

---

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

## 1962

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

---

FORTY-FIRST 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

**Copyright 1961 by  
GOSPEL ADVOCATE COMPANY  
Nashville, Tennessee**

## P R E F A C E

The lessons for 1962 are almost equally divided between the Old and New Testaments. There are twenty-five lessons based on the Old Testament records, while twenty-seven are taken from the New Testament—the Book of Acts. This somewhat unusual arrangement is due to the fact that there are only twelve Lord's days in the first quarter, while the third quarter has fourteen; and since the first and last quarters are devoted to Old Testament studies and the second and third, to the New Testament, we have two more lessons in the New Testament than we do in the Old Testament.

It is probably not correct to say that one set of lessons is more important than others, but it is not out of place to note that we have some of the most valuable studies before us for this year that we could study. This is due to the fact that the examples of the Old Testament lessons are so valuable in showing us how people reacted to God's ways, while we have the inspired history of the early church in the New Testament.

Those who are familiar with the Bible are aware of the fact that it was never God's will that his people under Moses have an earthly king to reign over them; but when they rebelled against his will and demanded such a ruler, he allowed them to have their way, notwithstanding the fact that the new arrangement was doomed to failure from the very beginning.

The "united kingdom" continued for approximate one hundred and twenty years, with the three kings of that period reigning for forty years each. The last of these three kings was Solomon, whose sins were directly responsible for the division of the kingdom. These lessons are valuable to us in that they show what sin will do for God's people here upon the earth. They also show how a man like David could conduct himself in such a way as to become a man after God's own heart. The division of the kingdom presents one of the darkest periods in the Old Testament period, and shows in a graphic manner that the wages of sin is indeed death. These lessons cannot be too carefully studied.

If there is a "central book" in the Bible, it is the Book of Acts. All the Old Testament and the first four books of the New point to the events of that part of the Sacred Writings, while all the remainder of the New Testament grows out of them. In speaking of the Book of Acts, Professor McGarvey says, "There is no book in the whole Bible that one who preaches the gospel should study more diligently than Acts of Apostles."

This is the forty-first annual volume which the Gospel Advocate Company has published for use of churches of Christ; and the seventeenth which has borne the title, *Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary on Bible School Lessons*. Both the author 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 year.

The Author

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## LESSONS FOR 1962

### FIRST QUARTER

The People Ask for a King .....	Lesson I—January 7 .....	1 Sam. 8: 4-7, 10-17
Israel's First King .....	Lesson II—January 14 .....	1 Sam. 9: 15-21; 10: 17-24
Samuel Warns the People .....	Lesson III—January 21 .....	1 Sam. 12: 1-5; 13-25
Saul Is Rejected by Jehovah as King .....	Lesson IV—January 28 .....	1 Sam. 15: 10-23
David, The Shepherd Boy King.....	Lesson V—February 4 .....	1 Sam. 16: 1-13
David and Goliath .....	Lesson VI—February 11 .....	2 Sam. 17: 19, 32, 41-52
David and Jonathan .....	Lesson VII—February 18 .....	1 Sam. 20: 32-42
David Spares Saul's Life.....	Lesson VIII—February 25 .....	1 Sam. 26: 5-12, 17, 21
David King Over Judah and Israel .....	Lesson IX—March 4 .....	2 Sam. 2: 1-7; 5: 1-5
Nathan Rebukes David.....	Lesson X—March 11 .....	2 Sam. 12: 1-10, 13
Solomon Succeeds David as <b>King</b> .....	Lesson XI—March 18 .....	1 Kings 1: 22-35
Solomon's Sin .....	Lesson XII—March 25 .....	1 Kings 11: 1-13

### SECOND QUARTER

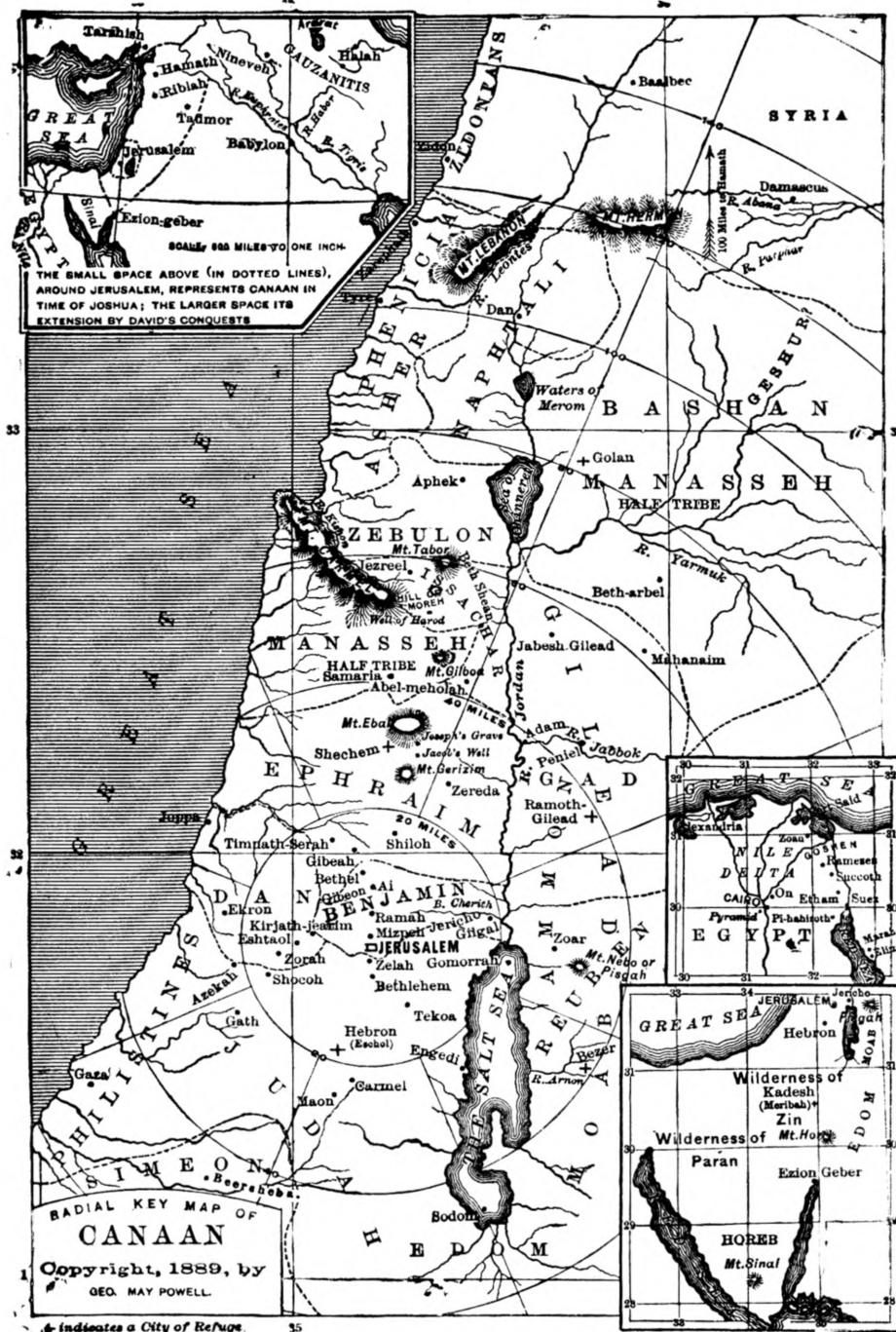
Jesus Ascends to Heaven .....	Lesson I—April 1 .....	Acts 1: 1-12
The Coming of the Holy Spirit .....	Lesson II—April 8 .....	Acts 2: 1-13
Peter's Sermon on Pentecost .....	Lesson III—April 15 .....	Acts 2: 14-16, 22-24, 29-41
A Miracle at the Beautiful Gate .....	Lesson IV—April 22 .....	Acts 3: 1-11
Peter and John Arrested .....	Lesson V—April 29 .....	Acts 4: 1-3, 7-22
Good and Bad People in the Early Church .....	Lesson VI—May 6 .....	Acts 4: 32-37, 5: 1-10
The Seven Chosen .....	Lesson VII—May 13 .....	Acts 6: 1-10
Stephen, The First Christian Martyr.....	Lesson VIII—May 20 .....	Acts 6: 8-15, 7: 54-60
The Conversion of the Ethiopian Treasurer .....	Lesson IX—May 27 .....	Acts 8: 26-40
The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus .....	Lesson X—June 3 .....	Acts 9: 1-9, 17-19
The Conversion of Cornelius .....	Lesson XI—June 10 .....	Acts 10: 30-48
The Church in Antioch .....	Lesson XII—June 17 .....	Acts 11: 19-30
Paul's First Missionary Journey .....	Lesson XIII—June 24 .....	Acts 13: 1-12

### THIRD QUARTER

Difficulties at Antioch in Pisidia.....	Lesson I—July 1	Acts 13: 13-15, 42-52
Paul at Lystra.....	Lesson II—July 8	Acts 14: 8-22
Conference at Jerusalem .....	Lesson III—July 15	Acts 15: 1-10, 28-32
Paul's Second Missionary Journey	Lesson IV—July 22	Acts 15: 36, 16: 1-5
Paul at Philippi .....	Lesson V—July 29	Acts 16: 10-15, 28-34
Paul Preaches at Athens.....	Lesson VI—August 5	Acts 17: 22-34
Paul at Corinth	Lesson VII—August 12	Acts 18: 1-11
Paul's Third Missionary Journey.....	Lesson VIII—August 19	Acts 19: 1-12
Paul's Charge to the Elders of Ephesus	Lesson IX—August 26	Acts 20: 28-28
Trial in Jerusalem.....	Lesson X—September 2	Acts 21: 27-40
Paul's Defense in Jerusalem.....	Lesson XI—September 9	Acts 22: 1-8, 19-25
Paul Before Felix.....	Lesson XII—September 16	Acts 24: 10-25
Paul Appeals to Caesar.....	Lesson XIII—September 23	Acts 25: 6-12, 23-27
Paul in Rome.....	Lesson XIV—September 30	Acts 28: 16-30

### FOURTH QUARTER

The Kingdom Divides.....	Lesson I—October 7	1 Kings 12: 12-20
Jeroboam Causes Israel to Sin	Lesson II—October 14	1 Kings 12: 25-33; 14: 15-18
Wicked Kings of Israel	Lesson III—October 21	1 Kings 15: 25-28; 16: 15, 23-33
Elijah and His Contest with Baal.....	Lesson IV—October 28	1 Kings 18: 19-20, 36-39
Elijah's Flight and Return.....	Lesson V—November 4	1 Kings 19: 8-18
Defeat Through Drunkenness .....	Lesson VI—November 11	1 Kings 20: 10-21
Covetousness of Ahab	Lesson VII—November 18	1 Kings 21: 1-16
Elisha, Successor to Elijah	Lesson VIII—November 25	2 Kings 2: 1-12
Jehu the Reformer	Lesson IX—December 2	2 Kings 9: 6-10, 24, 27, 30-35
Wickedness in High Places	Lesson X—December 9	2 Kings 13: 1-2, 10, 11; 14: 23, 24; 17: 1
Captivity of Israel	Lesson XI—December 16	2 Kings 17: 5-6; 18: 9-12
Prophecies Regarding Israel	Lesson XII—December 23	Amos 6: 1-6; Hos. 6: 1-6
God's Love for Israel	Lesson XIII—December 30	Hos. 11: 1-11



## FIRST QUARTER

### THE PERIOD OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

*AIM.—To learn all the essential facts concerning the kingdom of Israel, and to observe especially the impressive lesson of all sacred history—that the Lord's people are happy, powerful, and blessed when they serve him; miserable, weak, and bewildered in apostasy.*

Lesson I—January 7, 1962

### THE PEOPLE ASK FOR A KING

#### Lesson Text

1 Sam. 8: 4-7, 10-17

4 Then all the elders of Is'-ra-el gathered themselves together, and came to Sam'-u-el unto Ra'-mah;

5 And they said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

6 But the thing displeased Sam'-u-el, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Sam'-u-el prayed unto Je-ho'-vah.

7 And Je-ho'-vah said unto Sam'-u-el, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them.

10 And Sam'-u-el told all the words of Je-ho'-vah unto the people that asked of him a king.

11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: he will take your sons, and appoint them unto him, for his

chariots, and to be his horsemen; and they shall run before his chariots;

12 And he will appoint them unto him for captains of thousands, and captains of fifties; and *he will set some* to plow his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and the instruments of his chariots.

13 And he will take your daughters to be perfumers, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive-yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

16 And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

17 He will take the tenth of your flocks: and ye shall be his servants.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"I have given thee a king in mine anger, and have taken him away in my wrath."* (Hos. 13: 11.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Sam. 1: 1-28.

### Daily Bible Readings

January 1. M.  
January 2. T.  
January 3. W.  
January 4. T.  
January 5. F.  
January 6. S.  
January 7. S.

Hannah and Samuel (1 Sam. 1: 12-20)  
Hannah Dedicates Samuel (1 Sam. 1: 21-28)  
Samuel's Activities (1 Sam. 7: 1-13)  
Conditions in Israel (1 Sam. 8: 1-4)  
Israel Demands a King (1 Sam. 8: 5-9)  
Samuel Warns Israel (1 Sam. 8: 10-17)  
Jehovah's Choice (Deut. 17: 14-17)

TIME.—1095 B.C.

PLACE.—Ramah.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Samuel, and the elders of Israel.

### Introduction

The desire for a king on the part of Israel did not originate with them

at the time of this lesson. One hundred and fifty years before, they had

said to Gideon, "Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also; for thou hast saved us out of the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: Jehovah shall rule over you." (See Judges 8: 22, 23.) With human nature such as it is, it is doubtful if the principal men among the Israelites ever got this thought entirely out of their minds. Instead of looking toward Jehovah as their spiritual leader, they apparently kept their minds on the need for a leader whom they could see.

Samuel had been the wisest and holiest ruler the people of Israel had had since Joshua, and under his leadership the yoke of the Philistines had been broken and the attack of enemies on other frontiers had ceased to plague them; and as one looks upon the situation as it is portrayed in history, it would seem that the divinely chosen method of dealing with Israel, that is, the theocracy, was at last firmly established. But the people still had their thoughts on the material, and they seemingly

thought less of their present security than they did of their past dangers; and taking advantage of the season of tranquillity, they used it as an opportunity for obtaining that which they considered a stronger and more permanent form of government.

The man who had done so much for them was getting old, and his sons whom he had appointed to assist him in judging the people had proved unworthy of the trust which had been placed in them; and so the elders of Israel, taking advantage of the situation, went to Samuel's house in Ramah, pleaded his great age and the sins of his sons, the people's sense of which would be the keener because of their remembrance of Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, and plainly requested Samuel to make them a king to judge them like the nations about them. It appears that their idea of a king was threefold, namely. (1) a **leader** who would always be at their head in case of war, (2) a **judge** to decide the issues which might arise among them, and (3) a **court** invested with dignity and magnificence.

### The Golden Text

*"I have given them a king in mine anger, and have taken him away in my wrath."* It is a fact that both the first and last kings of the monarchy of Israel were removed from their office by Divine intervention. God rejected Saul, and he died from a self-inflicted wound on the battlefield (1 Sam. 31: 1-4); Zedekiah was taken a prisoner to Babylon when Jerusalem was destroyed (2 Kings 25: 1-7; cf. Ezek. 12: 8-13). It was therefore literally true that Jehovah gave the people of Israel a king in his anger, and removed him in his wrath. The Lord was never pleased for his people to have a human king.

There is a principle involved in these historical facts and the passage which serves as our golden text that is just as applicable to us as it was to the people of the Old Testament period. That principle is that God will allow people to have their own way, when they are determined to do as they please; but in the end, God will have his way. Man can sow what he wants to sow, but he must reap according to that which he sows; for God cannot be mocked. (See Gal. 6: 7, 8.) Just because man often

has his own way about a matter in no sense proves that such is pleasing to God.

When any of God's people clearly show that they want to believe and do something different from that which is revealed in his law to them, he not only will allow them to have their own way, but will also enable them to think that they are doing the right thing. This principle is plainly stated in both Testaments. "Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Every man of the house of Israel that taketh his idols into his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I Jehovah will answer him therein according to the multitude of his idols; that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols." (Ezek. 14: 4, 5.) "And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess. 2: 11, 12.)



## The Text Explained

### The Request for a King

(1 Sam. 8: 4, 5)

*Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah; and they said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.* The first three verses of the chapter from which our text is taken read as follows: "And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his first-born was Joel: and the name of his second, Abijah: they were judges in Beer-sheba. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted justice."

It is important that we learn the historical facts of the lessons which we are to study this quarter, for they are the records of actual happenings in the dealings which God had with his people during the Mosaic dispensation; but if we are to benefit ourselves we must seek to ascertain what God means for *us* to get from these ancient accounts. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope." (Horn. 15: 4.) "Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come." (1 Cor. 10: 11.) These two passages, along with Heb. 11: 39, 40, make it plain that the practical benefits of the scheme of human redemption are linked together in both the Old and New Testaments. This truth has been admirably stated by David Lipscomb in the following paragraphs.

When we dissever and dissociate the teachings of the New Testament from those of the Old, we disjoin what God has joined. He has given the two successive and united developments to man. No man from the Old Testament can ever learn the full and perfect lesson that God has conveyed to man. Neither if he takes the New Testament alone can he fully appreciate the will of God as revealed to man and his dealings

with man. They are complements one of the other, and as necessary to each other as the two blades of a pair of shears.

We believe that there is not an example nor a circumstance nor a principle related in the Old Testament but that it is intended to bear a lesson of instruction and wisdom to us. Many things were done by God in his dealings with the Jews that are not recorded, even as the Saviour did many things not recorded; but those recorded are examples to us. They are for our instruction, our guidance, to teach us how we should walk before God acceptable and well pleasing to him. The specific commands of the Old Testament are not binding on us, save as reiterated in the New; but the lessons are for our instruction, the principles for our guidance. If it were not so, Christ and the apostles would not have so constantly appealed to the Old Testament Scriptures, to the lessons they taught, to the promises made. They continually referred to the promises made under the Old Testament as grounds for our hoping for blessings—temporal blessings, too, under the new dispensation.

We are taught in the Old Testament how God applies his laws; in the New Testament the perfect laws are given. (Queries and Answers by Lipscomb and Sewell, p. 681.)

As already pointed out in the Introduction, the people of Israel had evidently been thinking about a change in the form of their government for some time. It appears that a firm conviction had grown up among them that, if they were to hold their own, they would have to have a more closely-knit national organization. Or, to state the same things in other words, they would have to cease to be tribes, that is, small communes—small administrative districts—united together only in the presence of a common enemy for a common advantage. Instead, they felt that they must become a military nation, and to accomplish that they, like other peoples, must have a monarchy.

While they made it plain to Samuel just what they wanted, the elders did not clearly state the motive which was behind their request. In-

stead, they based their contention on the fact that Samuel was getting old, and that his sons were not following in his footsteps. It was inevitable, of course, that Samuel would eventually have to be replaced—that had been done many times before in the God-appointed line of judges, with God himself raising up the needed judge; but it apparently never occurred to them that what they needed most at the time was the removal of the sons of Samuel from their posts and the appointment of some righteous men in their places. The presence of a problem due to the misconduct of some who are in responsible positions is not sufficient ground for changing God's order of things. This was true in the days of Samuel; and the same thing is true today. If an elder is not doing his duty or the singing is not up to standard, correct the problem., but do not endeavor to change the divine arrangement.

### The Divine Response

(1 Sam. 8: 6, 7)

*But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto Jehovah. And Jehovah said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them.* From all indications, Samuel knew nothing of the plan to ask him to make a king for Israel, and the whole matter must have come as a great surprise to him; and not only as a great surprise, but also as a great blow. Samuel's rule had always proved a blessing to the people, and while he must have known that he was getting to be an old man, it probably had not occurred to him that he was too old to direct the affairs of state as he had done for years. And, too, there is nothing in the text to indicate that he knew of the misconduct of his sons.

