Give the facts which immediately preceded his being called to Pharaoh.
What was the result of this visit to the king?

The Golden Text

With what peculiar endowments did Jehovah bless mankind?
How is it that character can be built upon them?
What use did Joseph make of his endowments?
What is meant by "diligence" and why is it necessary to success?
Show how the golden text was illustrated in the case of Joseph.

The Years of Prosperity

How long had Joseph been in Egypt when he stood before Pharaoh?
How long did he remain in prison? Give reason for your answer.
In what two ways may the trials of life be viewed?
What effect on character does each of these views have? and why?
What was implied in Joseph's going out from the presence of Pharaoh?
What was his purpose in travelling over the land of Egypt?
What is said regarding the seven plentiful years?

What is the meaning of "by handfuls"?
What principle guided Joseph in his preparation for the future?

What important lesson should we learn from the action of Joseph?
Is the law of supply and demand adequate for the needs of humanity? Give reasons for your answer.
How does this principle fit in with the Lord's declaration in Matt. 6:33?
Discuss the magnitude of the program which Joseph put into operation.
Why was he able to hold to his purpose in this respect during the years of great plenty?
What great lessons did Joseph learn by "waiting"?
How was the abundance of the grain which was stored up indicated?

The Birth and Names of Joseph's Two Sons

During what period in Joseph's life were these sons born?
What names did Joseph give these two sons? and why?
What do you think Joseph meant by saying that God had enabled him to forget his father's house? Give reasons for your answer.
What effect did all of this have upon the character of Joseph?

The Stark Realities of Famine

Why are the facts of reality often needed in order to convince people of the truthfulness of God's message?
What is the value of these Old Testament narratives to us?
Do you suppose that the Egyptians were as saving of their part of the harvest, as Joseph was of the part he took for the government?
When the people cried for bread, what did Pharaoh do?
Why is Joseph called the "saviour of Egypt"?
Give some idea of the privations from which the Egyptians were spared through Joseph's wise administration.
What is indicated by the last verse of the lesson text for today?

Lesson X—December 6, 1959

JOSEPH S BRETHREN IN EGYPT

Lesson Text

Gen. 44: 18-34

18 Then Ju'-dah came near unto him, and said, Oh, my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant; for thou art even as Pha'-raoh.

19 My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother?

20 And we said unto my lord. We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother; and his father loveth him.

21 And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.

22 And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die.

23 And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

24 And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.

25 And our father said, Go again, buy us a little food.

26 And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down; for we may not see the man's face, ex-

cept our youngest brother be with us.

27 And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons:

28 And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I have not seen him since:

29 And if ye take this one also from me, and harm befall him, ye will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to She'-ol.

30 Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad is not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life;

31 It will come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not *with us*, that he will die: and thy servants will bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to She'-ol.

32 For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then shall I bear the blame to my father for ever.

33 Now therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.

34 For how shall I go up to my father, if the lad be not with me? lest I see the evil that shall come on my father.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"* (Psalm 133: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 26: 1-7.

Daily Bible Readings

November 30. M.....	Judah, a True Brother (Gen. 44: 18-29)
December 1. T.....	Judah's Self-sacrifice (Gen. 44: 30-34)
December 2. W.....	Reuben Befriends Joseph (Gen. 37: 18-24)
December 3. T.....	Paul, a Friend of Onesimus (Phile. 8-20)
December 4. F.....	Helpfulness Taught (Rom. 15: 1-7)
December 5. S.....	Jonathan's Plea for David (1 Sam. 19: 1-6)
December 6. S.....	Jehovah's Lovingkindness (Psalm 26: 1-7)

TIME.—1707 B.C.

PLACE.—Joseph's house in Egypt.

PERSONS.—Joseph and his brethren, with Judah as speaker.

Introduction

The entire chapters, 42-44 of Genesis, should be read in full before beginning the study of this lesson; and

when once the reading is begun, the thoughtful student will not want to stop until he has finished it. The

family of Jacob was unable to obtain food in their country, and Jacob, upon hearing that there was grain in Egypt, asked ten of his sons to go down there and purchase some needed supplies. He was still grieving for his son Joseph, and was totally unwilling to risk the sending of Benjamin, lest harm should befall him.

In due time the ten brethren were standing before their brother Joseph, whom they did not recognize, but Joseph knew them. When they prostrated themselves before him because of his position as ruler of Egypt, Joseph immediately thought of his dreams which he had related to them before they sold him into Egypt. Joseph then, through a series of strange actions, continued to make his brethren feel that they were entirely unwanted in the land of Egypt. But in these dealings with them he was learning some things about them and their father which he did not know. For example, he learned that Reuben had tried to protect him from their cruel treatment, and that they all recognized their sin against him. He also learned that his father thought

that he had been torn to pieces by a wild beast, and that accounted for his father's making no effort to try to find him. The climax of the revelation which Joseph received regarding his brethren was reached when Judah made the plea which is the basis of our lesson today.

Commentators are not agreed as to the motive which prompted Joseph's treatment of his brethren before he made himself known to them. Many are of the opinion that he was merely trying to find out what kind of men they were at the time of the visits to Egypt, but it is not easy to explain his attitude toward Benjamin in that light. McGarvey thinks that his whole aim was to get rid of his brothers and make certain that they would never visit Egypt again, while he kept his younger brother, who had not wronged him, close by his side. But when a fuller view of the whole picture was unfolded before Joseph, and he saw the hand of God in it all, he promptly acknowledged that fact, and sought an immediate reconciliation with his brethren in whom he had lost confidence.

The Golden Text

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" This passage has been described as one of those bursts of feeling, the truth and beauty of which every human heart immediately recognizes. And the application is not restricted to any particular area, although the psalmist probably had primary reference to the children of Israel who had gathered in Jerusalem for the national festival, such as the passover feast. The psalm from which the golden text is taken is one of the "Songs of the Ascents," which, according to *A New Standard Bible Dictionary*, "may have been used by pilgrims 'going up' to Jerusalem at the annual feasts or songs sung ritually on one of the stairways in or near the temple."

If the original reference was to the Jewish brethren, then the principle is certainly applicable to the Lord's people today. Unity among the Lord's people is a relationship which is pleasing to him, and pleasant and beneficial to those who maintain it. But this type of unity is based en-

tirely upon the Word of God. Unity is oneness—oneness of faith and purpose. It does not consist in a number of incongruous or antagonistic elements brought together into a combination of union. There must be a common spirit of unity animating and permeating those who are thus bound together. Not only does such a relationship please the Lord and benefit those involved, it also has a profound effect upon those who are not directly concerned with it. And, too, if the Lord's people cannot maintain such a state of unity, how can they expect those who are not giving this matter the attention they should to come to the unity of the faith?

But the golden text, as used in this lesson, is intended to apply to the sons of Jacob. We know from their past history that such was not the case. There was anything and everything among them but unity. It seems that most of them were, in one way or another, opposed to Joseph, but they were by no means united among themselves in that opposition. It appears, however, that the long

strain under which they were compelled to live, while keeping the fate of Joseph from their father, and perhaps the mellowing of the years, had brought them closer together. And no one who enters into the spirit of

the narrative can read the account of their reconciliation with Joseph without being brought to tears. The unity which was thus brought about was truly a good and a pleasant relationship.