The whole petition was displeasing to Samuel, first, for personal and paternal reasons, and, next, because of the implications regarding the divine arrangements for the people's government. The whole thing was enough to drive the aged prophet to his knees. No one can study the life of Samuel without realizing how im-

portant he regarded the practice of prayer. Time and again the historian tells about his going to Jehovah in prayer. The people frequently requested that he pray for them; and on one occasion he said, "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 the right way." (1 Sam. 12: 23.) This was Samuel's rule of life, as may be seen in his break with Saul in later years, and his anointing David to be Saul's successor. He told the presumptuous Saul that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Read 1 Sam. 15: 1-16: 13.

The place of prayer in one's life is one of the most important lessons we can learn from this study. When things go wrong, our first impulse should be to take the matter to God. Too many people try to solve their own problems with little or no thought about God. Samuel did not even give the elders of Israel an answer to their request for a king, so far as the record goes, until he took the matter to God in prayer. Such an attitude on the part of his people has always been God's will for those who would live for him. "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.)

If those who seek to change God's order would only stop to think of the implications of their deeds, it is doubtful if many of the contemplated changes would be made. When the people of Israel sought a king to replace Samuel, they were in reality not rejecting the aged prophet, but God Almighty himself; and what was true then is just as true now. "Who-soever 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.) The marginal reading for "goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ" is *taketh the lead*. Only Christ will be recognized by God as the leader in matters pertaining to his kingdom. Read 1 Sam. 8: 8, 9.

### The Manner of the King They Requested (1 Sam. 8: 10-17)

*And Samuel told all the words of Jehovah unto the people that asked, of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: he will take your sons, and appoint them unto him, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and they shall run before his chariots; and he will appoint them unto him for captains of thousands, and captains of fifties; and he will set some to plow his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and the instruments of his chariots.*

It is doubtful if any people ever asked for a change in God's plan for them who fully realized what they were requesting. Only God, in his love, wisdom, and mercy, can know what is best for anyone; and it is only by trusting in him and walking according to his instruction can one be assured of having the best, both now and in the future. This requires faith in God's plans and purposes. "And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, *and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him.*" (Heb. 11: 6.)

*And he will take your daughters to be perfumers, and to be cooks, and*

*to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your men-servants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks: and ye shall be his servants.*

If one looks at the question of a kingdom from the worldly standpoint he might see some advantages over the old order, such as mass force to withstand an enemy attack and the development of internal resources; but there would be much more to lose. Instead of the independence which they had enjoyed, the rank and file of the citizens would be reduced to comparative insignificance. This is always true of a strong centralized government, in contrast with decentralization. A king must make his state magnificent, and taxes must be imposed on farmers and merchants everywhere to support that royal dignity. A standing army is also necessary, and that cost, too, would fall on the land and the people. In short, the liberties of the people are always abridged when power and wealth are concentrated within the hands of the few.

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of the lessons for this quarter?  
What should we aim to accomplish?  
What is the subject of this lesson?  
Repeat the golden text.  
Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

How far back in their history did the desire for a king characterize the Israelites?  
What will such an attitude eventually cause people to do?  
What kind of a record did Samuel have as the ruler of the Israelites?  
Why, then, did they have their mind set on a king?  
What did they expect to have in such a king?

#### The Golden Text

What was the Divine attitude toward the kings of Israel?  
What principle in the divine economy is illustrated by the golden text?  
Show that both the Old and the New Testaments set forth this principle.

#### The Request for a King

Give the setting for this request.

What principle should guide us in our study of these historical records?  
In what way has God linked the two Testaments together?  
Give a clear statement of the relation between the Old and New Testaments.  
Why can't people learn the meaning of one without understanding the other?  
What principal difference must we recognize between these two sections of God's word to man?  
Why was it easy for the people to ask Samuel for a king at the time of this lesson?  
What basic changes would have to be made before they could have their request?  
Why did the elders conceal their real motive when they made their request to Samuel?  
What motive did they assign and what was their real motive?  
How had Jehovah always handled such matters before during their history?  
What should have been their attitude toward these problems?  
Discuss the application of this principle for our time.

### The Divine Response

What effect did the request for a king have on Samuel?  
 Why did he feel as he did about the matter?  
 What kind of a record had he made with the people?  
 What was the prophet's first major reaction to their request?  
 Discuss Samuel's prayer-life.  
 Where did he place the emphasis regarding such matters?  
 What is the importance of this lesson to us?  
 Why do so many people today try to solve their problems without prayer?

What was Paul's injunction regarding prayer?  
 Why do so many people seek to change God's order of things?  
 Why did the people reject God in asking for a king?  
 How can people today be guilty of the same thing?

### The Manner of the King They Requested

Do you think that people who request a change in God's plan realize what they are asking for? Give reasons for your answer.  
 How can people be kept from such sins? Discuss the "gains" and "losses" in a centralized government.

## Lesson II—January 14, 1962

# ISRAEL'S FIRST KING

### Lesson Text

1 Sam. 9: 15-21; 10: 17-24

15 Now Je-ho'-vah had revealed unto Sam'-u-el a day before Saul came, saying,

16 To-morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Ben'-ja-min, and thou shalt anoint him to be prince over my people Is'-ra-el; and he shall save my people out of the hand of the Phi-lis'-tines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.

17 And when Sam'-u-el saw Saul, Je-ho'-vah said unto him, Behold, the man of whom I spake to thee! this same shall have authority over my people.

18 Then Saul drew near to Sam'-u-el in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is.

19 And Sam'-u-el answered Saul, and said, I am the seer; go up before me unto the high place, for ye shall eat with me to-day: and in the morning I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thy heart.

20 And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And for whom is all that is desirable in Is'-ra-el? Is it not for thee, and for all thy father's house?

21 And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Ben'-ja-mite, of the smallest of the tribes of Is'-ra-el? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Ben'-ja-min? wherefore then speakest thou to me after this manner?

17 And Sam'-u-el called the people

together unto Je-ho'-vah to Miz'-pah;

18 And he said unto the children of Is'-ra-el, Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, I brought up Is'-ra-el out of E'-gypt, and I delivered you out of the hand of the E'-gypt'-tians, and out of the hand of all the kingdoms that oppressed you:

19 But ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saveth you out of all your calamities and your distresses; and ye have said unto him, *Nay*, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before Je-ho'-vah by your tribes, and by your thousands.

20 So Sam'-u-el brought all the tribes of Is'-ra-el near, and the tribe of Ben'-ja-min was taken.

21 And he brought the tribe of Ben'-ja-min near by their families; and the family of the Mat'-rites was taken; and Saul the son of Kish was taken: but when they sought him, he could not be found.

22 Therefore they asked of Je-ho'-vah further, Is there yet a man to come hither? And Je-ho'-vah answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the baggage.

23 And they ran and fetched him thence; and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.

24 And Sam'-u-el said to all the people, See ye him whom Je-ho'-vah hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, Long live the king.

Golden Text.—*"Fear God. Honor the king."* (1 Pet. 2: 17.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalms 19.

## Daily Bible Readings

January	8. M.....	The King Identified (1 Sam. 9: 15-21)
January	9. T. ....	The King Chosen (1 Sam. 10: 17-24)
January	10. W. ....	The King's Associates (1 Sam. 10: 20-25)
January	11. T. ....	The King's Opponents (1 Sam. 10: 26, 27)
January	12. F. ....	The King's Victory (1 Sam. 11: 1-11)
January	13. S. ....	The King's Confirmation (1 Sam. 11: 12-15)
January	14. S. ....	The King's Disobedience (1 Sam. 13: 5-14)

TIME.—1095 B.C.

PLACES.—An unknown city, possibly Naioth, and Mizpah.

PERSONS.—Samuel, Saul, the servant, and the people.

## Introduction

The lengths to which people are willing to go, when once they have definitely made up their minds to have their own way, may be seen by reading the last verses of the chapter from which our last lesson was taken. After Samuel, at the direction of Jehovah, had explained to the people the manner of king who would reign over them, he said, "And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king whom ye shall have chosen you; and Jehovah will not answer you in that day.

"But the people refused to hearken unto the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of Jehovah. And Jehovah said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city." (1 Sam. 8: 18-22.)

Samuel's actions in making a king for Israel has been described as one of the most magnanimous, majestic, and heroic deeds ever done in the world's history. When once he was convinced that it was the will of God for him to proceed with the work, he promptly forsook all his past and abandoned all the lines of action which had characterized his work for Israel during the best years of his life, and set about to put into the hands of other men fresh possibilities for the welfare of the people for whom he had given his life. Samuel not only worked outwardly for the establishment of the kingdom, but he added his prayers to his actions. That great prophet was not willing to leave one stone unturned, in order to accomplish that which the people thought they wanted; notwithstanding the fact that God revealed to him that the new order would be a failure. But it was God's will for him to proceed as he did; and he was always willing to obey his Lord.

## The Golden Text

*"Fear God. Honor the king."* To fear God means to reverence and obey him; and it is because of this attitude toward him that the child of God can honor, that is, properly respect the king. Some people find it fairly easy to respect those rulers whom they admire, but that is not sufficient if one is to please God. Paul exhorted Timothy that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and

gravity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. 2: 1-4.)

When Paul penned these lines to Timothy, the man on the throne was Nero, one of the most wicked rulers in Roman history, and the very emperor who ordered the apostle's execution; and if Christians are to pray for a man like that, in order to be well pleasing unto God, then certainly they must pray for all men who are in authority over them, both

the good and the bad. But the aim of the prayer is not so much for the success of the rulers, as for conditions to prevail which will enable God's people to live as he intends that they should. The Christian's attitude toward civil rulers is clearly set forth in the following passage:

"Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have

praise from the same: for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing. Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." (Horn. 13: 1-7.) God has a purpose in appointing various kinds of rulers, and he expects his people to manifest a due regard for them. (See Dan. 4: 17.)

## The Text Explained

### The Future King Revealed to Samuel

(1 Sam. 9: 15-17)

*Now Jehovah had revealed unto Samuel a day before Saul came, saying, To-morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be prince over my people Israel; and he shall save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me. And when Samuel saw Saul, Jehovah said unto him, Behold, the man of whom I spake to thee! this same shall have authority over my people.* The manner in which Saul was led to Samuel is at once a delightful story and a forceful illustration of the workings of the providence of God. The entire story of Saul's journey to the prophet is perfectly natural, but it was all overruled by Jehovah for the purpose in question.

Saul was a man of Benjamin, and his father's name was Kish, who is described as "a mighty man of valor." And of Saul, the historian says that he was "a young man and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people." This intriguing narrative begins with the loss of Kish's asses, and the sending of Saul and a servant in quest of them. After a search for them in the neighboring countries without success, they came on the

third day to the neighborhood of Samuel's abode; and it was there that Saul proposed to the servant that they give up the search, and return to their home; lest Saul's father "leave off caring for the asses, and be anxious for us."

It was at this time that the servant told Saul that there was a man of God in the city before them, a man held in honor, and all that he said came to pass. The servant thought that he would probably tell them the whereabouts of the asses, but Saul hesitated to go to him, because they had nothing to offer him. But the servant had the fourth part of a shekel of silver in his hand, and he suggested that he would give him that "to tell us our way." The historian then explained parenthetically that beforetime in Israel when a man went to inquire of God, thus he said, Come, and let us go to the seer, for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer. Saul accepted the servant's suggestion regarding the gift for the man of God, and replied in these words: "Well said; come let us go. So they went unto the city where the man of God was." As they approached the city, they inquired of some maidens regarding the man whom they sought; and, following their instructions, they soon found him.

When Saul and the servant entered the city, they beheld Samuel coming out toward them, on his way to the

high place to bless the sacrifice before the people ate. The young women had explained to the two men that there would be a sacrifice that day in the high place, and that Samuel was going up there to eat; for the people would not eat until he arrived, "because he doth bless the sacrifice; and afterwards they eat that are bidden." Samuel was prepared for this meeting with Saul, for Jehovah had revealed to him on the previous day that he was sending Saul to him; but Saul, of course, did not know anything about these circumstances.

### Saul Feasts and Communes with Samuel

(1 Sam. 9: 18-21)

*Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is. And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer; go up before me unto the high place, for ye shall eat with me to-day; and in the morning I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thy heart. And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for thee, and for all thy father's house? And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou to me after this manner?*

It is interesting to observe the contrast between Samuel and Saul as they first look at each other. Saul's interest in Samuel at the moment was that he might obtain information from him regarding the lost asses, probably not far removed from the manner in which one might consult a magician; and it is also interesting to note that Saul's last act with reference to Samuel was in connection with the witch of Endor. (1 Sam. 28.) But Samuel's words to Saul, on the other hand, are beautiful in their smothering of all personal feeling, and dignified in their authority. The prophet at once took command of Saul, and prepared him by "half-hints" for something great to come.

When Samuel directed Saul to "go up before me unto the high place," that was a sign of honor; and the

invitation to the sacrificial feast was another. The promise to disclose Saul's own hidden thoughts to himself may have pointed to some secret ambitions which the Benjamite cherished, and the knowledge of such disclosure would, of course, prove that Samuel was indeed a prophet. The assurance that the lost asses had been found would ease Saul's mind, and satisfy the immediate purpose in going to Samuel; while the reference to all that was desirable in Israel would tend to cause Saul to put his mind on the serious business which Jehovah had for him. The future king responded with becoming modesty, which indicates that he had some understanding of what the prophet meant by the semi-veiled remark.

The events which followed when they reached the high place are graphically related in the closing paragraphs of chapter 9. "And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the guest-chamber, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, who were about thirty persons. And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee. And the cook took up the thigh, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, Behold, that which hath been reserved! set it before thee and eat; because unto the appointed time hath it been kept for thee, for I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day.

"And when they were come down from the high place into the city, he communed with Saul upon the housetop. And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of day, that Samuel called to Saul on the housetop, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out, both of them, he and Samuel, abroad. As they were going down at the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us (and he passed on), but stand thou still first, that I may cause thee to hear the word of God." (1 Sam. 9: 22-27.)

The marginal reading for "thigh" is *shoulder*, and the reference is probably to that portion of the sacrifice which belonged to Samuel as the

priest. (See Lev. 7: 32 and the marginal note.) The special attentions which were paid to Saul at the feast, and especially the giving of Samuel's portion of the sacrifice to him, signified the transference of the power of leadership to him; and all of this must have been well understood by those who were present at the feast. It could then be seen that the monarchy was reserved for Saul, and the formal investiture was made by the prophet himself. Samuel then anointed Saul to be king, and revealed to him some things which would happen to him on his way home. Read 1 Sam. 10: 1-16.

### The New King- Publicly Presented

(1 Sam. 10: 17-24)

*And Samuel called the people together unto Jehovah at Mizpah; and he said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all the kingdoms that oppressed you: but ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saveth you out of all your calamities and your distresses; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before Jehovah by your tribes, and by your thousands.* In giving the places, at the beginning of the lesson, it was stated that one of them was "an unknown city," possibly Naioth. Samuel's home was in Ramah, but it appears from 1 Sam. 19: 18, 19 that the prophet also had a dwelling in Naioth, which was probably in or near Ramah; and it is also probable that Naioth was also the site of the school of the prophets which Samuel seems to have directed. When the maidens told Saul and the servant that Samuel had "come to-day into the city," it may have been that they meant Naioth; or it could have been that he had come to Ramah from Naioth, or from one of the other cities of his judicial circuit. (1 Sam. 7: 15-17.) About the best that we can say about the "city" of 9: 12 is that it was an "unknown city" to us. The place of the public presentation of the new king is specifically stated as Mizpah.

Before the public choosing of the king took place, Samuel, in the name

of Jehovah, again improved the people for turning their backs on their Benefactor, and requesting a human king instead. They had for centuries been governed by God-appointed judges, they wanted a national government to replace that—a human king for a divinely guided prophet. They had always been blessed when God was their Governor, but that made no difference to them, when once they had made up their minds to have their own way. God intended to give them a king, but he wanted them to realize what they were doing, namely, rejecting the God who had redeemed them from their enemies, and supplied all their needs. They, in effect were saying that they could live better by sense, than they could by faith; and anyone who will stop to think, will have to admit that many of us today really feel the same way about such matters.

So Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken. And he brought the tribe of Benjamin near by their families; and the family of the Matrites was taken; and, Saul the son of Kish was taken: but when they sought him, he could not be found. Therefore they asked of Jehovah further, Is there yet a man to come hither? And Jehovah answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the baggage. Although Samuel knew that Jehovah had already selected Saul to be king, and that he himself had already anointed him for that purpose at the command of Jehovah (10: 1); both Jehovah and Samuel knew that some of the people, at least, would not be satisfied if the appointment depended solely upon the testimony of Samuel. It was for this reason, apparently, that the use of the lot was brought to bear upon the selection of the king. The lot had long been considered as the Lord's plan in such matters, as may be seen in the manner in which the land of Canaan was divided among the several tribes. Later on Solomon expressed their general feeling regarding the lot in these words: "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of Jehovah." (Prov. 16: 33.) "The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty." (Prov. 18: 18.) But if those people who insisted on a human king had really understood



the Scriptures, they would have known that anyone chosen from any tribe other than Judah would sooner or later have to be replaced. (Gen. 49: 10.)

*And they ran and fetched him thence; and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. And Samuel said to all the*

*people, See ye him whom Jehovah hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, Long live the king.* The people accepted the choice of a king as coming from Jehovah, and they clearly saw that from the physical standpoint (that which interested them most) he could not have been surpassed.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

What important lesson do we learn from the verses between this and the last lesson?

How do you account for such action on the part of the people?

Discuss Samuel's attitude toward the selection of the king, when once the matter had been determined by the Lord.

What were some of the motives which prompted the prophet's action?

### The Golden Text

What does it mean to fear God and honor the king?

What effect does the one have on the other?

Why does the Lord require his people to pray for kings?

What is the teaching of the New Testament regarding Christians and the powers that be?

How is it possible for a Christian to pray for a wicked king? (Compare Dan. 4: 17.)

### The Future King Revealed to Samuel

How were Samuel and Saul brought together?

What great doctrine does this illustrate?

Discuss the Bible teaching regarding providence.

Tell something of the family connections of Saul.

What was the immediate cause of Saul's and the servant's going to Samuel?

How was Saul's hesitation in the matter overcome?

What was a prophet formerly called? and why?

Describe the meeting of Samuel and Saul.

### Saul Feasts and Communes with Samuel

Discuss the contrast between the two men at this meeting.

What important lessons do we learn from each of their attitudes?

What honors did Samuel bestow upon Saul at this time? and why?

Do you think that Saul had any idea of the meaning of Samuel's words to him?

Give reasons for your answer.

Describe the events at the high place.

What was the significance of giving the "reserved thigh to Saul?

When and where was Saul anointed to be king?

What were some of the things which happened to him on his way home?

### The New King Publicly Presented

In what city did Samuel and Saul first meet?

In what place did the public presentation of the new king occur?

Why did Samuel reprove the people again before presenting the king?

Discuss the points he named in the reproof.

How could the people continue their request for a king in the face of Samuel's rebuke to them?

What lesson is there in all this for us?

Why was there a public choosing of the king after he had already been selected by Jehovah and anointed?

What lesson should we learn from this?

Why was the lot brought into the selection of the king?

How did the people of Israel feel about the lot?

In view of Jacob's prediction to his sons, what should the people who demanded a king have thought regarding a man from the tribe of Benjamin?

Why select a man of such great physical stature?

What effect did the announcement of the selection have on the people?

## Lesson III—January 21, 1962

## SAMUEL WARNS THE PEOPLE

### Lesson Text

1 Sam. 12: 1-5; 13-25

1 And Sam-u-el said unto all Is'-ra-el, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you.

2 And now, behold, the king

walketh before you; and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my youth unto this day.

3 Here I am: witness against me before Je-ho'-vah, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I taken a ransom to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.

4 And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand.

5 And he said unto them, Je-ho'-vah is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand. And they said, He is witness.

13 Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have asked for: and, behold, Je-ho'-vah hath set a king over you.

14 If ye will fear Je-ho'-vah, and serve him, and hearken unto his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of Je-ho'-vah, and both ye and also the king that reigneth over you be followers of Je-ho'-vah your God, *well*:

15 But if ye will not hearken unto the voice of Je-ho'-vah, but rebel against the commandment of Je-ho'-vah, then will the hand of Je-ho'-vah be against you, as it was against your fathers.

16 Now therefore stand still and see this great thing, which Je-ho'-vah will do before your eyes.

17 Is it not wheat harvest to-day? I will call unto Je-ho'-vah, that he

may send thunder and rain; and ye shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of Je-ho'-vah, in asking you a king.

18 So Sam'-u-el called unto Je-ho'-vah; and Je-ho'-vah sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared Je-ho'-vah and Sam'-u-el.

19 And all the people said unto Sam'-u-el, Pray for thy servants unto Je-ho'-vah thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins *this* evil, to ask us a king.

20 And Sam'-u-el said unto the people, Fear not: ye have indeed done all this evil; yet turn not aside from following Je-ho'-vah, but serve Je-ho'-vah with all your heart:

21 And turn ye not aside; for *then would ye go* after vain things which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain.

22 For Je-ho'-vah will not forsake his people for his great name's sake, because it hath pleased Je-ho'-vah to make you a people unto himself.

23 Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against Je-ho'-vah in ceasing to pray for you: but I will instruct you in the good and the right way.

24 Only fear Je-ho'-vah, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you.

25 But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

Golden Text.—“We have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.” (1 Sam. 12: 19.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Sam. 12: 6-12.

## Daily Bible Readings

January 15.	M.	Samuel's Admonition (1 Sam. 12: 6-18)
January 16.	T.	Samuel's Farewell (1 Sam. 12: 1-5, 19-25)
January 17.	W.	A Faithful Life (Psalm 26: 1-8)
January 18.	T.	Faithfulness to Be Rewarded (1 Sam. 12: 12-15)
January 19.	F.	God's Goodness (1 Sam. 12: 16-19)
January 20.	S.	Goodness and Severity of God (Rom. 11: 22)
January 21.	S.	Safety in Jehovah (Psalm 125: 1-5)

TIME.—1095 B.C.

PLACE.—Gilgal.

PERSONS.—Samuel and the people of Israel.

## Introduction

By reading the eleventh chapter of First Samuel, it will be seen that Saul did not assert his royal dignity nor enter upon his kingly duties when

his private call to be the ruler of his people was ratified at Mizpah. The sacred text says, “Then Samuel told the people the manner of the king-

dom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before Jehovah. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house. And Saul also went to his house to Gibeah; and there went with him the host, whose hearts God had touched. But certain worthless fellows said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no present. But he held his peace." (1 Sam. 10: 25-27.)

But a short time after this, apparently, a startling situation developed which changed the life of Saul radically. His attitude toward those who opposed his kingship was such as to indicate that he intended to demonstrate by his deeds that he was worthy of his crown. We gather from chapter eleven that when Saul returned to Gibeah he resumed his agricultural activities, and was engaged in those pursuits when the word reached him regarding the desperate plight of the men of Jabesh-gilead. Nahash, king of the Ammonites, came up and encamped against that city, and it seems that he was so sure of taking it that he was unwilling to accept its surrender except on the shameful condition of putting out the right eye of each individual, which he intended to lay as a disgrace to all Israel. The men of Jabesh asked for seven days respite, until they could get word to their brethren throughout all their borders, and see if they could get any assistance in their defense. They promised that they would submit to the reproach, if their brethren would not help them.

When word of all this desperate situation reached Saul, he was following the oxen out of the field, and he said, "What aileth the people that they weep?" After he was informed of what had happened, the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon him, and his anger was kindled greatly. He then took a yoke of oxen, cut

them in pieces, and sent them by messengers throughout the borders of Israel, saying, "Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen." The result was that a vast army rallied to him, and he sent word to the besieged Jabeshites that they would have deliverance the next day "by the time the sun is hot." Saul and the army made good their promise, and the Ammonites were so completely defeated and scattered "that not two of them were left together."

Some of the enthusiastic followers of Saul were so elated over the victory which they had won that they wanted to kill the "worthless fellows" who were opposed to his becoming king; but Saul said, "There shall not a man be put to death this day; for to-day Jehovah hath wrought deliverance in Israel." The new king was now seated securely on his throne, and the people of Jabesh never forgot their debt of gratitude. The house of Saul was safe there when their cause was ruined everywhere else. (See 1 Sam. 31: 7-13.) "Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before Jehovah in Gilgal; and there they offered sacrifices of peace-offerings before Jehovah; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly." (1 Sam. 11: 14, 15.) The assembly at Gilgal marked an important epoch in Jewish history. It ratified the work which was done in choosing Saul to be king in Mizpah, brought to an end the period of the judges, and formally inaugurated the new monarchy. Samuel, although he was still to retain his authority and influence as a prophet, resigned his office as judge at this meeting, and in so doing he delivered a solemn address to the people there assembled.

### The Golden Text

This portion of our lesson is found in the main text, and will be considered in its proper place.

### The Text Explained

#### Samuel Testifies and the People Confirm His Integrity

(1 Sam. 12: 1-5)

*And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your*

*voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded: and, behold, my sons are with you:*

*and I have walked before you from my youth unto this day. Here I am: witness against me before Jehovah, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I taken a ransom to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand. And he said unto them, Jehovah is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand. And they said, He is witness.*

This is one of the most remarkable statements on record. Here was a man who had spent a lifetime in judging the people of Israel (1 Sam. 7: 15), and when he came to turn those duties over to the king, he challenged the most minute inquiry into every act of his administration. He called upon any and everyone who had ever brought a case before him for judgment to state whether or not he felt that injustice had been done, or that any abuse had been experienced. Standing in the open assembly, he called upon God to witness that his hands were pure, and that uprightness and integrity had guided the whole course of his official life. Jamieson notes that history does scarcely anywhere present a more striking example of the moral sublime. In commenting upon this part of our text, Adam Clarke says,

"Did ever a minister of state, in any part of the world, resign his office with so much self-consciousness of integrity, backed with the universal approbation of the public? No man was oppressed under his government, no man defrauded! He had accumulated no riches for himself: he had procured none for his friends; nor had one needy dependent been provided for out of the *public purse*. He might have pardoned his own sons, who had acted improperly, before he quitted the government; but though he was the most tender of parents, he would not, but abandoned them to national justice, with only a tacit solicitation of mercy: *Behold, my sons are with you!* They have acted improperly; I deprived them of their authority; they are amenable to *you* for their past conduct; I have

walked uprightly and disinterestedly among you; they have not followed my steps: but can you forgive them for their father's sake? As a *minister of justice*, he abandons them to their fate; as a *tender father*, he indirectly and modestly pleads for them on the ground of his own services. Had he not acted thus in both these relations, he would have been unworthy of that character which he so deservedly bears."

Although Samuel lived before the sunlight of Christianity dawned upon the earth, his life was above reproach in all of its relationships; and there was not a man in Israel, from the king to the humblest, who so much as intimated that the old man had ever acted improperly with any man or in any relationship. Even God who knows the hearts of all men gave him a perfect record. Here is an example of judicial faithfulness and personal integrity which every man in authority, from elders in the church and on down, should study carefully and endeavor to emulate.

### His Authority as a Teacher Miraculously Made Known

(1 Sam. 12: 13-18)

*Now therefore behold the king whom you have chosen, and whom ye have asked for: and, behold, Jehovah hath set a king over you. If ye will fear Jehovah, and serve him, and hearken unto his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of Jehovah, and both ye and also the king that reigneth over you be followers of Jehovah your God, well: blit if ye will not hearken unto the voice of Jehovah, but rebel against the commandment of Jehovah, then will the hand of Jehovah be against you, as it was against your fathers.*

After the people had given their unqualified endorsement of Samuel and his administration, he then called upon them to "stand still, that I may plead with you before Jehovah concerning all the righteous acts of Jehovah, which he did to you and to your fathers." (Verse 7.) The prophet then cited examples from their history from Egypt to the present to show that Jehovah had always delivered them from their enemies. When they sinned, it was necessary for God to punish them; but when they turned to him again, he raised

up leaders, "and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side; and ye dwelt in safety. And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay, but a king shall reign over us; when Jehovah your God was your king."

The burden of this solemn, faithful, and uncompromising address which Samuel delivered on the occasion now before us was to show the people, that although they had obtained the change of government which they so foolishly requested, their conduct was highly displeasing to the Lord. However, the retiring judge assured them that if they would remain faithful to Jehovah (he was not resigning his authority over them), and to the principles of the theocracy, they would still enjoy his favor and protection from their enemies; but if not, then the hand of Jehovah would be against them, as it had been against their fathers. No one can evade God's justice by endeavoring to shake off his dominion. Those who will not accept him as king, must accept him as judge.

*Now therefore stand still and see this great thing, which Jehovah will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call unto Jehovah, that he may send thunder and rain; and ye shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of Jehovah, in asking you a king. So Samuel called unto Jehovah; and Jehovah sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared Jehovah and Samuel.*

After warning the people as to what would happen to them if they disobeyed the commandment of Jehovah, Samuel called attention to the cloudless day of the wheat harvest season, and told the people that Jehovah would give them a sign, great enough to cause them to see the enormity of their sin, in asking for a human ruler to judge them, instead of their Divine King. Bible students tell us that rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning, was rarely seen at that season of the year. Such phenomena belonged to the winter months. That is why Josephus called the sign which Samuel asked for "a winter storm in the midst of harvest." This event, so extraordinary at that

season of the year, terrified the people to the extent that they immediately confessed their latest sin, that of rejecting the divine order and asking for a human king. They were also moved to manifest great fear toward both Jehovah and Samuel.

### Confession of Sin and Divine Reassurance

(1 Sam. 12: 19-25)

*And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto Jehovah thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.* One of the cardinal principles in the divine plan for the forgiveness of sins is that of confession. People must be made to admit or acknowledge that they have sinned, before they will repent of their wrongdoing, and are thereby in position to receive the Lord's forgiveness. This principle is emphasized in both the Old and the New Testaments, as may be seen by reading the following passages.

"If they sin against thee (for there is no man that sinneth not), and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captive unto the land of the enemy, far off or near; yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn again, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captive, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have dealt wickedly; . . . then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling-place, and maintain their cause; and forgive thy people who have sinned against thee. . . ." (1 Kings 8; 46-53.) "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9.) Confession of sin is absolutely essential to forgiveness. (James 5: 16.)

*And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have indeed done all this evil; yet turn not aside from following Jehovah, but serve Jehovah with all your heart: and him ye not aside; for then would ye go after vain things which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain. For Jehovah will not forsake his people for his great name's sake, because it hath*

*pleased Jehovah to make you a people unto himself.* Samuel wanted the people to understand that the purpose of the miracle was not to frighten them away from Jehovah, but to make them realize that they had sinned against him. When they had been brought to confess their sin, it was then in order to lead them closer to God.

It should be observed that Samuel did not seek to make the people feel that they were excusable in their attitude in asking for a king; they had indeed been guilty of an enormous transgression; but since they had acknowledged it, Jehovah would forgive them and bless them as his people. This is one of the great examples of the mercy of God. If that were not his disposition, then none of us could live before him. But it is always necessary to keep in mind the fact that only God can thus bless his people; there is no other alternative and no other that can save. This was a lesson which the children of Israel never fully learned until they went through the ordeal of the Babylonian captivity.

*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 the right way.* Notwithstanding the fact that the people had rejected Samuel as their God-appointed leader, the prophet still felt that it would be a sin on his part against Jehovah if he should cease to pray for them. This is an example that all of God's people should seek to imitate. How many elders and preachers have had the experience of being rejected by the people whom they were trying to lead in the service of the Lord, who, instead of becoming angry with and denouncing them, have gone to

God in prayer for them? When people earnestly and sincerely pray for others, even their enemies, they cannot mistreat them, but will, on the contrary, endeavor to bless them.

While it was Samuel's duty to pray for the people who had rejected him, it was also his duty to instruct them in the good and right way. It often happens that religious teachers to-day, after those whom they are trying to teach the way of the Lord show a disposition to reject their teaching, say in effect, if not in reality, that they have no further obligation regarding them. If one is not exceedingly careful, it will be easy for him to allow the evil conduct of others to draw him away from the Lord. This was the spirit manifested by Paul when he freely forgave the offender in Corinth who had caused him so much trouble; and he said that he manifested this spirit "that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices." (2 Cor. 2: 5-11.)

*Only fear Jehovah, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do icckedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.* This great address by Samuel to the people of Israel reminds us somewhat of two similar addresses by Joshua as he was preparing to go the way of all the earth. (Josh. 23: 24. and also the farewell addresses of Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy.) Samuel, in effect, was calling upon the people to assume the obligation of practical religion and serious godliness. The term "fear" is used here in the sense of *reverence*, that is, of showing the proper respect for Jehovah. Faithfulness is always rewarded by the Lord; but sin is a reproach to any people.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What did Saul do immediately after his public selection to be king?  
How was he received by the people?  
What spirit did he manifest at that time?  
In what type of work was the king engaged at home?  
What circumstance caused him to begin his public career?  
How did he rally the army behind him?

How large was the army?  
What was the result of the battle?  
What did Samuel then command the people to do?  
What was the significance of the meeting at Gilgal?

### Samuel Testifies and the People Confirm His Integrity

What was Samuel's purpose in declaring his integrity?  
What is so unusual about his personal remarks?  
What was his attitude toward his own responsibility?

How did he regard his sons? and why?  
 What makes Samuel's great example so remarkable?  
 What lesson is there in this for elders and all others in authority?

#### His Authority as a Teacher Miraculously Made Known

What did Samuel do after the people endorsed him and his administration?  
 Why could he speak with such commanding authority at this time?  
 What use did he make of their past history?  
 What was the real burden of this great address?  
 What effect did their getting their own way have on their responsibility?  
 Why would Jehovah permit them to change from his to their way?  
 What lesson is there in all of this for us?  
 How did Samuel demonstrate his own authority before the people?  
 What was the purpose in all this?  
 What made the sign so unusual?  
 What effect did it have on the people?  
 In what sense did they fear Jehovah and Samuel?

#### Confession of Sin and Divine Reassurance

What place does the confession of sin have in the divine economy?

What does it mean for one to confess his sins?  
 Show that this principle is set forth in both the Old and New Testaments.  
 Why can't sins be forgiven without confession?  
 Why do so many people who desire forgiveness fail to confess their sins?  
 What was Samuel's purpose in telling the people not to fear?  
 What did he try to do after they confessed their sin?  
 Why did he remind them of the enormity of their sin after their confession?  
 How does all of this illustrate the mercy of God?  
 How should these truths affect us?  
 Why warn the people not to trust in any other source for salvation?  
 When did the people of Israel finally learn this lesson?  
 Why would it have been a sin for Samuel to cease to pray for the people who rejected him?  
 What lesson is there in this for us? Cite some examples.  
 What other duty did Samuel have toward the people?  
 What application does this have for our day?  
 How did Samuel conclude his great address?

### Lesson IV—January 28, 1962

## SAUL IS REJECTED BY JEHOVAH AS KING

### Lesson Text

1 Sam. 15: 10-23

10 Then came the word of Je-ho'-vah unto Sam'-u-el, saying,

11 It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And Sam'-u-el was wroth; and he cried unto Je-ho'-vah all night.

12 And Sam'-u-el rose early to meet Saul in the morning; and it was told Sam'-u-el, saying, Saul came to Car'-mel, and, behold, he set him up a monument, and turned, and passed on, and went down to Gil'-gal.

13 And Sam'-u-el came to Saul; and Saul said unto him. Blessed be thou of Je-ho'-vah: I have performed the commandment of Je-ho'-vah.

14 And Sam'-u-el said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

15 And Saul said, They have brought them from the Am'-a-lek-ites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto Je-ho'-vah thy God: and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

16 Then Ssm'-u-r'l said unto Saul,

Stay, and I will tell thee what Je-ho'-vah hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.

17 And Sam'-u-el said, Though thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Is'-ra-el? And Je-ho'-vah anointed thee king over Is'-ra-el;

18 And Je-ho'-vah sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Am'-a-lek-ites, and fight against them until they be consumed.

19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of Je-ho'-vah, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah?

20 And Saul said unto Sam'-u-el, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of Je-ho'-vah, and have gone the way which Je-ho'-vah sent me, and have brought A'-gag the king of Am'-a-lek, and have utterly destroyed the Am'-a-lek-ites.

21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the devoted things, to sacrifice unto Je-ho'-vah thy God in Gil'-gal.

22 And Sam'-u-el said, Hath Je-ho'-vah as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Je-ho'-vah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and t6r'-a-phim. Because thou hast rejected the word of Je-ho'-vah, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

**Golden Text.**—*"Thou hast rejected the word of Jehovah, and Jehovah hath rejected thee from being king over Israel."* (1 Sam. 15: 26.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Psalm 119: 33-40.

## Daily Bible Readings

January 22.	M.	Saul Anointed (1 Sam. 10: 1-8)
January 23.	T.	Saul Is Disobedient (1 Sam. 15: 10-16)
January 24.	W.	Saul Is Rejected by Jehovah (1 Sam. 15: 17-26)
January 25.	T.	Saul's Kingdom to Be Given to Another (1 Sam. 15: 27-31)
January 26.	F.	Failure through Disobedience (Isa. 42: 18-25)
January 27.	S.	Triumph through Faithfulness (Luke 5: 1-11)
January 28.	S.	Obedience Better Than Sacrifice (Psalm 40: 1-8)

**Time.**—1079 B.C.

**Place.**—Gilgal.

**Persons.**—Jehovah, Samuel, and Saul.

## Introduction

There is hardly a sadder story in all the Bible than that of Saul. So humble and promising at the beginning of his career, but so haughty and disobedient at its close. He may be rightfully classed as one of the greater characters of the Bible, yet his very place in history is so completely surrounded by characters greater than his that his life cannot be considered apart from theirs. James Hastings notes that as if to throw a stronger light on the character of the unhappy Saul by comparison or contrast, the Scriptures present him along with Samuel, the man of prayer, with David, the man after God's own heart, with his son Jonathan, so lovely and yet so truly great. Saul might have prayed like Samuel, might have waited upon God as David did, might have loved with largeness of heart like Jonathan. But his story is the story of the downward progress of the soul; his life is a succession of gradual changes, and in his successive trials evil prevails over the spirit of grace and opportunities of good. As a day that begins with sunshine, and then clouds over gloomily and at the last closes with a storm, so is the life of Saul. His is the most tragic character in the Old Testament records.

For a period of about two years Saul prospered as king over Israel, under the guidance of the Spirit of

God. Then came the time of his trial. The time had arrived when the children of Israel must throw off the heavy yoke of the Philistines. But Saul was not equal to the occasion. His first act of disobedience is recorded in 1 Sam. 13: 1-15a. Jonathan, Saul's son, smote a garrison of the Philistines, and they assembled themselves to fight against the Israelites. It seems that Samuel had commanded Saul to wait seven days until he (Samuel) would come to him, and offer a sacrifice before entering the battle. During this time the Philistines were busily preparing for battle, and the Israelites, seeing this, became terror-stricken and began to forsake Saul. The king himself grew impatient because of the prophet's failure to arrive on time, as he thought, and, taking the matter in his own hands, he offered the sacrifice himself. Saul's lack of faith resulted in his presumptuous sin, for which his kingdom was ultimately taken from him; and Samuel left him to follow his own headstrong way.