The Text Explained

Judah's Plea: Based on Facts Which Joseph Knew

(Gen. 44: 18-23)

The plea which Judah made on behalf of Benjamin is one of the most arresting speeches on record; and it is as ingenious as it is pathetic. It can be appreciated properly only in the full light of the story which lies behind it.

"No paraphrase can heighten the effect of Judah's address to Joseph. To *add* would be to diminish its excellence; to attempt to *explain* would be to obscure its beauties; to clothe the ideas in other language than that of Judah, and his translators in our Bible, would ruin its energy, and destroy its influence. It is perhaps one of the most tender, affecting pieces of natural oratory ever spoken or penned; and we need not wonder to find that when Joseph heard it he could not refrain himself, but wept aloud. His soul must have been insensible beyond what is common to human nature, had he not immediately yielded to a speech so delicately tender, and so powerfully impressive. We cannot but deplore the unnatural and unscientific *division* of the narrative in our common Bibles, which obliges us to have recourse to *another chapter* in order to witness the effects which this speech produced on the heart of Joseph."

The thoughtful student will immediately recognize that the plea which Judah made in behalf of Benjamin is based on three things, namely, (1) Facts which Joseph knew; (2) the status of their father; and (3) Judah himself.

Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh, my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger barn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh. Before leaving home, Judah had become surety for Benjamin; and he solemnly promised their father that if he did not bring him back safely, he would bare the blame for ever. The eleven

brothers had made the second trip to Egypt, had been entertained in Joseph's house, had received their grain, and were on their way home, when it was discovered that Joseph's cup was in the sack which Benjamin had.

Bible students are not agreed as to what Joseph's motive was in ordering the cup put into Benjamin's sack, as has already been suggested; but whatever the reason, it furnished the occasion out of which Judah's great speech came. The brothers were so sure that they did not have the cup that they made the rash proposal that whoever had the cup would die, and the others would become the servants of Joseph. The steward who had overtaken them countered with this proposal: "Now also let it be according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my bondsman: and ye shall be blameless." The search was then made, and to their consternation the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. "Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city."

"And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; and he was yet there: and they fell before him on the ground. And Joseph said unto them. What deed is this that ye have done? know ye not that such a man as I can indeed divine? And Judah said. What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's bondmen, both we, and he also in whose hand the cup is found. And he said. Far be it from me that I should do so: the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my bondman; but as for you, get you up in peace unto your father."

In saying, "For thou art even as Pharaoh," Judah was saying that they desired his mercy and dreaded his wrath, just as they did Pharaoh himself. Matthew Henry notes that religion does not destroy good manners,

and that it is prudence to speak obligingly to those at whose mercy we lie. Title of honor, to those who are entitled to them, are not flattering titles.

My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother? And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother; and his father loveth him. Gen. 46: 21 informs us that Benjamin was, at the time they went into Egypt, the father of ten sons. This, of course, implies that Judah did not mean that he was a mere child. But, being the youngest of the twelve sons of Jacob, and being the son of his old age, he had been more or less protected from the ways of the world, and was unaccustomed to the hardships to which the others had been exposed.

Judah, of course, knew what happened to Joseph, but after years of telling their father a lie concerning him, they probably in time came to believe it themselves. At any rate, that would make a good plea to the man whose mercy they sought. The picture he drew was pathetic, and would add pathos to his petition.

And thou saidst unto thy servants. Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. And we said unto my lord. The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. The obvious purpose of Judah in this part of his speech was to plead for mercy on the ground of the grief which would come to their father, should he lose his youngest son, the son of his old age. And, too, Judah and his other brothers could not bear to see the suffering which Jacob would have to undergo, if he should see them return without Benjamin. The grief which they had witnessed for twenty years was about all that even they could bear.

The Status of Their Father

(Gen. 44: 24-32)

And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, Go again, buy us a little food. And we said, We cannot

go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down; for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us. It is well to note the difference in Judah's phraseology when talking to his father, and when talking to Joseph. He told his father that they would "not go down," if Benjamin did not accompany them; but when he was talking to Joseph, he said that he told his father that "we cannot go down." The expression "buy us a little food" is the language of humility and dependence; and was in keeping with the general situation of the times.

And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bear me two sons: and the one went out from me, and I said. Surely he is torn in pieces: and I have not seen him since: and if ye take this one also from me, and harm befall him, ye will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol. Joseph, apparently, had been under the wrong impression regarding his father's attitude toward him, as may be gathered from the name which he gave to his first son. See Gen. 41: 51. And it was from the speech of Judah that he learned the truth regarding his father. He learned that Jacob was under the impression that Joseph was dead; and inasmuch as Joseph and Benjamin were the only sons of his favorite wife Rachel, he was entirely unwilling to allow any chance to be taken regarding the safety and welfare of Benjamin.

Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad is not with us: seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; it will come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants will bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to Sheol. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then shall I bear the blame to my father for ever. This must have been another great revelation to Joseph, since it was Judah himself who took the lead in selling Joseph into slavery. Judah, along with his nine other brothers, had seen the grief of Jacob for Joseph and they had been compelled to live with an accusing conscience for twenty years; and now, if another blow comes to

their father, his grief will be unbearable, and he will therefore die. The brothers were not prepared for Jacob's reaction regarding Joseph; but now, after the years of experience they are fully aware of that which they may expect if Benjamin is retained in Egypt.

Judah Himself

(Gen. 44: 33, 34)

Now therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord: and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, if the lad be not with me? lest I see the evil that shall come on my father. It would be difficult to find, even in the Bible, a more impressive example of the marks of the deepening of character, than the one now under consideration. The hard-hearted Judah, who was willing to sell his brother into bondage, and then lie to his father about it and lead him to think that he had been killed; and further, to allow the father to continue his grief for twenty years with no hope of finding the lost boy, although he was only about two hundred miles away:—this is the man now before us who prefers bondage himself than to see further grief come to his father. There is nothing like the discipline of life to bring out and deepen character: and Judah knew what it meant

to drink from its cup even to the bitterest dregs; but he did not drink in vain.

One of the greatest lesson which we can learn from this whole incident is that God does not choose people for what they are, but for what they are capable of becoming. We may be far away from the Lord, and our lives may be far from promising, but the Lord knows how to bring us to him, if we are willing to submit to his wise and benevolent discipline. Paul understood this principle when he wrote, after quoting from Prov. 3: 11, 12, "It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastening, whereof all have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them; but he for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous, yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness." (Heb. 12: 7-11; cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is it important to read the full scriptural context before beginning the study of this lesson?
Discuss the highlights of the preceding narrative.
What incident caused Joseph to recall his dreams?
Why do people often draw the wrong impression regarding people and things?

The Golden Text

How has this passage of scripture been described? and why?
Under what circumstances was it written?
Why is such a relationship good and pleasant?
What is the benefit of the golden text to us?
Discuss it in the light of Joseph and his brethren.

Judah's Plea: Based on Facts Which Joseph Knew

What is your estimate of the speech which Judah made to Joseph? Why?