The extent of Israel's subjugation to the Philistines, Saul's rash oath, Jonathan's salvation from it, some of Saul's victories, and the names of the members of his family are recorded in 1 Sam. 13: 15b-14: 52.

Saul's second act of disobedience is described in the verses immediately preceding our lesson text for today. Because of the opposition of the



Amalekites to Israel, as they were leaving Egypt and going toward Sinai, Jehovah decreed their destruction. (Ex. 17: 8-15.) Saul was commissioned to perform this task, and was given specific instructions to make their extermination complete. But this he failed to do, as the following statement shows. "And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people

spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly." (1 Sam. 15:8, 9.) This is a lesson which every person today should learn. God expects implicit obedience on the part of those who would claim his promises; he will not allow any person to substitute his will for that of the divine.

### The Golden Text

*"Thou hast rejected the word of Jehovah, and Jehovah hath rejected thee from being king over Israel."*

Saul was no monster who had won his crown by unrighteous means, and then plunged at once into a reckless abuse of his power. He was no apostate who had cast off his belief in God, and set up some foreign idol as his god. He simply forgot Jehovah and the prophet through whom he was led to the new life and its inspiration. He failed to remember that he was under law, and that he had a mission to fulfil. When he was commanded to perform a certain service, his obedience was partial and incomplete, which was in effect no obedience at all. He appeared to assume that the Lord would be satisfied with the beginnings of obedience, and would pardon a small amount of personal desire.

When Saul failed to carry out the Lord's command to destroy the Amalekites, the death knell of his kingdom was sounded. The command which he received was plain and unmistakable: "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." (1 Sam. 15:3.) As already pointed out, Samuel made it plain to

Saul that Jehovah would no longer tolerate him as king; and it was then that Saul confessed that he had sinned, but his attitude was not that of true penitence, in which he humbly sought the Lord's forgiveness (Verses 24-26), but one of seeking excuse so that he might continue to hold the respect and loyalty of the people (Verse 30).

Hastings sums up the results of Saul's action in these words: From the time of his disobedience in the matter of Amalek, Samuel came no more to see Saul, whose season of probation was over. The light that he had refused to follow was put out, the voice that he had declined to hear was silenced, the person that had represented high and holy refreshment and influence was removed, because he ignored his sacred help; the spiritual friend whom he declined to follow was lost to him and was never seen again till in his deep degradation, in the utter terror of his soul, in the presence of a witch, while his flesh crept with horror and his hair stood on end, the saintly image of his friend, the impersonation of all that was good in his life, called from the world of spirits by the wretched man, rose before him paralyzed and speechless.

### The Text Explained

#### Jehovah's Attitude Revealed to Samuel

(1 Sam. 15: 10-12)

*Then came the word of Jehovah unto Samuel, saying, it repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. The term "repent" is*

attributed in the Bible to Jehovah when wicked men give him cause to alter his course and method of procedure, and deal with them as if he had actually repented of the kindness which he had showed them. The same original word for "repent" is also found in verse 29: "And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he is not a man, that he

should repent." The meaning here is that Jehovah is not changeable, and will not be untrue to the promises he made concerning his people. When the term "repent" is applied to God, as in verse 11, the technical word for it is *anthropomorphism*, and it means, according to Webster, to ascribe to God human characteristics or attributes. The use of anthropomorphic language is intended to bridge the great chasm between the infinite and finite minds. 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 is necessary to bridge the gulf between God and us.

And Samuel was wrath; and he cried unto Jehovah all night. This was in keeping with the declared purpose of Samuel to pray for those who were running counter to God's will. "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 the right way." (1 Sam. 12: 23; cf. 2 Pet. 3: 9.) More praying on the part of the Lord's people today, and less criticism and indifference, might result in turning many to the Lord's way of doing things.

And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning; and it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a monument, and turned, and passed on, and went down to Gilgal. While Samuel was praying in bitterness of soul, Saul was acting in character, with apparently no thought of humbly seeking Jehovah's forgiveness. The "monument" which he set up was probably a kind of "triumphal arch," or maybe a *hand* pointing to the place of his victory. (See marginal note, and cf. 2 Sam. 18: 18.) The haughty king was thinking more of his own accomplishments, than of the glory of God.

### The Meeting between Samuel and Saul

(1 Sam. 15: 13-16)

And Samuel came to Saul; and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of Jehovah: I have performed the commandment of Jehovah. While Saul attempted to conciliate Samuel with

a friendly greeting, it is hardly probable that his conscience was so hardened as to make him insensible of his sin. But Saul told Samuel that he had done that which Jehovah said that he had not done. (Verses 10, 11; cf. James 2: 10.)

And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? Saul's profession of obedience was loud, but the circumstantial evidence was against him. There are many professed Christians who boast of their obedience to the will of the Lord, but their indulgence of the flesh, their love of the world, their passion and unkindness, and their neglect of specific duties testify against them.

And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto Jehovah thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed. Although Saul was the king and the army which destroyed the Amalekites was under his personal command, yet he sought to shift the blame for the disobedience to the people. But that could not be done; and it is doubtful if even Saul really felt that way about the matter. A religious motive, however pious, can never compensate for disobedience. It sometimes happens that a man who oppresses the poor and engages in robbery or trickery will attempt to save his conscience by giving a part of the proceeds to the church! But Saul and the people utterly destroyed that which they did not want to save, just as many today gladly emphasize and vigorously execute other duties, in order to atone for some glaring sin.

Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what Jehovah hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. While Samuel was endeavoring to fulfil his obligation in passing the Lord's word on to Saul, the king, on the other hand, appears to manifest a spirit of contempt toward the prophet. It is as if he had said, "O. K. Let's hear it!" Saul probably knew that Samuel would condemn his action, and so with a defiant spirit he bade him say on. Many faithful gospel preachers have had to stand before "influential" members of the church and tell them

that which God wants them to know, when those who should be listening manifested only an attitude of condescension. Like Samuel, the preacher often has to stand alone; but he is not alone, for the Lord is with him. (Cf. John 16: 32.)

### Saul's Rejection as King Announced

(1 Sam. 15: 17-23)

*And Samuel said, Though thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel?* Samuel probably had reference to Saul's statement concerning himself at their first meeting, when he said that he was little in his own sight. When the prophet suggested something great for Saul, the latter replied, "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou to me after this manner?" (1 Sam. 9: 21; cf. 10: 21, 22.) Benjamin was not only the youngest of Jacob's children, but the tribe itself was almost wiped out by the others. (See the last two chapters of Judges.) But like Saul, there are relatively few people who can stand real prosperity, especially if their beginnings were humble. Matthew Henry notes that those who are advanced to honor and wealth, ought to remember often their mean beginnings, so that they may never think highly of themselves, but always study to do great things for God who has advanced them. (Cf. James 1: 17.)

*And Jehovah anointed thee king over Israel; and Jehovah sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed.* It should always be kept in mind that Saul, although the king of Israel, was still subject to the will of God. He was simply an instrument in the hands of Jehovah to accomplish his holy purposes. And in the matter of destroying the Amalekites, the question was simply that of punishing sin. It was true then, as it is now, that the wages of sin is death. Jehovah is never vindictive in his dealings with the human race; but when wicked people reached the point where they became cancers in their relation to other nations, the

cancers had to be wholly exterminated. Or, to state the same thing in other words, God's benevolent design for mankind made it necessary for him to destroy those people who would destroy the peace of the world.

*Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of Jehovah, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah?* These were searching questions, and the principle involved is just as applicable now as it was then. When anyone receives a command from the Lord, it is essential that he make every effort to please the Lord, and not to allow any other motives to influence his thinking and acting.

*And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of Jehovah, and have gone the way which Jehovah sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the devoted things, to sacrifice unto Jehovah thy God in Gilgal.* When people are bent on having their own way regarding their professed obedience, they rarely ever admit their failure to do all that is commanded; and when changes are made in God's requirements, such people usually contend that the alterations which they introduced in no way detract from that which God stipulated. This principle is clearly illustrated in such practices as substituting sprinkling and pouring for baptism, and the addition of mechanical instruments of music to the divine command to sing. When Saul said he had gone the way which Jehovah had sent him, he failed to say that only his feet went; his heart went elsewhere, and there can be no true obedience apart from the heart. The "devoted things" which the people brought back with them were the things which were devoted to destruction. Their religious motive would not justify their rebellious conduct, however.

*And Samuel said, Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.* The difference between burnt-offerings and sacrifices, and in obeying the voice of Jehovah, is the difference between outward

forms of service and the devotion of the heart. The worshipper's will must be brought under subjection to God's will; and when that is done the heart will be right, and all that is done will be made to conform to the divine standard. (Cf. Mic. 6: 6-8; Hos. 6: 6.) God is glorified more, and self is denied more, by heart-felt obedience, than by outward forms of sacrifice. It would be much easier to bring a sheep or a bullock to be burnt upon an altar, than to bring every thought into obedience to God.

*For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim. Because thou hast re-*

*jected the word of Jehovah, he hath also rejected thee from being king.*

For one to be stubborn and rebellious is equal to setting up false gods and worshipping them and engaging in witchcraft. The "teraphim" were household gods, probably images of ancestors. (Compare Gen. 31: 19, 32-35; 1 Sam. 19: 13.)

It is doubtful if many people who are guilty of rebellion and stubbornness are aware of the danger which is theirs. Such characteristics serve as an index to the condition of the heart; and it is always true that where one's heart is, there will also be the object of his devotion.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today?  
Repeat the golden text.  
Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What impresses you most about the life of Saul?

Why can't the history of his life be successfully studied alone?

Who are some of the greater men who surrounded him?

What was the general trend of Saul's life?

In what ways was Saul tried?

What two great acts of disobedience did he perform?

What important lesson should we learn from them?

### The Golden Text

What caused Saul to behave as he did?

When was the death-knell of his kingdom sounded?

What attitude did Saul then manifest? and why?

Give a brief summary of the result of his disobedience.

### Jehovah's Attitude Revealed to Samuel

In what sense does God repent?

Why is "anthropomorphic" language used in the Bible?

How was Samuel affected by Jehovah's message to him regarding Saul?

Why did he pray all night?

What important lesson is there in his example for us?

Why don't professed Christians criticize less and pray more?

What did Saul do following his victory over the Amalekites?

### The Meeting between Samuel and Saul

In what manner did Saul greet Samuel?

How did Samuel answer him?

What lesson should we learn from Saul's attitude?

Why did the king attempt to shift the blame for the disobedience?

Why can't a religious motive compensate for sin?

Show that it sometimes happens that people try to cover their wrongs in that way.

Contrast the attitudes of the two men when Samuel endeavored to give Saul Jehovah's message.

How is this lesson often brought home to us today?

### Saul's Rejection as King Announced

How did Samuel begin his word to Saul?

How did Saul feel about himself at the time of his selection as king?

Why can so few people remain humble in the wake of prosperity?

How should Christians feel toward their advancement?

What motive is always behind the Lord's punishment of the wicked?

How was this seen in the total destruction of the Amalekites?

What must always follow the practice of sin?

What searching questions did Samuel ask Saul?

What feelings were they designed to awaken in the king?

What should anyone always do with any command he has from God?

How did Saul answer Samuel? and why?

Why can't people who are determined to have their own way see their failures?

Why do some people try to justify changes they make in God's requirements?

Why is obeying the voice of Jehovah better than sacrifice?

To what are rebellion and stubbornness likened? and why?

## Lesson V—February 4, 1962

## DAVID. THE SHEPHERD BOY KING

### Lesson Text

1 Sam. 16: 1-13

1 And Je-ho'-vah said unto Sam'-u-el, How long wilt thou mourn for

Saul, seeing I have rejected him from being king over Is'-ra-el? fill thy

horn with oil, and go: I will send thee to Jes'-se the Beth'-le-hem-ite; for I have provided me a king among his sons.

2 And Sam'-u-el said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And Je-ho'-vah said, Take a heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to Je-ho'-vah.

3 And call Jes'-se to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee.

4 And Sam'-u-el did that which Je-ho'-vah spake, and came to Beth'-le-hem. And the elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, Comest thou peaceably?

5 And he said, Peaceably; I am come to sacrifice unto Je-ho'-vah: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jes'-se and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

6 And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on E-li'-ab, and said, Surely Je-ho'-vah's anointed is before him.

7 But Je-ho'-vah said unto Sam'-u-el, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him: for **Je-ho'-vah seeth** not as man seeth; for

man looketh on the outward appearance, but Je-ho'-vah looketh on the heart.

8 Then Jes'-se called A-bin'-a-dab, and made him pass before Sam'-u-el. And he said, Neither hath Je-ho'-vah chosen this.

9 Then Jes'-se made Sham'-mah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath Je-ho'-vah chosen this.

10 And Jes'-se made seven of his sons to pass before Sam'-u-el. And Sam'-u-el said unto Jes'-se, Je-ho'-vah hath not chosen these.

11 And Sam'-u-el said unto Jes'-se, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he is keeping the sheep. And Sam'-u-el said unto Jes'-se, Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither.

12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now' he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon. And Je-ho'-vah said, Arise, anoint him; for this is he.

13 Then Sam'-u-el took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of Je-ho'-vah came mightily upon David from that day forward. So Sam'-u-el rose up, and went to Ra'-mah.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—*"The Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David from that day forward."* (1 Sam. 16: 13.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—John 10: 11-18.

### Daily Bible Readings

January	29. M.....	A King Provided (1 Sam. 16: 1-5)
January	30. T.....	Kind of Man Selected (1 Sam. 16: 6-8)
January	31. W.....	David Brought from the Field (1 Sam. 16: 9-13)
February	1. T.....	The Reign of David (2 Sam. 7: 18-26)
February	2. F.....	David Favored of God (Psalm 89: 19-28)
February	3. S.....	God's Covenant with David (Psalm 132: 1-11)
February	4. S.....	David's Faith in God (Psalm 27)

**TIME.**—1063 B.C.

**PLACES.**—Ramah and Bethlehem.

**PERSONS.**—Jehovah, Samuel, Jesse, and his sons.

### Introduction

It was pointed out in a previous lesson that Saul's claim to greatness was always overshadowed by men who were greater than he. But when we pass to the study of his successor on the throne, the very reverse is true. Not only did David rise above Saul in every moral standard; there never was another king of God's people on earth who reached the height to which David attained. And to Da-

vid only belongs the distinction typifying the greatest of all Kings, his son (according to the flesh) and successor, the Lord Jesus Christ, who sits today upon the throne which is called by David's name. (Acts 2: 29-31; Luke 1: 30-33; cf. Psalm 89: 35-37; Dan. 7: 13, 14.)

In introducing a series of studies on the life and character of David, Hastings observes that a nation has

rarely associated all her attributes with the life of a single man. But in the Hebrews we find a people, through long centuries of its history and through devious changes of its fortune, consistently and persistently agreeing to heap upon a single individual the aggregate glories of every profession of life. Israel has fixed her affections upon an ideal whose very name expresses the basis for uniting all desires—David the beloved. To claim one man as the object of all national desires is a claim not easily sustained. It can be supported only on the supposition that this one man has passed through every national experience, has filled every sphere, and has partaken of every circumstance.

As we take this wide view of the life and character of David, we note that he is not simply the greatest of

the kings of Israel; he is the man who is great in everything else. He monopolizes all her institutions. He is her shepherd boy—the representative of her toiling classes. He is her musician—the successor of Miriam and Deborah. He is her soldier—the conqueror of all the Goliaths that would steal her peace. He is her king—numbering her armies and regulating her polity. He is her priest (figuratively; for he could not be a literal priest)—substituting a broken and contrite spirit for the blood of bulls and rams. He is her prophet—predicting with his latest breath the perpetuity of his kingdom. He is her poet—her psalms are called by his name. The truth is, in the estimation of Israel this man is a personification of the nation itself—the embodiment of her qualities, the incarnation of her spirit, and the type of her destiny.

## The Golden Text

This portion of our lesson is a part of the main text, and will be treated in due order.

## The Text Explained

### A New Mission for Samuel

(1 Sam. 16: 1-4)

*And Jehovah said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from being king over Israel? fill thy horn with oil, and go: I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite; for I have provided me a king among his sons.* Our last lesson saw the final break between Samuel and Saul, and the latter's irrevocable rejection by Jehovah. "Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul. And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death; for Samuel mourned for Saul: and Jehovah repented that he had made Saul king over Israel." (1 Sam. 15: 34, 35.)

The self-willed Saul, whose course was rapidly descending toward the fatal battlefield of Gilboa, had proved a complete failure, and he could not therefore continue to be God's instrument for ruling Israel. He did remain for a time as king, until his sin worked out to its sad end; but God had selected another man to take his place, and Samuel was appointed to anoint him as the new king. Samuel's grief on account of Saul's re-

jection demonstrated the amiable feelings of the man; but they were at variance with his public duty as a prophet. The declared purpose of Jehovah to transfer the kingdom of Israel to hands other than those of Saul was not an angry menace, but a fixed and immutable decree; and Samuel, as God's faithful servant, must have a part in the transfer.

*And Samuel said, How can I go? If Saul hear it, he will kill me.* This does not imply that Samuel lacked faith and was therefore unwilling to obey God's commandment; he apparently was asking for more light. And when people come to God in that spirit, he is neither displeased with them nor does he deny their request. (James 1: 5-8.)

*And Jehovah said, Take a heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to Jehovah.* In commenting on this passage, *The Expositors Bible* notes that the question has often been raised, Was the diplomatic arrangement not objectionable? Was it not an act of duplicity and deceit? Undoubtedly it was an act of concealment, but it does not follow that it was an act of duplicity. It was concealment of a thing which Samuel was under no obligation to di-

vulge. It was not concealment of which the object was to mislead anyone, or to induce anyone to do what he would not have done had the whole truth been known to him. When concealment is practiced in order to take unfair advantage of anyone, or to secure an unworthy advantage over him, it is a detestable crime. But to conceal what you are under no obligation to reveal, when some important end is to be gained, is quite a different thing.

In addition to that which has just been said, Adam Clarke calls attention to the fact that it was strictly true that Samuel did offer a sacrifice; and it does not appear that he could have done the work which Jehovah commanded him to do, unless he had offered the sacrifice to which he called the elders of the city, along with the sons of Jesse and their father. That was one purpose which was before Samuel, but it was not the principal object of his going to Bethlehem. If he had revealed the principal design of his visit there, evil and not good would have resulted; but he could reveal a secondary design, and still remain in the realm of absolute truth.

*And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee.* By reading the last verse of the Book of Ruth, it will be seen that Jesse was the grandson of Boaz and Ruth, the beautiful gleaner and satisfied stranger, who left her home in Moab and came to Bethlehem with Naomi, where she married the wealthy farmer Boaz, and became the ancestress of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Matt. 1: 1-5.)

### **The Plan for Anointing Another King:**

(1 Sam. 16: 4, 5)

*And Samuel did that which Jehovah spake, and came to Bethlehem.* 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, yet age after age some event notable in history, some death or birth, or some prophetic word drew the eyes of Israel to the village in affection or in hope; and to us the Saviour's birth there has so distin-

guished the place as to give each reference to it in Old Testament history, prophecy, and psalm a tender significance. Micah grasped the secret of the ages when he exclaimed, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." (Mic. 5: 2; cf. Luke 2: 1-14.) Bethlehem was located some five or six miles south of Jerusalem; and after the events of our lesson today, it became pre-eminently known as "the city of David."