What are its natural divisions?
Why should the speech be read often by people who desire to do right?
What prompted Judah to make his plea to Joseph?
When they were accused of stealing the cup, what proposal did they make?
How was their proposition accepted? Why?
Can you describe the emotions which the brothers must have felt when the cup was discovered, and they prepared to return to face Joseph?
What did Judah mean by saying, "For thou art even as Pharaoh"?
Of what facts did Judah remind Joseph? and why?
Why did he speak of Benjamin as a "little one" and a "lad"?
Why did he refer to Joseph as being dead?
What was Judah's purpose in this part of his plea?

The Status of Their Father

What difference is noted in Judah's phraseology as he gave the reasons regarding Benjamin's trip to Egypt?
How did Judah describe the attitude of his father? and what would be the likely effect on Joseph?
What great change could Joseph see in Judah?

Why was this important to Joseph?
 Judah Himself
 Why do you think that Judah changed so radically? Discuss fully.
 What were the major factors which led to his change?
 Why does the Lord often choose people who are so unworthy to occupy places

of great honor and influence?
 What is the importance of this lesson to us?
 What is meant by the Lord's discipline?
 What is the basis of his discipline today?
 What should be our attitude toward it?
 How may we know when we are being disciplined?

Lesson XI—December 13, 1959

JOSEPH FORGIVES HIS BRETHREN

Lesson Text

Gen. 45: 1-15

1 Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

2 And he wept aloud: and the E-gyp'tians heard, and the house of Pha'-raoh heard.

3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into E'-gypt.

5 And now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

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.

14 And he fell upon his brother Ben'-ja-min's neck, and wept; and Ben'-ja-min wept upon his neck.

15 And he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you."* (Eph. 4: 32.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 6: 12-15.

Daily Bible Readings

December 7. M.....	Jesus Teaches Forgiveness (Luke 18: 9-14)
December 8. T.....	Esau Forgave Jacob (Gen. 33: 1-9)
December 9. W.....	God's Forgiveness (Psalm 103: 1-8)
December 10. T.....	The Standard of Forgiveness (Matt. 18: 21-35)
December 11. F.....	Forgiveness with God (Psalm 130: 1-4)
December 12. S.....	Forgiving Enemies (Rom. 12: 14-19)
December 13. S.....	Forgiving Others (Matt. 6: 5-14)

TIME.—1707 B.C.

PLACE.—Joseph's house in Egypt.

PERSONS.—Joseph and his brethren.

Introduction

The term "forgiveness" has been described as the most beautiful word in our language, and, we may add, it is as great as it is beautiful. Love in the Bible is represented as being greater than either faith or hope; but when one considers that in forgiveness love is at work, it is easy to see something of the greatness of forgiveness. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray for forgiveness he told them to do something which meets a demand that is just as universal as the petition for one's daily bread. The whole Bible, in fact, was written on the assumption that all men are sinners, and therefore in need of forgiveness. Cf. Rom. 3: 10, 23. Many people may not be very sensitive about their sin, but that does not in any way remove their guilt. All men are sinners, and as such they need the forgiveness which is made possible only by God's great love for the human race.

When Alexander Pope said, "To err is human, to forgive, divine," he was not engaged in the idle use of words. Forgiveness is an attribute of God; and only those who have been forgiven are in position to understand and appreciate its meaning, and to manifest the spirit of forgiveness towards others. Not only is there a

tenderness and beauty in the word, it is also fraught with far-reaching consequences. This is true because it has to do with human relations which involve the destiny of the souls of men. Jesus plainly says that God will not forgive the sins of those who are unwilling to forgive their fellow men; and this means that an unforgiving person cannot be saved, it matters not what else he may do in the way of observing that which God has commanded. Cf. James 2: 10, 11; 4: 17. There is no lesson which we can study which needs more emphasis than this one.

One of the most effective ways of teaching any truth is by example. Paul tells us in Rom. 15: 4 and 1 Cor. 10: 11 that the records of the Old Testament were written for our benefit; and if we are to get the lesson in the narrative now before us, we should give serious consideration to the example of Joseph. The sins which his brethren committed against him were great and most grievous: but as soon as he recognized the hand of God in it all, his great heart overflowed with the most tender forgiveness. In fact, as we shall see in a later lesson, he was more willing to forgive than they were prepared to receive.

The Golden Text

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you." The Christian life may be described as the forgiven and the forgiving life. It accepts from God that which it passes on to others, or, in the language of Jesus, freely receiving, it freely gives. Man's greatest need, whether from God or man, is forgiveness. Unity with God or man is impossible as long as sin remains unforgiven. Sin destroys friendly relations, and they can be restored only by forgiveness; for forgiveness is the renewing of friendly relations on the basis of love and righteousness. Someone has said that God is most like himself in the attitude of free pardon, and that man rises so as to be most like his Maker in the same divine-like act.

It may help us in our study of the question of forgiveness to consider it

along with a related term—pardon. The two words, while frequently used interchangeably, are not exact synonyms. To *pardon* is to free from punishment due for an offense, or to refrain from exacting punishment. To *forgive* is to give up, not only any claim for requital or retribution, but also any resentment or desire for revenge. Pardon has reference to consequences, while forgiveness has reference to *feelings*. An executive may pardon, but forgiveness must come from the one who has suffered the wrong.

When one forgives another he treats him as if the offense had never been committed. Jesus leaves no place for the desire for revenge. Former barriers have been broken down, old friendships restored, while a deeper and more abiding love takes the place of whatever feelings of

estrangement which may have characterized their state of enmity. This kind of forgiveness comes at a great sacrifice. It demands a cross. The one who extends it must suffer; and

only a strong character is able to go through with it. This, verily, is a place where one may measure himself with the Lord. This is the kind of forgiveness Joseph offered.

The Text Explained

Joseph Made Known to His Brethren

(Gen. 45: 1-4)

Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

Whatever may have been the motive which prompted Joseph to deal with his brethren as he did up to this point, whether he was merely trying to find out what their true character was after the years since they so cruelly sold him, or whether, as McGarvey suggests, he was trying to scare them to the point that they would never come to Egypt again, while he kept Benjamin with him, that motive no longer influenced his action. He had learned several things about his brethren before Judah spoke; but when that plea was made the picture became so clear that even Joseph himself could no longer question the purpose of the whole transaction.

The effect which Judah's plea produced on Joseph was overwhelming, but we must not lose sight of what it was about the speech which brought about such great results. The speech itself was a masterpiece, considered from any point of view, and its eloquence approached the sublime; but when all the facts are carefully brought into focus, it will have to be admitted that the thing about it which affected Joseph most was the truth which he had learned about his father, his brethren, and the purpose of God. Joseph had evidently misjudged all of these, and that apparently had greatly affected his whole attitude, but when the truth dawned upon him, the fires of his old love for his family returned, and it was utterly impossible for him to contain himself.

There was neither the desire nor the time to explain all of these things to the Egyptians who were standing by him, and they probably would not have understood them anyway; so Joseph calls for complete privacy as

he prepares to reveal his identity to his brethren. The drama of the occasion beggars description, and no one who reads the account even now can ever forget it. Only an inspired penman could leave such a record behind him.