*And the elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably; I am come to sacrifice unto Jehovah: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.* It had been Samuel's duty as judge to go from city to city to render judgment and punish offenders (1 Sam. 7: 15, 16); and it is possible that the elders of Bethlehem feared that in some way their city had incurred the divine wrath. And, too, it appears that Samuel was accustomed to visit various localities at uncertain intervals for the purpose, not only of holding courts of justice and redressing grievances, but also of celebrating religious services, and offering sacrifices. Samuel was, in addition to being a judge, also a priest and a prophet.

The sanctification which Samuel authorized consisted in cleansing themselves from any ceremonial defilements. (Gen. 35: 2; Ex. 19: 10.) No one can read the law of Moses without being deeply impressed with the place and significance of sanctification among the Israelites; and the same thing is true in the New Testament. The New Testament meaning of the term is to set apart unto the Lord service, and that can be done only as one yields himself to the truth of the gospel. (John 17: 17; Heb. 10: 10; Eph. 5: 26; 1: 13, 14.) The absolute necessity of the practice can be seen by reading Heb. 12: 14: "Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord."

*And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.* It is possible that Jesse was one of

the principal men of the city, and if so, then Samuel could give him and his family this special attention, without arousing the curiosity of the neighbors. At any rate, Jesse and his sons were called to the sacrifice, and there is nothing said which indicates that there was anything singular about it, other than that the Lord had specified that they be there.

### How God's Election Works

(1 Sam. 16: 6-13)

*And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely Jehovah's anointed is before him. But Jehovah said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him: for Jehovah seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart.*

At the proper time, the sons of Jesse presented themselves one by one before Samuel for his inspection. It is possible that the prophet explained his principal mission to the assembled group which had come to the sacrifice, and especially to Jesse. Saul had been chosen because of his great physical stature, and that probably came into the mind of Samuel as he looked upon Eliab, the first of Jesse's sons to pass before him. But the time had come in the economy of Jehovah when mere physical fitness had ceased to be a standard. This, however, does not imply that physical fitness should be disregarded for any given task, but rather that such is not to be looked upon as one's principal asset. It would be a blessing if every person who engages in the Lord's service were in the best physical condition possible; but that is in no way essential to effective and acceptable service. (2 Cor. 12: 7-10.) We do not know why Eliab was unacceptable to the Lord, but for some reason he was rejected.

After Jehovah told Samuel that he had rejected Eliab, he then gave the prophet the divine standard for judging; and it is one which we cannot study too carefully or too often. God's ways and man's ways (when left to himself) are never the same; for no man unaided can reach the standard which Jehovah maintains. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nei-

ther 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.)

Man, in the very nature of the case, can see only the outward appearance and manifestations, but Jehovah sees all of that and more; he looks into the innermost recesses of the soul. "And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb. 4: 13.) In commenting on the words of Jehovah to Samuel, W. M. Taylor notes that it makes little difference, therefore, what the outward appearance is, while, if the heart be wrong, nothing can be right. Christianity does not consist in attractive physical features, and bodily beauty is not holiness; and it is for that reason that character ought to be the principal object of one's attention. Not how one looks, but what he is counts before God; and if one will follow the divine pattern, his soul will become beautiful in the eyes of the Lord, and his life will be bright, even in the sight of his fellow men, with a glory which is not of this world.

*Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath Jehovah chosen this. Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath Jehovah chosen this. And Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Jehovah hath not chosen these.* If the matter had been left to Samuel and Jesse, it is certain that one of the seven would have been chosen. But the work to be done was the Lord's, and he reserved the right to make his own selection of the one to do it. Too few people who profess to follow the Lord are willing to allow him to choose their work for them. Too often we allow worldly considerations, rather than God's glory and the good of ourselves and our fellow men, to determine the fields of our activity. Any man who does his best and trusts in God for guidance can look back over his life and see many instances in which the Lord has led him in fields of usefulness.

*And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are*



*here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he is keeping the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither.* This would indicate that David was a fairly young lad, but old enough to attend to the duties of caring for the sheep. His age probably made his father feel that he was not old enough to be invited to such a meeting as Samuel had called. How often are the youngest in a family or a congregation neglected! but they are often, as in the case now before us, the most important. If the older people, and especially the leaders in congregations, would only look, they could find many useful people among the younger ones about them.

David's occupation was ideal for the training which he needed for the work God had in store for him. It is both interesting and profitable to observe the many references which he made to his shepherd-life in later years. Compare, for example, the twenty-third psalm. Many of the outstanding men and women of the Bible were among the lowly toilers of the earth. Consider Elisha, Amos, Ruth, Jesus, and Paul, to name only a few. Some of the Lord's apostles were fishermen, and Moses himself was a keeper of sheep. Such people not only knew the meaning of work; they also understood many of the problems which are common to the average man and woman who make up such a large part of human society.

*And he sent, and brought him in.*

*Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon. And Jehovah said, Arise, anoint him; for this is he.* If David was disappointed in not getting to attend the sacrifice, that must have been forgotten when his father called for him to come in. He was busy at his work as a shepherd boy when the message came to him, and when he went to the feast, he received the greatest blessing after all. The term "ruddy" means *red*, and it is generally thought that David had red or perhaps golden hair and a fair skin, which would mark him as being goodly to look upon in contrast with those of dark hair and complexion, which probably was the general rule. Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with oil when they were chosen and inducted into office.

*Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.* The record does not specifically state whether or not Samuel explained the significance of the anointing oil, but it is reasonable to suppose that he did; but whether he did or not, David was at that time consecrated to the service of God, and the Spirit of God came upon him as a seal and pledge of the blessings which the Lord bestowed upon the rulers of the nation for the people's good. The anointing of David to be king over Israel was among the last public acts performed by Samuel, so far as the record goes. After he had finished that service, he arose and went to his home in Ramah.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today?  
Repeat the golden text.  
Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

What contrast do we have between Saul and David?

What great distinction did David enjoy?  
Why was he so highly regarded by the nation of Israel?

### A New Mission for Samuel

What was Samuel's attitude toward Saul as we enter this lesson?

What did the Lord say to him?

What did Samuel's grief for Saul show regarding the prophet?

Why was it necessary that a new king be selected?

What question did Samuel ask Jehovah? and why?

What is God's attitude toward such questions?

What did Jehovah tell Samuel to do in order to escape the wrath of Saul?

Was the plan misleading? Give reasons for your answer.

Is it permissible to follow the same principle today?

Name some conditions which might require the same procedure.

Who was Jesse? and where did he appear in history?

### The Plan for Anointing Another King

Where was Bethlehem and its place in Hebrew history?

What effect did his visit to the city have on the elders there?

Why would they be so alarmed?

Why did Samuel have such influence over the people of Israel?

What did the prophet mean by telling the elders to sanctify themselves?  
 What is the New Testament teaching regarding that subject?  
 How could Jesse and his sons attend the meeting without arousing suspicion on the part of the neighbors?

#### How God's Election Works

How was the future king to be made known to Samuel?  
 Why would he think that Eliab was the man?  
 What standard did Jehovah tell Samuel to follow?  
 What notable difference is seen between the selection of Saul and David?  
 What reason was given for rejecting Eliab?  
 Why aren't Jehovah's and man's ways the same?  
 What is the principal difference between them?  
 Why isn't physical fitness so important?

What will be the result if the divine pattern is followed?  
 How many sons of Jesse passed before Samuel who were rejected?  
 What lesson do we learn regarding Samuel's and Jesse's attitude toward making the choice?  
 What question did Samuel then ask Jesse? and why?  
 Where was David and why was he not invited to the feast?  
 What lesson should this experience teach us regarding young people?  
 What can you say of the value of David's occupation as a means of training him for the work God had for him to do?  
 What use did he make of his experience in later years?  
 What is said regarding the appearance of David?  
 What was the significance of anointing David with the oil?  
 What result followed?

## Lesson VI—February 11, 1962

# DAVID AND GOLIATH

### Lesson Text

1 Sam. 17: 19, 32, 41-52

19 Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Is'-ra-el, were in the vale of E'-lah, fighting with the Phi-lis'-tines.

32 And David said to Saul, Let not man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Phi-lis'-tine.

41 And the Phi-lis'-tine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield went before him.

42 And when the Phi-lis'-tine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and withal of a fair countenance.

43 And the Phi-lis'-tine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Phi-lis'-tine cursed David by his gods.

44 And the Phi-lis'-tine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the birds of the heavens, and to the beasts of the field.

45 Then said David to the Phi-lis'-tine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a javelin: but I come to thee in the name of Je-ho'-vah of hosts, the God of the armies of Is'-ra-el, whom thou hast defied.

46 This day will Je-ho'-vah de-

liver thee into my hand; and I will smite thee, and take thy head from off thee; and I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Phi-lis'-tines this day unto the birds of the heavens, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in is'-ra-el,

47 And that all this assembly may know that Je-ho'-vah saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is Je-ho'-vah's, and he will give you into our hand.

48 And it came to pass, when the Phi-lis'-tine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hastened, and ran toward the army to meet the Phi-lis'-tine.

49 And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Phi-lis'-tine in his forehead; and the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell upon his face to the earth.

50 So David prevailed over the Phi-lis'-tine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Phi-lis'-tine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.

51 Then David ran, and stood over the Phi-lis'-tine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Phi-lis'-

tines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.

52 And the men of Is'-ra-el and of Ju'-dah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Phi-lis'-tines, until thou

comest to Ga'-i, and to the gates of Ek'-ron. And the wounded the Phi-lis'-tines fell down by the way to Sha-a-ra'-im, even unto Gath, and unto Ek'-ron.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—*"The battle is Jehovah's, and he will give you into our hand."* (1 Sam. 17: 47.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—Psalms 27: 1-6.

## Daily Bible Readings

February 5. M.....	Story of David and Goliath (1 Sam. 17: 1-52)
February 6.	T. Goliath, a Man of Gath (1 Sam. 17: 1-11)
February 7. W.....	David's Visit to the Camp of Israel (1 Sam. 17: 12-39)
February 8.	T. David's Faith in God (1 Sam. 17: 41-52)
February 9.	F. Deliverance by Jehovah (Psalms 44: 1-8)
February 10. S.....	David Is Envied by Saul (1 Sam. 18: 1-9)
February 11. S.....	Sin of Envy (Gal. 5: 19-21)

**TIME.**—1063 B.C.

**PLACE.**—The vale of Elah.

**PERSONS.**—Saul, David, and Goliath.

## Introduction

Those who read the history of David thoughtfully will observe that he is introduced into history by three different incidents. The first one tells of his anointing to be king, which we studied last week. Saul had been rejected by Jehovah, and Samuel was sent to Bethlehem, to the house of Jesse, to select a successor to the unfaithful man from Benjamin. Beginning with the first of Jesse's sons, seven of them passed before Samuel, but they were all rejected. The prophet then asked Jesse if he had other sons, and upon being told that the youngest one was keeping the sheep, Samuel sent for him, and in due time he was anointed to be king. David did not enter upon his royal duties during the remainder of Saul's lifetime; and it is very probable that he returned to the flocks soon after Samuel left to go to his home in Ramah.

The future king next appears in history as the maker of "Medicinal music" in the presence of the troubled king. The inspired record says that "the Spirit of Jehovah departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from Jehovah troubled him." The servants of Saul suggested that a "skilful player on the harp" be sought out and brought to the king; "and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well." This idea appealed to the king; and upon being told that a son of Jesse the

Bethlehemite was such a person, Saul sent to Jesse and obtained the services of David. "And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took the harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." (1 Sam. 16: 14-23.) Although this narrative is in the same chapter as that of the anointing of David, the two accounts are given as being somewhat independent of each other.

The third incident by which David is introduced into history is the one which we are to study today. Notwithstanding the fact that David had been in the presence of Saul as his musician and armor bearer, the account of his fight with the Philistine giant plainly indicates that he was wholly unknown to the king. Consider these two statements in the second and third accounts of his introduction into history. "And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armorbearer." (1 Sam. 16: 21.) "And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell. And the king said, Inquire thou whose son the stripling is." (1 Sam. 17: 55, 56.) One would think that at least "the captain of the host" would know the young man who had been the king's armor bearer.

But as it is, the only conclusion we can draw is that David is introduced into history by three loosely-con-

nected narratives; and it is important that we keep these facts in mind as we study the record of his life.

## The Golden Text

This portion of our lesson is a part of the main text, and it will be considered in its proper order.

## The Text Explained

### The Setting for the Lesson

(1 Sam. 17: 19)

*Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the vale of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.* The occasion of our lesson for today was the war between Israel and the Philistines. It appears that the latter people had come from Egypt, and had settled along a narrow strip of the coastline in southwestern Palestine. Although they seemed to have been one people, yet in their government it appears that they were divided into a confederacy of five more or less independent cities, namely, Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron. (See map.) During the days of Shamgar and Samson the Philistines held the people of Israel in hard and cruel bondage; and it was only under Samuel that the people of the Lord were able to break their power to any great degree, although they did enjoy temporary relief under the earlier judges.

Saul was quite successful in his fight against the Philistines during the early months of his reign; and it is altogether possible that they were encouraged to renew their hostilities against Israel when they heard of Samuel's separation from Saul. At any rate, there was war between Israel and the Philistines at the time of our lesson for today. "Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle; and they were gathered together at Socoh, which belongeth to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammin. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and encamped in the vale of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines. And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side: and there was a valley between them." (1 Sam. 17: 1-3.)

The Philistines had a soldier in the camp by the name of Goliath. He is referred to as a champion; and

when we consider his size, it is easy to think that he was just that. His height is given as six cubits and a span, or, according to our measurements, nine feet and nine inches tall, a cubit being eighteen inches and a span nine inches; and he was clothed and armed in proportion to his size. This giant came out in view and in hearing distance of the Israelites morning and evening for a period of forty days, and challenged their army to furnish a man to fight with him. He proposed that the victor in the contest should have as his reward the servitude of the losing country to his people. As he continued his challenge, "the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together. And when Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid."

David's three oldest brothers were in the army with Saul, and their father was at the time an old man, and stricken in years among men. David himself was going to and from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem. "And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched grain, and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to thy brethren; and bring these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge." It was at this point that the inspired historian explained in the part of the lesson text now under consideration where his brethren were.

### The Giant's Challenge Accented by David

(1 Sam. 17: 32)

*And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.* David promptly obeyed his father's command, and arrived at the camp just as the battle was about

to get underway. He left his baggage with the keeper of the baggage, ran to the army, and, having found his brethren, saluted them. While he was talking with his brothers, Goliath came out of the ranks of the Philistines, and repeated the challenge which he had been hurling at the Israelites for more than a month. David heard what he had to say, and he also observed that when the men of Israel heard his challenge, they fled from him and were sore afraid. Some of the soldiers then said to David, "Have you seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel."

It appears from verses 26, 27 that David wanted to make sure that he correctly understood what the king proposed to do for the man who was successful in slaying the mighty champion of the Philistines who was continuing to defy the armies of the living God; and when he asked the question, the people repeated the words which had just been spoken. The oldest brother of the future king heard what David had said to the people, and became annoyed at what he considered an unbecoming attitude on the part of his young brother. "And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why art thou come down? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thy heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle."

But David did not allow himself to become provoked at his brother's angry and unfounded charge against him; and this should be an impressive lesson to all of us. If some one mistreats us by saying some improper thing to or about us, the situation will not be improved by our becoming angry and hurling countercharges. Instead, we should endeavor to overcome evil with good. See Rom. 12: 17-21; cf. Prov. 15: 1; 16: 32. David's reply was respectful and to the point: "And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" There

was both a reason for David's being there (his father had sent him), and for his taking some action, since none of the soldiers was willing to accept the Philistine's challenge.

And so David turned away from his brother, and spoke to someone else, with the result that the people answered him again after the former manner. And when the word reached Saul, he sent for David, who told him that he would be glad to accept the challenges. But the king told David that he was not able to fight such a man. "And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." But David told Saul how he had been successful in slaying both a lion and a bear which had attempted to carry away some lambs from his flock; and he assured the king that Jehovah who delivered him out of the paw of the lion and of the bear, would also deliver him from the man who was defying the armies of the living God. Saul then attempted to arm David for the fight, but David would not accept anything the king offered him. Instead, he took only his staff in his hand, and his sling. And as he prepared to go forth to meet the giant, he "chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in the shepherd's bag which he had, . . . and he drew near to the Philistine."

### The Encounter and the Result

(1 Sam. 17: 41-52)

*And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield went before him.* The contrast between the warriors was most impressive. The giant had every military preparation, while David's trust was in the strength of God, a living demonstration of our golden text for today. The whole situation no doubt was designed to bring the future king before the eyes of the people.

*And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and withal of a fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou earnest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me,*

*and I will give thy flesh unto the birds of the heavens, and to the beasts of the field.* It appears that when two champions met in such a combat as this, they each made statements to each other before the fight began. It is very probable that Goliath did not see David's sling, but only his staff; and that probably accounts for the reference to the dog and the staves, as if to say, Do you consider me a mere dog after your sheep, and do you think that all you need is a staff to chase me away. He then called on his gods to bring David into contempt for the insult which he offered him; and then added his own boast of what he proposed to do to him.

*Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a javelin: but I come to thee in the name of Jehovah of hosts, the Cod of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will Jehovah deliver thee into my hand; and I will smit thee, and take thy head from off thee; and I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day unto the birds of the heavens, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that Jehovah saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is Jehovah's, and he will give you into our hand.* There is a marked contrast between the speech which the Philistine made, and that which David delivered. David's entire trust was in Jehovah, and for his glory. He wanted all the world to know that the battle was the Lord's, and that it would result in everyone's knowing that he was directing it. This is the way the Lord's people should feel about his work now. When they are willing to put their trust in him, and use the strength and wisdom which he supplies to overcome all obstacles which may be in their way; then the world about them will be impressed with the fact that he is indeed leading his people to the victory which is for their good and his glory. (Rom. 8: 31-39; 1 Cor. 15: 57, 58; 1 John 5: 4.)

*And it came to pass when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hastened, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand*

*in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead; and the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell upon his face to the earth.* The only part of the Philistine's body which was exposed was the target of David's aim. He was evidently an expert with the sling; but it was due probably more to the providence of God, than to David's marksmanship, that the stone hit the giant in such a vital spot. However, it is possible that David was that accurate himself, in view of a statement found in Judges 20: 16. In speaking of the men of Benjamin, the inspired historian said, "Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men left-handed; every one could sling stones at a hair-breadth, and not miss." If Goliath knew of this ability among the Israelites, he probably didn't think about it when young David came out to meet him. But whatever may have been the facts in the case, David gave all the glory to God for his remarkable triumph.

*So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him: but there was no sword in the hand of David. Then David ran, and stood over the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith.* It is probable, from the wording of the text here, that Goliath was not completely killed by the stone, although he probably would have died from that blow, had he been left alone long enough; but it appears that David took the giant's own sword and finished taking his life. His head was evidently severed from his body to be used as a trophy to take to Jerusalem. (See verse 54.) There is no indication that any of the other Philistine soldiers were beheaded.

*And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines, until thou comest to Gai, and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaaraim, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron.* In issuing the challenge to Israel, Goliath had specified that the people on the losing side would become the servants of

those whose fighter was successful in killing the other one; but when things turned out as they did, the Philistines were not willing to fulfill that condition; and, as Adam Clarke says, they precipitately left the field. The army of Israel took proper advantage of that situation, and totally routed their enemies.

This lesson is a forceful example of what faith can accomplish. As long as the people of Israel relied

on their own ability, they were both humiliated and unable to win a victory over their opponents. The same principle is just as true today; for the New Testament says, "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.) When people learn to put their trust in the Lord, it will surprise them what the providence of God can accomplish.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Discuss the manner in which David is introduced into history.

What did David probably do after his anointing?

What were his duties in connection with the second incident?

How do you account for the fact that Saul did not know David when he slew Goliath?

### The Setting for the Lesson

What was the occasion of the events of this lesson?

Who were the Philistines?

What had been their relation with the Israelites?

What was the probable reason for their warlike activities at the time of this lesson?

Where were the two armies located?

Who was Goliath and what part did he play in the contest?

What proposition did he make to Israel?

Why didn't the Israelites accept his challenge?

How did David happen to be on the scene?

The Giant's Challenge Accepted by David

Under what circumstance did David reach the camp of the army?

How long had Goliath been defying the army of Israel?

In what way did David react to the situation?

What did his oldest brother think about it?

How did David react to his brother's unkind remarks to him?

What lesson should we learn from this?

Discuss the teaching of the Bible in this connection.

What was David's reply to his brother?

What did he mean by what he said?

What did David then propose to do?

What did Saul think of David's going against Goliath?

What arguments did David make in reply to the king and with what success?

In what way did Saul try to help David in his preparation to meet Goliath?

Why didn't David want to wear the things Saul provided for him?

In what way did the young man go out to meet the giant?

### The Encounter and the Result

Discuss the contrast between the manner in which the two men were armed.

What seems to have been the providential purpose in David's going out to meet the Philistine?

Why did each one of them make a statement before they began the fight?

In what way did Goliath regard David?

What was the tone and content of David's address to him?

In what way did David give glory to God?

What lesson should we learn from him?

Point out some New Testament teaching in this connection.

What happened after the two men finished their speeches?

How was David able to hit the giant so accurately?

What ability did the Israelites have with the sling?

How did David go about completing the work of killing Goliath?

Why did he sever his head from his body?

What happened when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead?

Why did they flee from the army of Israel?

What great lesson of faith may we learn from this?

## Lesson VII—February 18, 1962

# DAVID AND JONATHAN

## Lesson Text

1 Sam. 20: 32-42

32 And Jon'-a-than answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore should he be put to death? what hath he done?

33 And Saul cast his spear at him

to smite him; whereby Jon'-a-than knew that it was determined of his father to put David to death.

34 So Jon'-a-than arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no

food the second day of the month; for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

35 And it came to pass in the morning, that Jon'-a-than went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him.

36 And he said unto his lad, Run, find now the arrows which I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him.

37 And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jon'-a-than had shot, Jon'-a-than cried after the lad, and said, Is not the arrow beyond thee?

38 And Jon'-a-than cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jon'-a-than's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master.

39 But the lad knew not anything: only Jon'-a-than and David knew the matter.

40 And Jon'-a-than gave his weapons unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry them to the city.

41 And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of *a place* toward the South, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded.

42 And Jon'-a-than said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of Je-ho'-vah, saying, Je-ho'-vah shall be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed, for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jon'-a-than went into the city.

**Golden Text.**—*"There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."* (Prov. 18: 24.)

**Devotional Reading.**—John 15: 9-15.

### Daily Bible Readings

February 12. M.....	Jonathan's Love for David (1 Sam. 18: 1-5)
February 13. T.....	Faith of Jonathan (1 Sam. 14: 6-15)
February 14. W.....	Jonathan's Self-sacrifice (1 Sam. 19: 1-7)
February 15.	T. Jonathan's Covenant (1 Sam. 20: 12-28)
February 16.	F. Jonathan's Friendship (1 Sam. 20: 35-42)
February 17.	S. David's Sorrow Over Jonathan (2 Sam. 1: 19-27)
February 18. S. ....	Value of Friends (Prov. 18: 19-24)

**Time.**—1063 B.C.

**Place.**—Gibeah of Saul.

**Persons.**—Saul, Jonathan, and David.

### Introduction

The story of the friendship between Jonathan and David is one of the most beautiful narratives in all the literature of the Bible, and if we consider it purely from the standpoint of the world it ranks with such great love stories as that of Damon and Pythias. The friendship of Jonathan and David was truly noble, and there is not a selfish element to be found in it anywhere. Jonathan appears to have been considerably older than David, but the difference in years does not seem to have made any difference in their devotion to each other. Jonathan evidently knew that David would succeed his father as king; but being a man of sterling character himself, nothing, not even the ambition to be king' himself, could make him close his eyes to true

worth and merit wherever he found it.

The elements of true friendship are always the same, and some of the noblest friendships which history records were among people of lowly stations in life. This, of course, should be encouraging to many of us; for that is where the majority of us are found. It is encouraging therefore to find the noble principles of friendship directing the lives of people like ourselves; and it calls out the best that is in us when we observe our fellow men responding so nobly to the great principles of truth, righteousness, and devotion to each other. But this principle of friendship is not limited to any class of human beings, or to those of the same class, as may be seen in the case of Jonathan and



David. The former was the son of a king, while the latter, in his own words, was a poor man. (1 Sam. 18: 23.)

As one reads the inspired record of the friendship between Jonathan and David, he will be impressed with the fact that it was first sought by the king's son, and the one who was older. "And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his apparel, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle." (1 Sam. 18: 1-4.)

The sealing of this covenant of friendship between Jonathan and Da-

vid took place just after Saul's interview with David, following his victory over Goliath, and its significance is apparent when one considers the contrast between a seasoned soldier like Jonathan, and an untrained shepherd boy like David, along with the prestige which David gained when he successfully met the challenge of the boastful Philistine. Jonathan recognized a courage in the heart of David which was superior to his own; and there is no wonder that the noble spirit of the king's son responded so powerfully to the call of the splendid traits found in David's character. And Jonathan paid his young friend the highest compliment which one soldier can pay another, when he gave him his uniform, his sword, his bow, and his girdle. This act was a declaration on the part of Jonathan that David was a braver and more heroic warrior than he himself was.

### The Golden Text

*"There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."* The full statement from which this text is taken is, "He that maketh many friends doeth it to his own destruction; but there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Friendship greatly affects the lives of those who give themselves to it; and it is for that reason that the person who makes many friends does it to his own destruction. Unless friendship is truly reciprocal, the one who gives himself to making many friends will learn to his own sorrow that some of the people whom he thought were his friends, only pretended to be so in order to take advantage of him. That is the reason why anyone who tries to make friends should give careful consideration to the quality of friendship, rather than to its quantity.

When the average person reads the Passage which serves as our golden text for today, he almost immediately thinks that the friend who sticks closer than a brother is no less a personage than the Lord Jesus Christ. He is, of course, such a friend to all who seek his friendship, but that is hardly the thought that the writer of the Book of Proverbs had in mind. The point which he

made is something like Jesus had in mind when he spoke the parable of the pearl of great price. While the merchant was seeking goodly pearls, he found one of great price; and he went and sold all he had, and bought it. It was simply a treasure greater than the average run of pearls. And so it sometimes happens that a man finds a friend who will be truer to him than his own brother. That was the kind of friendship which existed between Jonathan and David.

There is, of course, no violence done to the Scriptures when one takes the passage now under consideration, and applies it to the friendship of the Lord Jesus Christ; for there is no earthly friend, however great, who is as true to a faithful child of God, as is Jesus. The love of brethren here among men is usually regarded as one of the most powerful and abiding relations upon the earth; but even that in its greatest degree cannot compare with the love which the Lord manifests toward his people. Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15: 13); but Jesus went further than that, and laid down his life for his enemies. (Rom. 5: 6-8.)

## The Text Explained

### Saul's Determination to Put David to Death Made Known

(1 Sam. 20: 32-34)

*And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore should he be put to death? what hath he done?* Saul was greatly impressed with David after his victory over Goliath, and promoted him to a place of high responsibility in the army. But that fondness for the young general did not last long; for we read, "And it came to pass as they came, when David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with timbrels, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women sang one to another as they played, and said,

Saul hath slain his thousands,

And David his ten thousands.

And Saul was very wroth, and this saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward." (Read 1 Sam. 18: 1-9.)

The narrative between this incident and the lesson text for today is a thrilling account of Saul's efforts to kill David, and the unrivaled friendship between Jonathan and David, all of which should be read at this time. Saul was seized by an evil spirit from the Lord, and his uncontrolled jealousy led him to make repeated attempts to smite the man who continued to play before him, in an effort to drive the evil spirit away. But the Lord continued to bless David; and as a result of his wise behavior, he daily grew in the favor of the people.

During this time of David's alienation from Saul, because of the king's extreme wickedness, the young musician was married to Michal, the king's daughter; but even that was an attempt by Saul on David's life. The plan to get David killed, however, fell through, and Michal's love for him, as well as that of Jonathan, caused their father's jealousy toward him to increase. There is scarcely any limit to the foul deeds which jealousy will move one to do. Some

years ago a leading criminologist of this country listed ten of the underlying motives which cause men to commit capital offenses; and near the head of the list he placed envy and jealousy.

Finally David went to Samuel, and told him what Saul was doing to him. The aged prophet asked the young fugitive to remain with him in Naioth; but Saul soon made his way to him there. After David fled from Naioth, he made his way to Jonathan, who assured him that he would not be put to death. But David knew the heart and motives of Saul better than Jonathan did; and it was at that time that David uttered his famous statement, "But truly as Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death." Jonathan then told David that he would do anything for him which his soul desired him to do.

After Jonathan's generous promise, David proposed that he hide himself in the field for three days, while Jonathan endeavored to find out what Saul purposed to do. The two friends then renewed their covenant of friendship, and Jonathan made the following proposal: "Then Jonathan said unto him, To-morrow is the new moon: and thou wilt be missed, because thy seat will be empty. And when thou hast stayed three days, thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was in hand, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel. And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark. And, behold, I will send the lad, saying, Go, find the arrows. If I say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee; take them, and come; for there is peace to thee and no hurt, as Jehovah liveth. But if I say thus unto the boy, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee; go thy way, for Jehovah hath sent thee away. And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, Jehovah is between thee and me for ever." (1 Sam. 20: 18-23.)

Saul missed David on the first day of the new moon festivities, but he said nothing about it, thinking that "something hath befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean."

But on the second day when he was not present, Saul asked Jonathan why he was not there, and Jonathan gave his father the answer which David had suggested; but it was wholly unsatisfactory to the king. Saul then turned upon Jonathan, and severely rebuked him for shielding David. This is the point at which the first section of our lesson for to-day begins.

*And Saul cast his spear at him to smite him; whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to put David to death. So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no food the second day of the month; for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.* The grief of Jonathan over his father's base conduct regarding David is another mark of the true nobility which characterized Jonathan. He knew that Saul's anger at David was groundless, and that his desire to kill him was due to wicked jealousy and a failure to submit himself to the will of God. And Jonathan also was aware of the fact that he himself was now the object of Saul's evil spirit; but that did not cause him to turn from the high principles of righteousness, nor to break his covenant of friendship with David. This should be a forceful lesson to those little souls who profess friendship to others; but who do not hesitate to break it in order to save their own skin.

### The Information Relayed to David

(1 Sam. 20; 35-40)

*And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him.* This was the morning following Jonathan's near-fatal interview with his father regarding David. But in spite of the danger involved, Jonathan was determined to make good his promise to David.

*And he said unto his lad. Run, find now the arrows which I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him.* Jonathan was not shooting at random, as one might suppose; but was aiming at a definite mark; or, as the margin has it, he was "making it pass over him."

*And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan*

*had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, L: not the arrow beyond thee? And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master.* This was the sign by which David would know that it was no longer safe for him to remain within the king's reach, and that he should flee at once. The words which were apparently addressed to the lad were, of course, meant for David; and he so understood them. When the lad gathered up the arrows and returned them to Jonathan, the task was accomplished; the message had been delivered and received.

*But the lad knew not anything: only Jonathan and David knew the matter. And Jonathan gave his weapons unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry them to the city.* All of this was arranged, it seems, so that if any of Saul's spies were watching, they would not understand the signal, or even know that a signal had been given. From verse 22 it would seem that Jonathan meant for David to leave at once, if the report was unfavorable; but now it appears that he changed his mind. His heart yearned toward his devoted friend from whom he was to be separated, and he apparently determined to throw caution to the wind and venture one last interview with him; and it was evidently for that reason that he sent the boy back to the city, so that he could make no report of the matter.

### The Tearful Parting of Jonathan and David

(1 Sam. 20; 41, 42)

*And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the South, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded.* Thus by the usual Oriental sign. David both did honor to the king's son, and showed his own deep humility. He also indicated that he had no desire to supplant Jonathan in the matter of succeeding Saul on the throne. The people in the eastern countries are more demonstrative than we are, and that accounts for their kissing and weeping. Matthew Henry notes that the

separation of two such faithful friends was equally grievous to them both, but David's case was the more deplorable; for while Jonathan was returning to his family and his friends, David was leaving all his comforts, even those of God's sanctuary, and therefore his grief exceeded Jonathan's; or, perhaps, it was because his temper was more tender, and his passions stronger.

*And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of Jehovah, saying, Jehovah shall be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed, for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.* Inasmuch as this interview was held in the face of grave danger, it was a manifestation of kindness on the part of Jonathan to hasten his friend's departure. The reference to their oath was probably to their original covenant and to its reenactment and extension. (Verses 12-17, 23.)

So far as the record goes, these devoted friends met only on one other occasion. "And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in the wood. And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him, Fear not; for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next

unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. And they two made a covenant before Jehovah: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house." (1 Sam. 23: 15-18.)

The annals of human history contain no greater example of human friendship than that which was displayed by Jonathan. W. G. Blaikie notes that there was one feature of friendship between these two men, which has no parallel in classic times. It was a friendship between two people, of whom the younger was a most formidable rival to the older. And it was Jonathan who shines most in this friendship; for he was the one who had the least to gain and the most to lose from the other. He knew that God had ordained that David was to succeed to his father's throne, yet he loved him; and he knew that to befriend David was to offend his father, yet he warmly befriended him; and he knew that he had to decrease while David would increase, yet no particle of jealousy disturbed his noble spirit. Jonathan's love was truly great; it was a love which sacrifices all for the object of its devotion. Looking at it from the human point of view, Jonathan had nothing to gain from his friendship with the youthful David, while the advantages to David from such a friendship were almost unlimited.

## Questions for Discussion

What is our subject for today?  
Repeat the golden text.  
Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Discuss the quality of friendship between Jonathan and David.  
What are some of the elements of true friendship?  
Why is a lesson like this so encouraging to the most of us?  
Show that it is possible for such friendship to exist anywhere.  
How did the friendship between Jonathan and David come about?  
In what way did Jonathan seal this friendship?

### The Golden Text

Give the full statement from which this text is taken.  
Why does one who makes many friends do so to his own destruction?  
Who is the friend who sticks closer than a brother?  
In what way may this principle find fulfillment in Christ?

### Saul's Determination to Put David to Death Made Known

What was Saul's reaction to David after he slew Goliath?  
What caused him to change his attitude toward him?  
What caused Saul to want to kill David?  
Discuss the effects of jealousy in one's life.  
What were some of the experiences of David during this period of his life?  
What famous statement did he utter on one occasion during this time?  
Under what circumstances was the statement made?  
After Jonathan proposed to help David, what did the latter suggest?  
What plan did Jonathan have for informing David regarding Saul's purpose?  
How did Jonathan find out what his father planned to do regarding David?  
What did this reveal regarding the character of Jonathan?

### The Information Relayed to David

When did David learn of Saul's intention regarding him?

What aim did Jonathan have in shooting the arrows?  
 Why address his language to the lad who went for the arrows?  
 What apparent change did Jonathan make in the signal to David?  
 Why send the boy back to the city alone?

### The Tearful Parting of Jonathan and David

What did David do when he reached Jonathan?  
 What was Jonathan's reaction?  
 Why was this such a bitter parting?

In what sense did David "exceed" Jonathan?  
 What did Jonathan say to indicate that David should go?  
 What attitude did Jonathan manifest in this connection?  
 When did they next meet?  
 Why could Jonathan show such great friendship toward David?  
 Why will some people who profess friendship turn their backs when dangers arise?  
 Discuss the blessings which would come to these two men as a result of their friendship.  
 Why was Jonathan's love so great?

## Lesson VIII—February 25, 1962

# DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE

## Lesson Text

1 Sam. 26: 5-12, 17, 21

5 And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had encamped; and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Ab'ner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay within the place of the wagons, and the people were encamped round about him.

6 Then answered David and said to A-him'e-lech the Hit'tite, and to A-bi'-shai the son of Ze-ru'-iah, brother to Jo'-ab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And A-bi'-shai said, I will go down with thee.

7 So David and A-bi'-shai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the place of the wagons, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head; and Ab'ner and the people lay round about him.

8 Then said A-bi'-shai to David, God hath delivered up thine enemy into thy hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear to the earth at one stroke, and I will not smite him the second time.

9 And David said to A-bi'-shai, Destroy him not; for who can put

forth his hand against Je-ho'-vah's anointed, and be guiltless?

10 And David said, As Je-ho'-vah liveth, Je-ho'-vah will smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall go down into battle, and perish.

11 Je-ho'-vah forbid that I should put forth my hand against Je-ho'-vah's anointed: but now take, I pray thee, the spear that is at his head, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

12 So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's head; and they gat them away: and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither did any awake; for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from Je-ho'-vah was fallen upon them.

17 And Saul knew David's voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king.

21 Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my life was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.

**Golden Text.**—*"Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."* (Matt. 5: 39.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Psalm 31: 1-8.

## Daily Bible Readings

February 19.	M.....	David Wins the Heart of the Army (1 Sam. 18: 1-5)
February 20.	T.....	Saul Is Jealous of David (1 Sam. 18: 6-9)
February 21.	W.....	Saul Seeks to Kill David (1 Sam. 18: 10-16)
February 22.	T.....	David Escapes from Saul (1 Sam. 26: 1-6)
February 23.	F.....	Saul Falls into David's Hands (1 Sam. 26: 6-8)
February 24.	S.....	David Spares Life of Saul (1 Sam. 26: 7-14)
February 25.	S.....	Saul Affects Repentance (1 Sam. 26: 21-25)

**Time.**—1060 B.C.

**Place.**—The hill of Hachilah in the wilderness of Ziph.

**Persons.**—Saul, Abner, David, and Abishai.

## Introduction

It was pointed out in the first lesson of this quarter that it is important that we learn the historical facts of these Old Testament records, but that it is more important that we try to discover what lesson they have for us. Paul says "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope." (Rom. 15: 4.) The people who lived in former times were human beings, just as we are; and it is a fact, capable of demonstration, that the same human nature which characterized them also characterizes us. Human nature is substantially the same in all ages of the world; and the only way in which it can be overcome is by becoming partakers of the divine nature. (2 Pet. 1: 5-11.)

If we can determine the motives which actuated the people in former dispensations, it will not be difficult for us to see that the same motives will, in all probability, lead us to do the same things. This was not the first time that Saul had tried to kill David, nor the first that David had spared the life of Saul. (1 Sam. 24: 1 ff.) Both men had other opportunities of doing as they did. Their actions therefore were not due to immediate impulses, but rather to

their habitual way of thinking; and it is always true that as one thinketh within himself, so is he. (Prov. 23: 7.)

Saul was filled with jealousy when the singers ascribed greater achievements to David, than they did to him; "and Saul eyed David from that day and forward."

David, on the other hand, had no desire to kill Saul, and the result was that when he had the opportunity to do so, he was never tempted to take his life, although he knew full well that Saul was seeking to kill him. There are few more important lessons in these Old Testament records for us than the one contained in this study. Professed Christians, of course, seldom want to take the life of a fellow man, but there are many of them, including preachers, who gladly seize the opportunity to kill the influence and destroy the good name of one whom they dislike. Even granting that the object of their antipathy has done wrong, such people do not have faith enough to allow God to be the avenger, or to employ his methods of dealing with offenders; and they apparently do not realize that heart-murder is as real in the sight of God as hand-murder. (1 John 3: 15; Matt. 18: 15-17.)

## The Golden Text

*' Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.'* This statement is a part of an illustration which Jesus used in teaching against the practice of retaliation for wrongs which one has suffered, or thinks he has suffered, from others. The full context is as follows: "Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that

would borrow of thee turn not thou away." (Matt. 5: 38-42.)