And he wept aloud; and the Egyptians heard, and the house of Pharaoh heard. It is not difficult to understand Joseph as he "gave forth his voice in weeping" (see margin). He had long been accustomed to a life of solitariness, but now with this situation before him his pent-up feelings burst the dams which had held them in, and his true self was clearly manifested. All of this evidently made a great impression on the Egyptians, as may be gathered from the narrative immediately following the lesson text.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? Brevity, force, and pathos are strikingly combined in Joseph's first words to his astonished brethren. His first thought was about his aged father, whom he apparently had misjudged, but he must make himself known to his brethren before even they could understand his inquiry regarding his father.

And his brethren could not answer him; for, they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. The emotions which now characterized both Joseph and his brethren, and which followed each other in rapid succession, were many and violent. Joseph was agitated by sympathy and joy, while they were astonished, confounded, and terrified. They betrayed their terror as they stood dumbfounded at a respectable distance from him. They were indeed so troubled at his presence that it was necessary for Joseph to repeat the announcement which he had made regarding himself. But the kindness which Joseph manifested toward them soon melted

the barrier which had separated them from him, and he was able to make them understand that he was in reality their long lost brother.

Recognizing the Hand of God

(Gen. 45: 5-8)

And now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. This attitude on the part of Joseph demonstrates the greatness of his character. He not only did not hold the sin of selling him into bondage against his brethren, but also asked them to forget the whole affair, and not to chide themselves for their action. Instead of regarding the action of his brothers as something which he should resent and seek to avenge, he attributed the entire matter to the providence of God. This is not to say that Joseph thought that Jehovah approved that which his brethren did, or the motive, which prompted their action; but rather that God was able to overrule that which they did to his glory and the good of the family of Jacob.

This is one of the great lessons of life which every child of God should endeavor to learn; and, having learned it, to put into practice. The New Testament plainly teaches that Christian people will be called upon, during their life here among men, to suffer many things for the Lord's sake. "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3: 12.) But the Lord has promised them that he will be with them in all that they are called upon to endure. "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8: 28.)

In making this sweeping statement, Paul does not affirm that all things are good, but that all things *work together* for good. Something which happens today may be the beginning of a series of circumstances which will not reach fruition for the next twenty-five years, but the next twenty-five years may prove how essential the almost unnoticed circumstances were for our later good. The ingredients of a prescription taken singly might cause one's death, while the combination may be highly beneficial to him. So then, people of faith in

the Lord will recognize his ability to overrule anything in their life, great or small, to their ultimate good.

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. This was a simple statement of fact, made in the light of God's revelation to Joseph when he was called upon to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. The prolonged drought prevented the Nile from overflowing its banks, so that the land of Egypt was totally unfit to produce a harvest. The famine had also spread to other countries of that area. See Gen. 41: 57.

And God sent me before you to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, a ruler over all the land of Egypt. Joseph here repeated the providential direction of God, and stated the purpose for which it was done, that is, the reason why God overruled the wicked action of Joseph's brethren in selling him into Egypt. The marginal reading of "by a great deliverance" is to *be a great company that escape*; so that, according to that rendering, the verse would read, "And God sent me before you to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive to be a great company that escape." The whole idea is that they would survive the great famine. No one but God could foresee that which was coming, and only he could overrule the affairs of men so that his people would be protected. This is the doctrine of Divine Providence found throughout the entire Bible.

The term "father," in the expression "and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh" probably has reference to his official position. Clarke calls attention to the use of the term by various ancient nations, and suggests that the term to the Egyptians probably meant about what the expression "prime minister," or the "king's minister," means to us. Cf. Judg. 17: 10; Isa. 22: 21. The term might also include the idea of provider or benefactor. A father to Pharaoh, lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of Egypt involved colossal responsibilities.

The Call for Jacob and Kindness to His Brethren

(Gen. 45: 9-15)

Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not; and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, 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: 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. This call for his father Jacob nullified everything he had in his mind when he gave the name Manasseh to his firstborn son. See Gen. 41: 51. It is easy for human beings to misjudge the actions or the lack of actions of others; but if they are intellectually and morally honest, they will correct their mistakes when they learn better.

Clarke thinks that the land of Goshen must have been allotted to Joseph by Pharaoh, since he promised it to his father and his family without first obtaining the king's permission. This may have been true, or it could have been that the land was undesirable by the pharaohs, as some have thought. At any rate, Joseph made the promise without any hesitation; and he must have known what he was doing.

The land of Goshen, also called "the land of Rameses" (Gen. 47: 11), was located in that part of Egypt which was nearest to Palestine. *Harpur's Bible Dictionary* says it was a valley some thirty to forty miles long, extending from Lake Timsah to the Nile. See map. It appears to have been an ideal place for pastoral people. When Jacob and his household

arrived in Goshen, they remained there until Joseph came to them. It was from this section of Egypt that the Exodus began. See Ex. 12: 37.

And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen: and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. When Joseph was making himself "strange" unto his brethren, he spoke through an interpreter, as if he did not understand the Hebrew language (see Gen. 42: 23); but in the instance now before us, he stresses the fact that he is speaking with his own mouth, that is, he is not using an interpreter. The message to his father would also be proof that it was Joseph who was speaking unto them, as well as the request to bring him to Egypt.

And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him. It is well to keep in mind the fact that just a few minutes before this Benjamin, for all practical purposes, stood as a condemned thief before Joseph. Benjamin, of course, knew that he had not taken the cup, but he had no way to prove that to the ruler before whom he stood. Jamieson notes that the sudden transition from a condemned criminal to a fondled brother might have occasioned fainting, or even death, had not his tumultuous feelings been relieved by a torrent of tears. But Joseph's attentions were not confined to Benjamin alone; he affectionately embraced each of his other brothers, as a demonstration of his love for them and of his full and free forgiveness.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is forgiveness such a great and beautiful word?
How is it related to love?
What effect does forgiveness have on people?
What is God's attitude toward the unforgiving?
What is one of the most effective ways of teaching forgiveness?

The Golden Text

In what way may the Christian life be described? Why?
Why is forgiveness one of man's greatest needs?

How is forgiveness related to pardon?
What does one do when he forgives another?
Why is it so hard for one to forgive another?

Joseph Made Known to His Brethren

Why did Joseph make himself known to his brethren at this time?
What were some of the things which he had learned about his family?

What was there about Judah's speech which impressed Joseph most?
 Why did he want all the Egyptians to leave his presence?
 Why did Joseph weep?
 What was Joseph's first thought when he made himself known to his brethren?
 What characterized his first statement to his brethren?
 How were his brothers affected by his statement?
 What must have been the feelings of Joseph?
 What finally melted the barrier which separated them?

Recognizing the Hand of God

Why did Joseph tell his brethren not to be grieved or angry with themselves for what they had done?
 How did Joseph regard their act of selling him?
 Why is this lesson so important to us?
 What does the New Testament teach regarding the providence of God?
 What is meant by God's "providence"?

How do all things work together for one's good?
 What did Joseph say regarding the duration of the famine? and why?
 Why did he say that God sent him?
 Why should people always trust in God's overruling?
 What did Joseph mean by saying that he was a "father" to Pharaoh?