The principal idea in this statement by Jesus was against the practice of personal retaliation on the part of the Lord's people. God has always provided for the judicial punishment of wrongdoing, and, by the same token, has always prohibited personal revenge. This is a lesson which many professed Christians have been slow to learn. The Lord has solemnly promised to avenge all wrongdoing, and no one can be pleasing in his sight who does not have faith enough to accept that promise as being true.

The best commentary on our golden text for today is found in Rom. 12: 17-21: "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 belong-

eth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord. But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

## The Text Explained

### The Historical Record

(1 Sam. 26: 5-12)

*And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had encamped; and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay within the place of the wagons, and the people were encamped round about him.* This incident took place during the period in David's life when he was not only a fugitive from Saul, but also the leader of a company of outlaws. It appears that that was about the only way that David had of maintaining himself during that time. This is not to say that it was right for him to do all the things which he did, but rather that circumstances more or less compelled such action. And, too, we must take into consideration the times during which David lived.

The whereabouts of David were made known to Saul by the Ziphites, that is, the citizens of the town of Ziph which was located about five miles south of Hebron. Nothing is said about why the Ziphites desired to give Saul this information, but it may have been due to the fact that they felt that the fugitive could not long evade the king and his army; and, desiring to gain favor with the king, they decided to disclose to him the hiding-place of David. This was the second time that these people had endeavored to aid Saul in capturing David. "Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in the strongholds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of the desert?" (1 Sam. 23:

19.) Ziph was on an eminence which rises about a hundred feet above the plain, and it would therefore be fairly easy for the people of the city to see David and his men as they Passed from place to place in their efforts to survive while hiding from Saul.

When Saul received the informa-

tion regarding the hiding-place of David, he "arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul encamped in the hill of Hachilah, which is before the desert, by the way. But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness. David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come of a certainty." (Verses 2-4.) David and his men knew that country, and they no doubt had many advantages over Saul and his army. They were accustomed to watching for the enemy, and could easily detect any unusual movements in the area where they were.

Just why David wanted to see the camp of Saul is not stated, but the implication is that it was for defensive purposes. It appears that a barricade was made of the wagons for the safety of the king (see margin), "and the people were encamped round about him." Abner, who was the captain of the king's host, played an important role during both the reigns of Saul and David. Abner was Saul's cousin (1 Sam. 14: 40), and upon the death of the latter he made Saul's son Ish-bobeth king over Israel, and he reigned for two years, "but the house of Judah followed David" (2 Sam. 2: 8-10). Abner later transferred his allegiance to David in Hebron (2 Sam. 3: 6ff.), and soon thereafter was slain by Joab, in revenge for the death of his brother Asahel and because he feared that Abner might supplant him as captain of the king's host. When David heard of Abner's death he was deeply grieved, and said unto his servants, "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel? nr. . I am this day weak, though anointed king." (See 2 Sam. 3: S8, 39.)

*Then answered David and said to*

*Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee.*

Nothing more is known of this Ahimelech, who was evidently one of David's warriors during the time he was hiding from Saul, but Abishai played an important role throughout the reign of David. He and his two brothers, Joab and Asahel, were David's nephews, being sons of his sister. (1 Chron. 2: 13-16.) There is no reason given for mentioning the mother of these men, rather than their father (who is never mentioned), unless he was dead, or because of the unusual character of Zeruiah and her relation to David. There is never a dull moment in the history of Abishai, and anyone who is interested in reading all the Bible says about him can easily find the references in any good concordance or Bible dictionary. We are not told why Ahimelech did not go with David, but it appears that Abishai was delighted to go.

*So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the place of the wagons, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head; and Abner and the people lay round about him.* This was no ordinary sleep, as we shall see further on in the text, and there is therefore some basis for supposing that David may have been directed by the Lord to enter the camp, or at least in some way divinely led to do as he did. It is interesting to observe how often Saul is seen with his spear, after his rejection by Jehovah.

*Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered up thine enemy into thy hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear to the earth at one stroke, and I will not smite him the second time. And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not; for who can put forth his hand against Jehovah's anointed, and be guiltless? And David said, as Jehovah liveth, Jehovah will smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall go down into battle, and perish.* These same two attitudes were manifested in a similar situation in the wilderness of En-gedi. (See chapter 24.) David's subordi-

nates thought that Jehovah had delivered Saul into his hands, and that he therefore should be slain; but in that case, as in the one now before us, David entertained no such ideas. It appears that David had Abishai under better control at the time of this lesson, than he did later on, as may be seen from what the king said about him and Joab following the death of Abner: "And these men the sons of Zeruiah are too hard for me." (2 Sam. 3: 39.)

The magnanimity of David with reference to Saul on the occasion now before us can be correctly regarded as nothing short of deep faith in Jehovah. It is true that David's life was in grave danger, so far as the king was concerned, but he had the promise of God who had Samuel to anoint him to be king. Therefore, if David had taken the matter in his own hand, and had slain Saul, that would have been a sin in the sight of the Lord. So David, in his reply to Abishai, mentioned the three ordinary ways by which man ends his days here upon the earth, namely, (1) by a stroke of divine judgment, (cf. Lev. 10: 1, 2) (2) a natural death, which, since Saul was older than David, would likely come first, (see Job 42: 17) and (3) as a result of war, and that is exactly what happened to Saul (1 Sam. 31: 1-6). If David had consented to the slaying of Saul by Abishai, that would have been taking the matter out of God's hands; and that was something which David would not do.

This should be an impressive lesson to all of us. It often happens that an elder or a preacher goes wrong, and those who are opposed to him are wont to get rid of him. But instead of employing the means which the Lord has ordained for such purposes, those who seek such ousters often resort to actions which are just as sinful, if not more so, in the sight of God as the alleged wrongdoing of the one they are seeking to remove from his place. Although the days of miracles, such as those in Bible times, have long since passed, we should not allow ourselves to forget that the providence of God is just as potent as it ever was, and he has solemnly promised that all things work together for good to them that love him, and are called according



to his purpose. And again, "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." (Rom. 8: 28; Phil. 4: 6, 7.) If those who desire the removal of wrongdoers are themselves doing the will of God, then they should remember that "the supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." (James 5: 16.)

**Jehovah forbid that I should put forth my hand against Jehovah's anointed: but now take, I pray thee, the spear that is at his head, and the cruse of water, and let us go. So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's head; and they gat them away: and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither did any awake; for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from Jehovah was fallen upon them.** Many of us often forget that the Lord's plans include his dealing with the wicked, as well as his blessing the righteous; and they both require time. David therefore was determined to refrain from interfering with Jehovah's purpose regarding Saul, as long as the anointing oil was upon him. But he did do something which would let Saul know that he had no desire to kill him. Matthew Henry calls David's action with reference to the slaying of Saul the preference of his conscience to his interest, with the result that he trusted God with the issue. The "deep sleep from Jehovah" was the same as that which fell upon Adam when Jehovah took from his side a rib and made woman, that is, the same original word is found in both instances. (Gen. 2: 21, 22.) This, of course, implies that David's actions were according to God's will.

#### **Saul Made Aware of David's Presence**

(1 Sam. 26: 17)

**And Saul knew David's voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king.** After David and Abishai took the spear and the cruse of water, they "went over to the

other side, and stood on the top of the mountain afar off; a great space being between them; and David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner." (Verses 13-16.) That which David said was in irony, and it evidently had its effect upon Saul and the people; and if Saul had not realized the situation, he doubtless would have put Abner to death.

Jamieson says that the extraordinary purity and elasticity of the air in Palestine make it possible for words to be distinctly heard which are spoken on the top of one hill and addressed to those on the top of another, the two being separated by a deep ravine. Hostile parties therefore can speak to each other, while completely out of reach of each other's attack. After David had addressed his words to Abner, he then called on him to look and see where the king's spear and cruse of water were. All of this must have filled the captain of the host with humiliating embarrassment and deep mortification.

#### **Saul's Reaction to David's Magnanimity** (1 Sam. 26: 21)

**Then said Saul, I have sinned: return my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my life was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.** Taken on its face, Saul's confession of sin and his determination to do better, seem to be all that one could desire; but David had heard similar words from Saul before. Read 1 Sam. 24: 16-22. While David would not trust himself in Saul's immediate presence, he did request the king to send for the spear, and added, "And Jehovah will render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness; forasmuch as Jehovah delivered thee into my hand to-day, and I would not put forth my hand against Jehovah's anointed. And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of Jehovah, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation," which shows where David's trust was.

### **Questions for Discussion**

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

**Introduction**  
What is the most important phase of these lessons to us?

Show why this is true.  
 How do we know that human nature is basically the same in all ages of the world?  
 How alone can human nature be overcome?  
 How does one become a partaker of the divine nature?  
 What effect do motives have on one's conduct?  
 Show how this principle was illustrated by Saul and David.  
 In what way is this lesson applicable to people today?

#### The Golden Text

Give the context of the passage which serves as our golden text for today.  
 What problem was Jesus dealing with at the time he spoke these words?  
 What is our best commentary on this text?  
 Discuss this passage and show its application.

#### The Historical Record

When and under what circumstance did the incident of this lesson take place?  
 How did Saul learn of the whereabouts of David?  
 Where was Ziph and how could the people of that city know about David?  
 What did Saul do when he received the information about David?  
 Describe the camp of Saul and tell what David did about it.  
 Why did David want to go to the camp of Saul at night?  
 Who was Abner and what were some of the things he did?  
 Who went with David to the camp of Saul?  
 Tell something of the life of Abishai.

Under what conditions did David and Abishai enter the camp of Saul?  
 What was characteristic of Saul in those days? Why?  
 What did the two men find when they arrived in the camp?  
 What was Abishai's request and why?  
 Why did he and David view the situation from such opposite standpoints?  
 What reason did David give for not wanting to kill Saul?  
 Was it a valid reason? Give reasons for your answer.  
 What did he say regarding the end of Saul's life?  
 Show how this principle is applicable in our time.  
 Can you cite some concrete examples of this?  
 What should Christian people always do in trying to deal with wrongdoers?  
 What are some New Testament references to this question?  
 Discuss the efficacy of prayer in this connection.  
 Why don't the Lord's people rely more on prayer in such matters?  
 In what way does the Lord's plan include the wicked as well as the righteous?  
 Why did the people sleep so soundly?

#### Saul Made Aware of David's Presence

How did Saul come to know that David was in the vicinity?  
 Why could they hear each other so plainly?

#### Saul's Reaction to David's Magnanimity

What was the nature and content of Saul's confession to David?  
 In what way was it received by David? and why?

## Lesson IX—March 4, 1962

# DAVID KING OVER JUDAH AND ISRAEL

### Lesson Text

2 Sam. 2: 1-7; 5: 1-5

1 And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of Je-ho'-vah, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Ju'-dah? And Je-ho'-vah said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto He'-bron.

2 So David went up thither, and his two wives also, A'-hin'-o-am the Jez'-re-el-i-tess, and Ab'-i-gail the wife of Ne'-bal the Car'-mel-ite.

3 And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of He'-bron.

4 And the men of Ju'-dah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Ju'-dah.

And they told David, saying, The men of Ja'-besh-gil'-e-ad were they that buried Saul.

5 And David sent messengers unto the men of Ja'-besh-gil'-e-ad, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of Je-ho'-vah, that ye have showed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him.

6 And now Je-ho'-vah show lovingkindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.

7 New therefore let your hands be strong, and be ye valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Ju'-dah have anointed me king over them.

1 Then came all the tribes of Is'-ra-el to David unto He'-bron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh.

2 In times past, when Saul was

king over us, it was thou that leddest out and broughtest in Is'-ra-el: and Je-ho'-vah said to thee, Thou shalt be shepherd of my people Is'-ra-el, and thou shalt be prince over Is'-ra-el.

3 So all the elders of Is'-ra-el came to the king to He'-bron; and king David made a covenant with them in He'-bron before Je-ho'-vah:

and they anointed David king over Is'-ra-el.

4 David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years.

5 In He'-bron he reigned over Ju'-dah seven years and six months; and in Je-ru'-sa-lem he reigned thirty and three years over all Is'-ra-el and Ju'-dah.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—*"David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years."* (2 Sam. 5: 4.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—Psalms 18: 1-6.

## Daily Bible Readings

February 26. M.....	David King of Judah First (2 Sam. 2: 1-7)
February 27.....	T. David's Rule Extended to Israel (2 Sam. 5: 1-5)
February 28.....	W.. David's Kingdom Firmly Established (2 Sam. 5: 6-12)
March 1. T.....	God's Promises to David (1 Chron. 17: 7-15)
March 2. F.....	Faith of David (1 Chron. 17: 16-27)
March 3. S.....	David Dances Before the Ark (2 Sam. 6: 12-19)
March 4. S.....	Jehovah's Message to David (2 Sam. 7: 18-20)

**TIME.**—1055-1048 B.C.

**PLACE.**—Hebron.

**PERSONS.**—Jehovah, David, and the people.

## Introduction

The chapters between our last lesson and this one should be read, in order to understand the setting of the facts which we shall consider in this study. After Saul had confessed his folly in seeking the life of David, and the latter had told him how he felt about the matter, the historian said, "So David went his way, and Saul returned to his place." And then as chapter 27 opens, we read, "And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul will despair of me, to seek me any more in all the borders of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand."

Having reached this conclusion, David, his six hundred men, and all that they had, went to "Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath." Later on they were given the city of Ziklag, and there they made their home. Later on David and his men made a raid on some of the peoples in that general area, but in his report to Achish, he led the latter to believe that the raid had been made on David's own people. This caused Achish to think that David was now alienated from his people. "And Achish believed David, buying, he hath made

his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever." Chapter 28 gives the account of Saul's effort through the witch of En-dor to communicate with the departed Samuel; with the result that Samuel did tell Saul what was going to happen to him, and why. David and his men made as if they would accompany the Philistine into the battle with Israel, but they were turned back by orders of the lords of the Philistines. When they returned to Ziklag, they found that the city had been burned by the Amalekites, and their families and goods had been carried away by them. But David and his followers pursued them, destroyed the army, and brought back all that which had been taken captive. David then took some of the spoil which they brought back and used it to express his thanks to the people who had befriended him during his wanderings.

Then came the fatal battle of Israel with the Philistines, and the death of Saul and three of his sons, including Jonathan and the mutilation of Saul's body. All four of these bodies were cremated and their ashes buried by the men of Jabesh-gilead in grateful memory of that which Saul had done for them at the be-

ginning of his reign. The news of the death of Saul and Jonathan was brought to David at Ziklag by a man who thought that he would do David a favor by telling him that he had killed Saul, but David had the messenger slain then and there. David's dirge for Saul and Jonathan is a classic example of drawing the mantle of charity over the lives of those who have gone into eternity; and it is probably the forerunner of the modern funeral eulogy.

The elegy which David composed and sang in his lamentation over Saul and Jonathan has been referred to as the song of the bow, probably because of the archers of the Philistines. (1 Sam. 31: 3.) In commenting on this lamentation, Blaikie, in the Expositor's Bible, says, "What gentler view could be drawn over their bloody death and mutilated bodies than in the tender words, 'Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided'? And what more fitting theme for tears could have been furnished to the daughters of Israel, considering what was probably the prevalent taste, than that Saul had 'clothed them with scarlet and other delights, and put on ornaments of gold upon their apparel'? Up to this point Saul and Jonathan are joined together; but the poet cannot close without a special lamentation for himself over him

whom he loved as his own soul. And in one line he touches the very kernel of his own loss, as he touches the very core of Jonathan's heart—'thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.' Such is the Song of the Bow."

The experience must have had a profound effect upon the character of the psalmist and king-elect. David could not have given expression to these "thoughts that breathe and words that burn" without having his whole soul stirred with the desire to do something to restore prosperity and honor to Israel again. His heart was saddened by the afflictions which he was compelled to bear, and was sobered by the stroke of prosperity which raised him to the throne; and the two together must have impelled him to a course of action which, under God, is the best safeguard against the harmful influences of both adversity and prosperity. Affliction tends to drive one to think primarily of himself, that is, of his own comfort, while prosperity fills one with a sense of his own importance; and he is blessed indeed who is kept from either of these extremes. (Prov. 30:

8.) It appears that David was providentially kept from both of these pitfalls; and was by hi' long training eminently fitted for the great responsibilities which were before him as the king of God's people.

### The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is a part of the main text, and will be treated in its proper place.

### The Text Explained

#### David Made King over Judah

(2 Sam. 2: 1-4a)

*And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of Jehovah, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And Jehovah said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron.* The events referred to in the expression "after this" were the great defeat of Israel at mount Gilboa, and David's reaction to the death of Saul and Jonathan. The people of Israel were not only disconcerted, but the Philistines were largely in command of the situation in the land of Canaan. The paragraph containing verses 8-11 of the

second chapter of Second Samuel is evidently greatly abbreviated. It appears that Abner took Ish-bosheth, the fourth and only remaining son of Saul (see 1 Chron. 8: 33, where he is called Esh-baal, and also the marginal note on 2 Sam. 2: 8), to the eastern side of the Jordan, and made him king over Gilead, which had not been overrun by the Philistines, immediately following the death of Saul.

Following the crowning of Ish-bosheth in Gilead, Abner then apparently set to work to drive the Philistines out of the territory of Israel west of the Jordan which, according to Josiah White, as quoted by Wm. M. Taylor, probably took

about five and one half years. If the conquering of the land followed the order mentioned in verse 9, it would seem that as Abner reached the borders of Judah which was David's stronghold, he caused Ish-bosheth to be proclaimed king over all of the recovered territory of Israel. This, apparently, was what touched off the long war between the houses of Saul and David. If the reference to the length of Ish-bosheth's reign was to the time he ruled "all Israel," then that was probably the length of the war between the two houses just mentioned. If what has just been said is true, the two years' reign of Ish-bosheth coincided with the last part of David's seven and one half years' reign in Judah.

Although David knew that he was destined to be king of the Lord's people, and the death of Saul would naturally indicate that the time had come for him to ascend the throne, yet his faith was such that he made no effort in that direction until he asked for and received instruction from Jehovah. This motivation of faith on his part is all the more remarkable when we consider that many men of war had come to his assistance while he yet remained in Ziklag, as may be seen by reading

1 Chron. 12. The title given to the twenty-seventh psalm in some versions of the Ancient Scriptures has led some Bible students to think that it was written by David during this period of his life. The title, as given in the Septuagint, is "Before the Anointing," which could have very well been before the anointing in Hebron at the time of our lesson; but whether that be so or not, the psalm does give an impressive view of the philosophy of life which characterized the sweet singer of Israel, and which made him such a trustful servant of the Lord. We know from the text now under consideration that that was the way that David felt when he made inquiry of the Lord before leaving Ziklag to go to Hebron. This is the lesson which we should learn here.

Hebron was the metropolis and capital of the tribe of Judah, and was located some nineteen miles southwest of Jerusalem, in one of the richest sections of the country. It

was one of the oldest continuously inhabited communities in Palestine, having been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt. (Num. 13: 22.) Some of the most hallowed memories of the patriarchs are associated with Hebron, as may be seen by reading the accounts of them in the Book of Genesis. It was in this city that David reigned for seven and one half years, before moving on to Jerusalem. Hebron is still a thriving community, with the inhabitants tending the surrounding land, manufacturing the famous hand-blown blue Hebron glass, and weaving black tent cloth from goats' hair.

*So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.* Although polygamy was tolerated in Hebrew society, the law of Moses was very specific regarding the king in this respect: "Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away." (Deut. 17: 14-17.) But David continued to practice polygamy and established a harem; and by so doing he sowed the seeds of disorder and disunion in his own household, which produced a rank harvest of bitter fruit in his later life. For the names of several of David's wives, see 2 Sam. 3: 2-5. In addition to taking his own family to Hebron, David also took with him the men who had followed him and their families; and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron, that is, the suburbs or adjacent communities.