The Call for Jacob and Kindness to His Brethren

What attitude did Joseph manifest in calling his father to him?
 Why did he promise them the land of Goshen so freely?
 Tell where the land was and give a brief description of it.
 Why did Joseph stress the fact that they saw his mouth speaking?
 Why give special attention to Benjamin?
 What is the value of tears in great sorrow and suffering?
 Why did he embrace all his brethren so affectionately?
 What great lesson does the example of Joseph teach?

Lesson XII—December 20, 1959

JACOBS LAST DAYS

Lesson Text

Gen. 46: 1-7, 28-30; 47: 28-30; 49: 28-33

1 And Is'-ra-el took his journey with all that he had, and came to Be'-er-she'-ba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father I'-saac.

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.

28 And he sent Ju'-dah before him unto Joseph, to show the way before him unto Go'-shen; and they came into the land of Go'-shen.

29 And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Is'-ra-el his father, to Go'-shen; and he presented himself unto him, and fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

30 And Is'-ra-el said unto Joseph. Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive.

28 And Jacob lived in the land of E'-gypt seventeen years: so the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were a hundred forty and seven years.

29 And the time drew near that Is'-ra-el must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found favor in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me: bury me not, I pray thee, in E'-gypt;

30 But when I sleep with my fathers, thou shalt carry me out of E'-gypt, and bury me in their burying-place. And he said, I will do as thou hast said.

* * * * *

28 All these are the twelve tribes of Is'-ra-el: and this is it that their father spake unto them and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.

29 And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of E'-phron the Hit'-tite,

30 In the cave that is in the field of Mach-pe'-lah, which is before Mam'-re, in the land of Ca'-naan, which Abraham bought with the field

from E'-phron the Hit'-tite for a possession of a burying-place.

31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried I-saac and Re-bek'-ah his wife; and there I buried Le'-ah—

32 The field and the cave that is therein, which was purchased from the children of Heth.

33 And when Jacob made an end of charging his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"So teach us to number our days, that we may get us a heart of wisdom."* (Psalm 90: 12.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gen. 46: 28-34.

Daily Bible Readings

December 14. M.....	Duty to Parents (Gen. 46: 1-7)
December 15. T.....	Honoring the Aged Father (Gen. 47: 7-12)
December 16. W.....	A Faithful Daughter (Ruth 1: 15-22)
December 17. T.....	Heeding Parents' Instructions (Prov. 1: 7-19)
December 18. F.....	Jesus an Example to Youth (Luke 2: 41-52)
December 19. S.....	Children and Parents (Eph. 6: 1-9)
December 20. S.....	Caring for Parents (1 Tim. 5: 1-8)

TIME.—1706-1689 B.C.

PLACE.—Hebron, Beer-sheba, and Goshen.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Jacob, his household, and Joseph.

Introduction

As the record of Genesis draws nearer to the time when Jacob had to die it is worthy of note that it becomes full of details. After Jacob had returned and settled in Canaan the record turned almost exclusively to an account of Joseph; but now Jacob comes to the forefront again. While Abraham was the founder of the Hebrew race, as we know it, we must remember that the family of that great patriarch developed into a number of branches, until at length Jacob and his descendants were selected as the ones through whom the promised seed would come. This is obviously the reason why so much space is given to Jacob and his sons in the closing part of the Book of Genesis.

We learn from the text of our lesson today that Jacob lived in the land of Egypt for seventeen years. This means that they were there twelve years after the famine ended; for when they went there five of the seven years of famine were yet to come. (See Gen. 45: 6.) Looking at the question from a purely human point of view, one might wonder why

the Israelites did not return to Canaan when the famine was over; for their purpose in going to Egypt was to escape the ravages of the famine. But instead of returning to their own country, they remained in the land of the pharaohs for more than two hundred years, until they probably numbered some two or three million souls.

But when the end of Jacob's life was approaching, he made it clear to Joseph that he did not want to be buried in Egypt, which was to say that he did not want to be identified with a foreign land permanently. While we are given no specific reason for their long sojourn there, it was probably in the providential plans of God. There is always a tinge of sadness when we view the last days of an old man; but there is also a source of great satisfaction if we can see him die in the faith of his God. We know that such was true of Jacob; for Jesus said, "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 8: 11.)

The Golden Text

"So teach us to number our days, that we may get us a heart of wisdom." The psalm from which this passage is taken has been called "the funeral hymn of Christendom, which every church recites at the burial of its dead." It is appropriate for funerals, of course, but it also has other values. No one can read it without being made to feel the need for a closer walk with God. It is thought that Moses wrote the psalm, and if he did he was probably thinking of his own experience in the service of God, and was urging others to think of the seriousness of life.

The true way to number our days is get before us a perspective of brevity of the time which is at our disposal, so that we may have a wise motive for proper living. If one should like to consider this petition in a literal sense, he could think after this fashion, while basing the calculation on the theory that one will live to be seventy years of age. There are 17,897 days between twenty-one years and seventy; 16,436 between twenty-five and seventy; 12,783 between thirty-five and seventy; and

only 9,131 between forty-five and seventy. These figures, to say the least of the matter, can become the basis for sober thinking.

To have a heart of wisdom is to reckon with a purpose. The prayer of the psalmist therefore is for holy light which shall illumine the mind, heart, and will, and so transfigure the life in its character and conduct. Such an attitude demands that we have the right end in view, and a determination to make progress. We must not allow things to take their chance, but must assert an imperative discrimination. Feelings must not be allowed to determine our destiny; for it is not what we like, but what is true, that counts in the end. This means that, having determined the brevity of life, we are going to bring everything to the bar of righteous judgment, and ask, where are you taking us, In short, when we have numbered our days as we should, we must pray for that wisdom which is so essential in making our moral and spiritual choices, Cf. James 1: 5-8.

The Text Explained

From Canaan to Goshen, and the Meeting with Joseph (Gen. 46: 1-7, 28-30)

And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. We learn from the last part of the preceding chapter that Joseph, at the command of Pharaoh, sent wagons and supplies for Jacob's use in going to Egypt; and it is likely that he and his household made the necessary preparations to go as soon as they could. Jacob was probably living in Hebron at the time he received Joseph's message; and if so, Beer-sheba would be directly on his way to Egypt. See map. The latter place was a favorite encampment of both Abraham and Isaac, and it was there that they both called upon Jehovah. See Gen. 21: 33; 26: 25. It was natural therefore for Jacob to pause at Beer-sheba and worship the God of his fathers, and especially since he was beginning such a momentous journey. Clarke notes that he who would travel safely must take God with him. It is well

to notice the emphasis which is given to Jacob's name *Israel*.

And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for there I will make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes. The circumstantial evidence in the context implies that Jacob had some misgivings about his going into Egypt to live. It appears that he viewed with unalloyed joy the prospects of visiting Joseph; but to leave his home with a view of remaining as a sojourner in Egypt was another question. Cf. Gen. 26: 1ff.

But Jacob did not have to wait long for the Lord's direction. This incident is a splendid commentary on Prov. 3: 5, 6: "Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, and lean not upon thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths." This was exactly what

Jacob was doing, and this was the Lord's response to him. He was told that he might go down into Egypt, without fear of evil befalling him; that the promise which had been made to him would be fulfilled, and that the Lord would be with him and bring him up again into his own country. He was also promised a close relationship with his beloved Joseph. Concerning the statement "and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes," Jamieson says that he "shall perform the last office of filial piety, which was usually reserved to the eldest or the dearest member of the family; and this implied that he should henceforth enjoy, without interruption, the society of that favorite son."

And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. See Gen. 45: 16-28. Pharaoh and Joseph saw that the necessary means of transportation, as well as the necessary food, were provided for the journey into Egypt. The advanced age of Jacob was accompanied by the usual infirmities, and he and the women and children especially would need some means of conveyance.

And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him: and his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt. It appears from Gen. 45: 20 that they were advised not to move their household furniture, and agricultural instruments and utensils; for such things would be difficult to move and would delay their journey; and besides they could be easily replaced in Egypt. It seems that only the families and their personal belongings were taken, along with their flocks and herds.

And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to show the way before him unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. The role which Judah played in bringing about this great move made him the proper one to send to Joseph to announce Jacob's coming, and to direct the way.

And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father,

to Goshen; and he presented himself unto him, and fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive. It should be noted that Joseph rode in his chariot, rather than in a wagon, such as were sent to bring his father and his household into Egypt. That, of course was in keeping with Joseph's station as ruler of the land. Any one who is familiar with human nature and the narrative now before us can understand something of the feelings of Jacob and Joseph at this meeting.

Jacob's Preparation for His Burial

(Gen. 47: 28-30)

And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were a hundred forty and seven years. It can be seen from this that Jacob was one hundred and thirty years old when he came into Egypt. Cf. Verses 8, 9. The move into Egypt was two hundred and fifteen years after Abraham received the promises. (Abraham was seventy-five years old when the promises were made. Isaac was born twenty-five years later; and Jacob was born when Isaac was sixty. See Gen. 12: 1-4; 21: 5; 25: 26. $25 + 60 + 130 = 215$.) Paul says (Gal. 3: 17) that the law was given four hundred and thirty years after the promise, which means that it was two hundred and fifteen years after Jacob and his family went to Egypt before they came out, that is, before the exodus.

And the time drew near that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found favor in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under, my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me: bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt; but when I sleep with my fathers, thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place. And he said, I will do as thou hast said. Placing the hand under the thigh of another was in connection with oath-making, and it bound the one who did it to do for the other that which was requested. It probably had some reference to the covenant of circumcision. The meaning, of course, was plain to the people then, but it is not so clear to us now. Clarke says that

the rite or ceremony used on the occasion was something as follows: "The person binding himself put his hand under the thigh of the person to whom he was to be bound; i. e., he put his hand on the *part* that bore the mark of *circumcision*, the sign of God's covenant, which is tantamount to our *kissing the book*, or laying the hand upon the *New Testament* or *covenant* of our Lord Jesus Christ." (See on Gen. 24: 9.)

Jacob's request that he be buried in Canaan, rather than in Egypt, was based on his faith in God's promise to him and his fathers regarding the land which was to be theirs for an inheritance. He did not therefore want to be identified with a foreign land in death; for that would be equivalent to his turning his back upon God's promises. It appears that the people of that day regarded the place of their burial as being a sign of their belonging to that place.

Israel was certain that God would fulfil his word, and give to him and his seed the land of Canaan; and his request of Joseph therefore had a deep religious significance, which required an oath to bind it. Joseph, of course, shared his father's views, as may be seen in his own case (Gen. 50: 24, 25), and he was glad to grant his father's request.

Jacob's Final Charge to His Sons

(Gen. 49: 28-33)

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them. The preceding part of the chapter records the address which Jacob made to his sons. Verse 1 says, "And Jacob called unto his sons, and said: Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the latter days." Israel was evidently guided by the Holy Spirit as he revealed to each of them all the important events which should take place during their successive generations, as well as the traits which should characterize them; and in doing this he apparently made some relatively obscure references to the coming of the Messiah, and the redemption of the world by him.

It is both interesting and sobering to note the manner in which he spoke

to each of his sons, "every one according to his blessing he blessed them." No one was overlooked, although in pronouncing their destiny it was necessary for Jacob to speak of the temporal results which would come to them because of their sins. His love for them, however, was unshaken by anything which he said, and he called down upon each of them the blessings of Jehovah.

And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying-place. When Jacob said that he was to be gathered unto his people, his meaning was totally different from that of being placed in a tomb, and it was so understood by his sons. More shall be said about this at the close of this lesson.

Jacob was very specific about the place where he desired to be buried. It was in the cave which Abraham bought when it became necessary for him to bury his beloved Sarah out of his sight. See Gen. 23. This cave was the first such burying-place which is mentioned in history. Ephron endeavored to give the place to Abraham, but he would not accept it as a gift, but insisted on paying the full price for it, which he did. "And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre (the same is Hebron), in the land of Canaan. And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying-place by the children of Heth." (Gen. 23: 19, 20.)

There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah—the field and the cave that is therein, which was purchased from the children of Heth. Jacob had lived in the faith of his fathers, and he wanted to be identified with them in death. It is interesting to note that it was Leah, his first wife, rather than Rachel, his favorite wife, that he buried in the place where his parents and

grandparents were buried. See Gen. 48: 7; 35: 16-20.

And when Jacob made an end of charging his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people. In the two phrases, "yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people," we have a simple but very significant idea of what death meant to the ancient patriarchs. Jacob yielded up his spirit to God, and was reunited with his people who had gone on before him. All of this bears testimony to the fact of the immortality of the soul, and to its existence

separate and apart from the body. Cf. Eccl. 12: 7. At the very time of Jacob's death, it is said that he was gathered unto his people, and that is enough to show that it was his soul, rather than his body which figured in that reunion. One has only to read chapter 50 in order to see that several weeks passed by before Jacob's body was placed in the tomb along with the bones of his family. It is plain therefore that when a righteous man ceases to live among his fellow men here upon the earth, his soul goes on to join the spirits of just men made perfect.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What can you say of the prominence given to Jacob near the close of Genesis?

Why do you think this was done?

How long did Jacob live in Egypt?

The Golden Text

What is peculiar about the psalm from which this text is taken?

Who probably wrote this psalm? and why?

What did he mean by numbering our days?

What is the value of such a practice?

What is meant by a heart of wisdom?

What should be our attitude toward this question?

From Canaan to Goshen, and the Meeting with Joseph

Where was Jacob probably living at the time he left for Egypt?

What preparations were made for the journey?

What did Jacob do at Beer-sheba? and why?

What application should this practice have in our lives?

Do you think that Jacob had any misgivings about his going to Egypt to sojourn? Give reasons for your answer.

What was the result of Jacob's sacrifices at Beer-sheba?

What great Bible lesson does this incident illustrate?

What promises did Jehovah make to Jacob at this time?

What was meant by Joseph's putting his hands upon his father's eyes?

Give a description of the caravan as it journeyed toward Egypt.

What did they take with them and what did they leave behind in Canaan?

What was the probable reason for selecting Judah to go before them?

What did Joseph do upon hearing that his father had arrived in Goshen?

Tell something of the meeting of Jacob and Joseph.

Jacob's Preparation for His Burial

How old was Jacob at the time of his death?

How long did the children of Israel remain in Egypt?

What request did Jacob make of Joseph?

Why did he want it confirmed with an oath?

What was the manner of swearing then? and why?

Why did Jacob want to be buried in Canaan rather than in Egypt?

How did Joseph feel about his father's request?

Jacob's Final Charge to His Sons

What address did Jacob make to his sons? and why?

Why could he speak so unerringly about their future?

Why did he mention their sins to them?

Where was the place where Jacob wanted to be buried?

Under what circumstances was that burying-place established?

What other people were buried there?

What was meant by yielding up the ghost?

In what sense was Jacob gathered unto his people?

What important lesson do we learn here?

Lesson XIII—December 27, 1959

JOSEPH RETURNS GOOD FOR EVIL

Lesson Text

Gen. 50: 15-26

15 And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, It may be that Joseph will hate

us, and will fully requite us all the evil which we did unto him.

16 And they sent a message unto

Joseph, saying. Thy father did command before he died, saying,

17 So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the transgression of thy brethren, and their sin, for that they did unto thee evil. And now, we pray thee, forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.

18 And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we are thy servants.

19 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God?

20 And as for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

21 Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

22 And Joseph dwelt in E'-gypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived a hundred and ten years.

23 And Joseph saw E'-phraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Ma'-chir the son of Ma-nas'-seh were born upon Joseph's knees.

24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; but God will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to I-saac, and to Jacob.

25 And Joseph took an oath of the children of Is'-ra-el, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

26 So Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in E'-gypt.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Be *not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*" (Rom. 12: 21.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Luke 10: 30-37.

Daily Bible Readings

December 21. M.....	Goodness of God (Psalm 119: 65-72)
December 22. T.....	Do Good to Enemies (Rom. 12: 9-21)
December 23. W.....	Do Good at All Times (Mark 3: 1-6)
December 24. T.....	Jehovah Does Good (Deut. 30: 1-7)
December 25. F.....	The Blessing of God (Micah. 2: 6-11)
December 26. S.....	Moses' Offer (Num. 10: 29-34)
December 27. S.....	"God Is Love" (1 John 4: 7-11)

TIME.—1689-1635 B.C.

PLACE.—Egypt.

PERSONS.—Joseph and his brethren.

Introduction

It was pointed out in an earlier lesson on the life of Joseph that there is more in the Bible concerning him than any other Old Testament person with the sole exception of Abraham; and we may add that there are few records of a character about whom God has spoken from whom we can learn more valuable lessons than that of Joseph. His life was a mixture of sunshine and shadows, but regardless of that which he was called upon to bear, he always endeavored to do that which he thought was right. He made mistakes, but his heart was right; and when he learned that he had done wrong, he took immediate steps to correct whatever error he had committed.

He knew that his brothers had mis-

treated him, and had sinned against him grievously; but when he learned that it was God, and not they, who was responsible for his being in Egypt, he freely forgave them even before they realized what he was doing. In other words, Joseph did not want to do wrong by actually committing the deed, nor did he want to be guilty of holding a grudge against those who had mistreated him. Joseph had dreamed some lofty dreams, and it is worthy of notice that the combined efforts of Satan and his agents were never able to turn him away from the goal toward which his dreams pointed, or make him unworthy of them. The story of his life remains forever enshrined in the temple of God's eternal revelation.

and it ever lives to point the way to certain victory over sin and temptation.

There is an art in forgiveness, and the first step in this gentle art is a true passion for friendship which will never be satisfied until one has turned each enemy or estranged person into a friend. This is directly opposed to the passion of hatred or desire for revenge. To heal the wounds of friendship, bind up the

spirit of the broken-hearted, and transform hatred and indifference into attachment and love is according to the spirit of Christ who made it possible for us to have forgiveness. This is also the fruit of the Spirit, and if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. If Joseph knew all of this truth about forgiveness before Christ came and could and did practice it, what then should be our attitude now?

The Golden Text

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." No one can read the narrative of Joseph without being made to realize that his life illustrates, in a beautiful manner, the lesson of the golden text. Few people were sinned against more than was he, and by those who were near and dear unto him; but when he learned the truth regarding that which was done, and saw the hand of God in it all, he not only was not overcome by evil, but was able to overcome evil with good. It is impossible to overemphasize this lesson.

The context shows that Paul's admonition was directed primarily against the evil of giving way to a spirit of revenge. This prohibition does not imply that there is no power of correction committed to man, but that we must distinguish between the administration of punishment for offenses against the law of God or man and that which is inflicted through personal anger for some personal offense. The same principle, however, is extended to cover all

forms of evil; for it is obvious that the Christian must guard against being overcome by any evil. Cf. James 1:13ff.

The only practical way of overcoming evil which is open to the child of God is by means of good—"overcome evil with good." We may try to suppress evil by force or frighten it into submission, but it still remains evil. God is the perfection of all good, and every good influence comes from him; and it matters not how great the force of evil may be, good is always stronger than evil. We must, therefore, always look to God and the methods which he has ordained for this work, if we are to succeed in overcoming evil with good. "But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. 15: 57, 58.)

The Text Explained

The Brothers Plead for Forgiveness

(Gen 50: 15-18)

And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, It may be that Joseph will hate us, and will fully requite us all the evil which we did unto him. It is surprising, in view of the magnanimous spirit which Joseph manifested toward his brethren, to see them bring up the question of their sin against him, and ask his forgiveness. It shows, not only their sense of guilt, but also their lack of confidence in Joseph. Such an attitude is characteristic of weak and base characters who find it difficult to believe in the nobility of others. These brothers

measured Joseph by themselves, and thought that he was holding a grudge against them, and was only waiting for an opportunity to take vengeance upon them. People who are suspicious of others and who find it difficult to credit them with magnanimity and the spirit of forgiveness, usually reveal and emphasize their own sinfulness.

And they sent a message unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the transgression of thy brethren, and their sin, for that they did unto thee evil. And now, we pray thee, forgive the transgression

of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. When one reads this statement and considers the well chosen words which it contains, he is made to think that perhaps Judah was its author. The plea for forgiveness is based upon two propositions, namely, (1) an appeal to their father's memory, and (2) they represented themselves as being "servants of the God of thy father."

We have no way of knowing, of course, whether or not Jacob told his sons to approach Joseph with a petition for forgiveness; but it is safe to assume that if he did, it was because they brought undue influence to bear upon him in his old age. Jacob had lived too long with Joseph to entertain any such thoughts regarding him, so far as he was concerned. But this was not the first time that these brothers had misunderstood and mistrusted Joseph.

There is scarcely anything more trying and searching in life, to use the words of W. H. Griffith Thomas, than the experience of being misunderstood, with motives misconstrued and intentions distorted. But Joseph had seen too much of life himself to be adversely affected by such things. He no doubt felt the deepest pity for his brothers, as well as sorrow that they should have thought of him as being capable of such unworthy feelings and intentions after all the years which had elapsed since his restoration to them. Is it any wonder that he wept when they spake unto him?

It is perhaps unfair to judge these brothers to be without any good intention. The second part of their plea, that of being servants of the God of thy father, was no doubt sincerely made. But their conscience, as Clarke notes, had recorded criminality; and, by giving birth to continual fears and doubtfulness, it destroyed their peace of mind, security, and confidence.

And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said. Behold, we are thy servants. This was further evidence of the fear which they entertained in their hearts. These brothers had been afraid in practically all of the accounts which are given of them, from the time they first visited Egypt, until the time when they made this appeal

to Joseph. But they confessed their sins, and acknowledged that they were his servants; and if they were sincere, which apparently they were, that was about all that they could do until they received assurance from Joseph that all had been forgiven.

Joseph Offers Them His Care and Protection

(Gen. 50: 19-21)

And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? This is a lesson which many people today need to learn. They seem to think that they have the right to make those who sin against them suffer for their wrongs; notwithstanding the fact that God has said over and over again that vengeance belongs to him, and that he will fully repay any sin which is committed. This truth is stated in many parts of the Bible, but in no place is it clearer than in the passage from which our golden text is taken. "Render to no man evil for evil. Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men. Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto the wrath of God: for it is written. Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord. But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom. 12: 17-21.)

Sin is primarily a matter between God and the sinner, no matter against whom the sin was committed; and anyone who attempts to take action regarding the sin on any terms, other than those which God has specified, will himself become a sinner in God's sight. No man is justified in taking God's place in dealing with the problem of sin. Joseph understood this principle, and he bade his brothers to have no fear of what he might try to do.

And as for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. While no man has the right to take the place of God in dealing with sin, he does, however, have the right to try to make people understand what their sin is. This is plainly authorized by

Jesus. "And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church: and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican." (Matt. 18: 15-17.)

That which Joseph told his brothers regarding the sin which they committed against him is a splendid commentary on Paul's statement about the providence of God. in Rom. 8: 28: "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose." It is easy for people to see how good things can turn out to their benefit; but when things are not so good, the situation is different. It should be kept in mind just here that all of the things which his brothers did to Joseph were meant for evil. God therefore can turn that which is evil into good; for he meant for good that which they meant for evil.

Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your, little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them. This reveals something of the true character of Joseph. Distrust and misunderstanding often cause one to become embittered, but Joseph had too much of the love of God and his fellow men in his heart for a thing like that to happen to him. And besides, he had been entrusted with the bounty of God, and it was more fitting that he should distribute that than to turn his attention to a selfish attitude on his part. Some one has said that when our good is evil spoken of, our best intentions misinterpreted, our loving actions suspected and even reviled, then we have the opportunity for showing the spirit of Christ and the sincerity of our profession. And it is especially true when people ask our forgiveness: we should comfort them, and speak kindly unto them.

Joseph Died as He Had Lived— in the Faith

(Gen. 50: 22-26)

And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived

a hundred and ten years. And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were born upon Joseph's knees. If one will consider the chronology of these lessons, he will see that there were about fifty-four years difference between the events of the preceding paragraphs and those of this one. After Joseph had fulfilled his obligation in seeing that his father was buried in the cave of Machpelah in Canaan, he returned with his brethren to the land of Egypt, and continued his duties as the ruler of the nation for more than a half century. In all, he was governor of Egypt for eighty years; for he was thirty when he stood before Pharaoh, at the time he was appointed governor (Gen. 41: 46); and he died at the age of one hundred and ten.

Joseph was permitted to see the great-grandchildren of his son Ephraim, and the grandchildren of his son Manasseh, and that must have been a great joy to him. All of this goes to show something of the greatness of the life he lived while in Egypt, having been brought into that country as a slave. In saying that the grandchildren of Manasseh were born upon the knees of Joseph, the reference was probably to the fact that they were trained by him or under his direction. It appears that the members of his family regarded him as the head of the family as long as he lived.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; but God will surely visit you. and bring you up out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. Although Joseph's life had been bound up with Egypt for nearly a century, and he was permitted to enjoy everything which makes for earthly happiness, but his faith in God never waned, and he was entirely unwilling to be identified with that land permanently. He had every reason to believe that God would fulfil his promise to Jacob to lead the people out of Egypt, and he did not want his bones left behind. Paul says regarding him, "By faith Joseph, when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the chil-

dren of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones." (Heb. 11: 22; see also Ex. 13: 19; Josh. 24: 32.)

So Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt. Although Joseph lived to a ripe old age, he did not live nearly as long as Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. Abraham was 175 years old when he died; Isaac, 180; and Jacob, 147. Both Joseph and his father Jacob were embalmed in Egypt. That seems to have been a common practice among the Egyptians, but it was particularly necessary in the case of these two patriarchs since their bodies were to be taken to Canaan for burial. Jacob's was taken soon after the period of mourning for him was over, but it was a hundred and forty-four years later before the bones of Joseph were removed.

The following words from *The Speaker's Bible* seem appropriate here. "The last words of Genesis describe not only the ending of a great career: they mark the close of an epoch in man's history. Genesis, the

book of the beginnings, surveys the race of mankind, only to dismiss them one by one, in order that the record may follow the fortunes of one race and concentrate our interest upon the story of the seed of Abraham. It eliminates subordinate characters, keeping before us the main line, the Divinely chosen succession. At length we reach the point at which the chosen representative passes out of the pastoral life in which hitherto the tribe had lived, and crosses into the more complex life of Egyptian civilization. Joseph's adventures and temptations show us how God's people stood the test of emergence from the shadows of simple pastoral life into the glare of Egypt. And now the great servant of God is dead." He was put in a coffin in Egypt, but his influence and interest still live; they could never be confined to the narrow limits of a coffin. He was put in a coffin in Egypt, but he was not buried there. The use of a coffin seems to have been in keeping with his station as the ruler of the land of the pharaohs.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What can you say of the prominence given to Joseph in the inspired record?
What was his general attitude toward life?
Why was he able to free himself from all malice?
What influence did his dreams have on his life?
Why could Joseph forgive the sins of others so freely?

The Golden Text

Show how the experience of Joseph illustrates the golden text.
What was Paul's primary aim in writing this injunction?
What wider application does it have in our lives?
Is there any other way of overcoming evil? Give reasons for your answer.

The Brother Pleads for Forgiveness

Why did these brothers bring up this subject again?
What did it reveal concerning them?
What was the basis of their plea? Discuss fully.
What is the effect of suspicion on a good person?
Why are so many people guilty of suspicion?
What do you think of the sincerity of these brothers?
Why did they fall down before Joseph?

Joseph Offers Them His Care and Protection

What did Joseph mean by asking, "Am I in the place of God?"
What lesson is there in this for us today?
How does Joseph's attitude illustrate the golden text?
Why do people want to make those who sin against them suffer?
Whose place is it to deal with sin?
Is it right to point out the sins of others to them? Give reasons for your answer.
What did Jesus teach on this subject?
How is this teaching regarded by the Lord's people now?
What great lesson on providence do we learn from Joseph?
How did Joseph reveal his true character to his brothers?

Joseph Died as He Had Lived—in the Faith

How long did Joseph live in Egypt? How long was he governor?
What is said regarding his family?
What influence did he have with them?
In what way did Joseph manifest his faith in God's promises?
Why did he want his bones carried up out of Egypt?
How old was Joseph when he died?
Why was he embalmed and put in a coffin?
Give a brief survey of the Book of Genesis.
What was the author's purpose in discussing these great characters?
What important lessons have you learned from this study?

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