*And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.* This was the second of David's three anointings to be king over God's people. He was first anointed by Samuel, by which he received a right to the kingdom (*jus ad regnum*), and here he was anointed by the men of Judah, giving him actual authority over the kingdom (*jus in regno*), although it was at first limited to the tribe of Judah. He was later on anointed to be king over all Israel, as we shall see further on in this lesson. As already pointed out, the other parts of the kingdom were being ruled over by Ish-bosheth the son of Saul.

### The Magnanimity of David Further Exemplified

(2 Sam. 2: 4b-7)

*And they told David, saying, The men of Jabesh-gilead were they that buried Saul. And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of Jehovah, that ye have showed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him. And now Jehovah show lovingkindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing. Now therefore let your hands be strong, and be ye valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.*

It has already been pointed out that the men of Jabesh-gilead never forgot the kindness which Saul showed unto them at the beginning of his reign. (1 Sam. 11: 1-11.) So when Saul and his sons died on the battlefield of mount Gilboa and were maltreated by the victorious Philistines, the men of Jabesh performed a bold and dangerous service in recovering their bodies and seeing that their bones were appropriately buried. Such action on their part could prove obnoxious to a rival to the throne, but David hastened to assure them that he was highly pleased by what they had done. He further invoked God's blessings upon them, and assured them that he himself would reward their service.

There can be no doubt but that David was thoroughly sincere in his attitude toward and in his message to the men of Jabesh-gilead, but it was at the same time a stroke of sound and timely policy. These people were living in the territory ruled over by Ish-bosheth, and the new king was in effect saying to them that they could be sure of the same kind of protection from him, should they be exposed to danger, as they received from their former king when Nahash threatened them; and when the report of this gesture became generally known, it would be reasonable to suppose that others would be kindly disposed toward the new monarch. There is, however, no indication that the people of Jabesh made any response to David's overtures, and neither is there any proof that David was expecting such; but

it is interesting to note the delicate manner in which he made his coronation known to them: "for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me to be king over them."

### David Also Made King over Israel

(2 Sam. 5: 1-5)

*Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was thou that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and Jehovah said to thee, Thou shalt be shepherd of my people Israel, and thou shalt be prince over Israel. So all the elders of Israel came to the king of Hebron; and king David made a covenant with them in Hebron before Jehovah: and they anointed David king over Israel.*

It appears from the record that Ish-bosheth owed his position as king over Israel entirely to the efforts of Abner. The break between the two is described in 2 Sam. 3: 6-11, where the king accused Abner of intimacy with his father's concubine. It was customary in those days for the man who succeeded to the throne to have the wives and concubines of his predecessor; and for anyone else to attempt to take one of them was nothing short of a claim to the throne. (2 Sam. 20-22; 1 Kings 2: 1C-25.) The record is not clear as to the actual truth of Ish-bosheth's charge against Abner, but the latter reacted to the accusation violently, and swore that he would transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, which was equivalent to saying from one end of the country to the other; and Ish-bosheth "could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him."

Abner immediately sent messengers to David, with the request that he make a league with him, and he proposed to "bring about all Israel unto thee." David replied by saying that he was willing to make the league on condition that his former wife Michal, Saul's daughter whom he had taken from David and given her to another man, be brought to him. This condition was promptly met, and it was not long before Da-

vid and Abner were in conference in Hebron. Joab, the captain of David's host, and his brother Abishai were not there during the time of the conference, and Joab was angry when he arrived in Hebron and learned that David had sent Abner away in peace, and he rebuked the king severely for his peaceful action toward Abner.

After coming out from the presence of the king, Joab sent messengers after Abner, and had him returned to the city, where he and his brother murdered him in cold blood. This deeply grieved David, and all the people were convinced that the king had nothing to do with the plot to murder the strong man of the rival kingdom. The turn of events also greatly troubled Ish-bosheth, and he was soon murdered in his own house by two of his captains, who thought that David would be pleased with

their action; but he had them killed as soon as he learned of their wicked deed.

It was following this that the tribes of Israel came to David with the proposal that he become king over all the people, both Judah and Israel. The full account of this great assembly is given in 1 Chron. 12: 23-40.

*David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; And in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.* It appears that soon after David was made king over all the people of the Lord that he went to Jerusalem and captured that city to be the capital of his kingdom; and it came to be known as the city of David.

## Questions for Discussion

What is our subject for today?  
Repeat the golden text.  
Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Why is it important to read the chapters between this lesson and the last one?  
How did Saul react to David's kindness toward him in sparing his life?  
How did David feel toward Saul's confession?  
What was David's next move and why?  
How did he fare with the Philistines?  
Tell of the battle of Gilboa.  
When and how did David hear about the death of Saul and Jonathan?  
How do you account for his great lamentation over Saul?  
What effect did these experiences have on the character of David?  
What two pitfalls was he apparently providentially kept from?

### David Made King over Judah

What was the condition of Israel following the death of Saul?  
What political move was made by the captain of his host?  
After Ish-bosheth was crowned in Gilead, what did Abner then do?  
When was Ish-bosheth made king over all Israel?  
What effect did this have on the relationship between the houses of Saul and David?  
What was David's attitude toward actually becoming king after Saul's death?  
What did this show regarding his philosophy of life?  
What is the principal lesson in all this for us?  
Where was Hebron and why did David reign there?  
Give some facts concerning the city.  
Who went to Hebron with David?  
Why did he practice polygamy?  
Show some of its effects in his after life.

Why was David anointed in Hebron, after being anointed in Bethlehem?

### The Magnanimity of David Further Exemplified

In what way did David exemplify his magnanimity on this occasion?  
What apparently was his principal motive in this action?  
In what other way might his gesture be construed?  
What else did David make known to the people of Jabesh-gilead at this time?

### David Also Made King over Israel

Discuss the influence of Abner over the kingdom of Israel at this time.  
How did the break between Ish-bosheth and Abner take place?  
Why was Abner's alleged conduct so significant?  
What was his reaction to the king's accusation?  
What is the meaning of "from Dan even to Beer-sheba"?  
What was Ish-bosheth's response to Abner and why?  
What message did Abner then send to David?  
What reply did David make to him?  
Why did the king want Michal?  
What was done about David's condition regarding the making of the league with Abner?  
What was David's captain of his host's attitude toward Abner and why?  
Why did he want to kill Abner?  
In what way did David conduct himself with reference to the murder of Abner?  
What effect did that have on the people?  
What other serious incident happened before David was made king over Israel?  
What did he do about that and why?  
In what way did the people of Israel demonstrate their wish to have David as their king?  
How long did he reign and where?

## Lesson X—March 11, 1962

## NATHAN REBUKES DAVID

## Lesson Text

2 Sam. 12: 1-10, 13

1 And Je-ho'-vah sent Na'-than unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

2 The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds;

3 But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own morsel, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

4 And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

5 And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Na'-than, As Je-ho'-vah liveth, the man that hath done this is worthy to die:

6 And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

7 And Na'-than said to David. Thou art the man. Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, I anointed thee king over Is'-ra-el, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

8 And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Is'-ra-el and of Ju'-dah; and if that had been too little, I would have added unto thee such and such things.

9 Wherefore hast thou despised the word of Je-ho'-vah, to do that which is evil in his sight? thou hast smitten ü-ri'-ah the Hit'-tite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Am'-mon.

10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of ü-ri'-ah the Hit'-tite to be thy wife.

\* \* \* \* \*

13 And David said unto Na'-than, I have sinned against Je-ho'-vah. And Na'-than said unto David. Je-ho'-vah also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight."* (Psalm 51: 4.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 51: 1-17.

## Daily Bible Readings

March	5. M.....	David's Sin (2 Sam. 11: 1-27)
March	6. T.....	Nathan Rebukes David (2 Sam. 12: 1-10)
March	7. W.....	David's Confession (Psalm 51: 1-17)
March	8. T.....	David Is Brought to Repentance (2 Sam. 12: 11-15)
March	9. F.. .	Promise of Pardon (Isa. 55: 6-13)
March	10. S.....	Blessings of Forgiveness (Psalm 32: 1-11)
March	11. S.....	God's Goodness and Loving-kindness (Psalm 103: 8-13)

TIME.—1034 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Nathan, and David.

## Introduction

The emphasis in our lesson for today is on sin, its consequences, and its forgiveness. One of the remarkable things about the Bible, and one of the reasons why we know it is from God, is that it portrays the sins

of its heroes, as well as their virtues. No effort is ever made to conceal the wrongdoings of the people who are called by the Lord's name. It is never his purpose to cover up the sins of his people, in the sense of



hiding them from the view of others; his plan, rather, is to bring them to repentance and forgiveness. This, however, can only be done by making the individual sinner realize what he has done; and that, in turn, can only be done by exposing sin and bringing the sinner to a confession of his transgression. No one will repent of a sin which he will not admit that he committed; and a confession will not likely be made while the sinner thinks that the sin is unknown.

The story of David's sin, about which we are to study at this time, is found in the chapter which precedes our lesson text—the eleventh chapter of Second Samuel. This entire chapter should be carefully read before proceeding with this study. David was not only guilty of the sin of adultery: he was also guilty of deceit and murder, to mention only two of his additional crimes in this connection. From the days of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, man has consistently endeavored to hide his wrongdoings from others. (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. (Prov. 25: 13; Psalm 85: 2.) David tried the wrong way at first; but when that failed, as it always

does, he accepted the right way and received the Lord's forgiveness.

It should be of interest to all of us to ask, Why would a man like David commit such a monstrous sin? The answer to this question does not concern David alone; the principle involved is also applicable to all of us today. But the facts in the life of David do bring to light in an admiral manner some of the precursors of such a fall as he experienced. In the first place, he had, as the preceding chapters indicate, been enjoying a life of almost unbroken prosperity. He hardly knew what it meant to suffer defeat, or to have his personal popularity questioned by any of his people. This naturally led to a period of idleness; and so, instead of leading his army as other kings did, he "tarried at Jerusalem." (2 Sam. 11: 1.) It is at such a time as this that Satan comes to a man, and makes his appeal where passion is strongest and principle is the weakest—in the case of David, polygamy or the love for many women. With his attitude in this respect, it would be but natural for him to be on the lookout for another woman whom he might take to himself, or at least to be attracted to one who appealed to him. He would not have yielded to this temptation, if he had been governed by principle rather than by passion. (2 Tim. 2: 22.)

## The Golden Text

*"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight"* This confession is taken from the Fifty-First Psalm, and there is no poem or prayer which surpasses it in depth of feeling or ardor of expression. It is a classic in the literature of penitence. During the long years of the life of this psalm it has proved itself to be both a challenge and a solace to countless thousands of men and women who, having realized something of the enormity of their sins, have been filled with self-loathing and a longing for a reconciliation with God. Even after thirty centuries, this psalm is frequently found in the hands or upon the Ups of those who fear God. The One Hundred and Thirtieth Psalm is comparable to it, but it is less personal and quickly soars to hope.

The psalm now before us presents one of the most pathetic scenes in human experience. It deals with a problem which is beyond human solution. Even though its subject was a king, with armies and mighty men to do his bidding, and with multitudes of animals for sacrifice at his disposal, he was, nevertheless, a helpless sinner, naked and defenseless, and without any possible means of escape or deliverance. But with all that, he was not without hope; for he could turn to God, and that is exactly what he did. In deep penitence he confessed his sin, and implored God for mercy. He made no attempt to offer animal sacrifices, because he knew that "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit"; and, in his words, "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

It is a noticeable fact that David

made his confession to God, and admitted only sin against him; but that does not mean that he was denying that he had sinned against man. What he was saying is that sin is a breach of the Divine order, a transgression of the Divine law, and that, whatever may be said or thought about its effect in the sphere of human relations, it is essentially a rebellion against the Will of him who rules over all men. This is the elementary truth of the religion of the Bible, and it is witnessed by every conscience. The very existence of conscience is evidence of a moral order which we did not create, but to

which we are responsible. The conscience, of course, may be ill-informed, and it may misread the moral order, but its very presence in us is a witness to an authority outside of us which we ought to obey. (Rom. 2: 12-16.) All sin therefore is centered, culminates, and comes to a climax at the feet of Almighty God, and is committed in his very presence and sight; and when this fact is recognized and properly respected, an effort will always be made to correct the sins against one's fellow men, to the extent that they can be corrected.

## The Text Explained

### The Issue Parabolically Stated

(2 Sam. 12: 1-6)

**And Jehovah sent Nathan unto David.** Nathan was a prophet during the reign of David. (2 Sam. 7: 2.) A prophet was one who spoke for another; and since he was a prophet of Jehovah, he spoke whatever message God wanted delivered. As already pointed out, chapter eleven records the sin of David, and the last paragraph reads as follows: "And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she made lamentation for her husband. And when the mourning was past, David sent and took her home to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased Jehovah." This last sentence gives the reason for Jehovah's sending Nathan to David. We are not told how long it was after the sin was committed before the prophet spoke to David, but from verse 27 of chapter eleven, and verse 14 of chapter twelve, it must have been the greater part of a year.

**And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own morsel, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he**

**spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.**

A parable is an effective means of getting an unwelcomed truth before one who needs to be taught a lesson. It is possible that similar complaints had often been made to David, and he evidently thought that Nathan was presenting a real case for his judgment. The plan used by the prophet had the advantage of getting David to commit himself regarding the principle involved before he realized that he was the offender. Or, to state the same thing in other words, David passed judgment on himself, so that when the real issue was made known to him, he could not claim that he was being unfairly treated. The parable itself is so simple and true to life, that no one can miss the lesson it was meant to teach.

**And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As Jehovah liveth, the man that hath done this is worthy to die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.** Although David's indignation was greatly aroused by the parable which Nathan spoke, it is a noticeable fact that his conscience was still asleep; and at a time when he was fatally indulging his own sins, he was ready to condemn the wrongdoings of others. And as is usually the case, David went further than the law warranted. The law of Moses did provide for

the fourfold restoration of a sheep which had been unlawfully taken and disposed of (Ex. 22: 1), but it did not authorize the execution of a man for such a crime. But how often do we find people today manifesting the same attitude toward wrongdoing that David did. It is easy to justify one's own sins, and still easier to condemn the wrongs of others. (Matt. 7: 1-5.)

"Thou Art the Man"

(2 Sam. 12: 6-10)

*And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the word of Jehovah, to do that which is evil in his sight? thou hast smitten Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and has taken his wife to be thy wife, and has slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.*

These terrible words pierced the heart of David, aroused his conscience, and brought him to his knees. The depth and sincerity of his penitential sorrow may be seen from the psalm already referred to in the treatment of the golden text. See also Psalms 32 and 103. Jehovah pardoned David, insofar as his restoration to Divine favor was concerned; but no effort was made to spare him the consequences of his sin. His fall from the height of his noble character, and from his eminent rank in society, would do great injury to the cause of the Lord; and it was therefore necessary that Jehovah should make known his abhorrence of sin by leaving his own forgiven servant to reap the bitter fruits of it in this life. Verse 14 says, "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." David himself was not required to die, ac-

cording to his own view of what justice demanded (see verse 5); but he did have to suffer anguish in the successive untimely deaths of some of his own sons, besides a multitude of other heart-breaking experiences. (2 Sam. 12: 15-23; 13: 23-33; 18: 31-33.)

The reference to the giving of the wives of Saul into David's bosom probably means no more than that they were given into his custody. It has already been pointed out that when anyone claimed the wife of a ruler of a kingdom, it was equal to a claim to the crown; and it was probably for that reason that the succeeding king was given the absolute power over the wives of the former king, so that no one else could marry them and thereby lay claim to the kingdom. But the statement concerning David's contempt for the word of Jehovah, and his guilt of murder, were real. He not only ordered Uriah killed, but even sent the letter containing the death warrant to Joab by the hand of the victim himself. (11: 14, 15.) The same idea of disregarding the word of the Lord is found in James 2: 10, where the term "stumble" means to set aside or ignore.

It is a historical fact that the sword did not depart from the house of David, as may be seen by reading the records of the Old Testament. Amnon was killed by order of his brother Absalom for assaulting his sister Tamar; Absalom was killed by Joab after he conspired to take the kingdom from his father; another son, Adonijah, was executed at the command of his brother Solomon for asking for one of their father's wives; and as the house of David neared its earthly end, the sons of king Zedekiah were slain before his eyes by his Babylonian captors, before putting out his own eyes and taking him in fetters to Babylon. There is no way for finite beings to compute the tragedy which came to David as a result of his sin with Bath-sheba.

### Confession of Sin and Forgiveness

(2 Sam. 12: 13)

*And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against Jehovah. And Nathan said unto David, Jehovah also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.* To confess sin is to admit one's guilt, and that is what David did;

and it is a noticeable fact that he did not blame anyone for his wrongdoing but himself. He accepted full responsibility for his wickedness. Confession **of** sin has always been a condition of forgiveness. Read the attitude **of** Cain toward his murdered brother Abel in Gen. 4. John declares that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1: 9.) There is therefore no forgiveness for him who will not admit or own his sins.

It is generally agreed among Bible students that David was the author of the Thirty-Second Psalm, and that it was written to express his gratitude following the forgiveness of his sin with Bath-sheba. The Fifty-First Psalm, as already noted, contains his confession of the sin, the confession referred to in the passage now under consideration, and his cry for mercy, while the Thirty-Second Psalm gives voice to the fact that the confession which was made won for him the forgiveness which was implored. It also sets forth something of the blessedness of forgiveness and of trust in God. David knew what it meant to be forgiven, and welcomed back into the favor of his Father. Both of the psalms referred to in this paragraph grew out of and are directly connected with the events of the eleventh and twelfth chapters of Second Samuel.

The opening verses of Psalm 32 might very properly be called *the beatitude of forgiveness*, and the reference is not to David only, but to all men who have been forgiven by their heavenly Father. When David made his confession in Psalm 51, he used three words to describe his wrongdoing, and he repeats them in Psalm 32 and then adds a fourth. The four words are (1) **Transgression**: to rebel against God's authority; to set oneself against the will and law of God; to cross over a line, or do that

which is expressly forbidden. (2) **Sin**: to miss the mark which God has set for the man to aim at. Not only has God set bounds across which we must not go; he has also set a mark at which we must aim. To miss this mark, therefore, either by commission or omission, is to sin.

(3) **Iniquity**: that which is turned out of its course or proper situation; anything which is morally distorted or perverted. This is the real source of our sin and transgression. Beginning with Adam, man was turned out of his proper course or condition by yielding to temptation, and as a result his nature became perverted from faithful obedience to God. (Psalm 51: 5; Eph. 2: 1f.) (4) **Guile**: deception, fraud, treachery. This term has the same basic meaning as the word "bait," which is used to allure fish—something put over the point of the hook to cover it up and deceive the fish, thus leading it to its destruction. (2 Cor. 12: 16.) David had used "guile" in his effort to deceive his victims, and thereby cover up his sin; but the reproof of Nathan uncovered his soul before his own eyes, and exposed his secret and wicked intention.

With this fourfold description of wrongdoing before us, we are next made acquainted with the steps which are necessary to remove the guilt. (1) Transgression is forgiven; (2) sin is covered; (3) iniquity is not imputed; and (4) the spirit is free from guile. Any man about whom these things can be said is indeed a happy man; and it is in vain that anyone looks for or expects happiness while the guilt and power of sin remain upon him. This is apparently what David had reference to in Psalm 32:

3, 4. He had attempted to hide his sin, which the historical record plainly indicates; but the psalm tells us something which the historian passes over, namely, the horror and suffering which he experienced at that time.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Where is the emphasis of our lesson for today?  
For what is the Bible noted in this respect?

What is God's purpose regarding sinners?  
How is this purpose accomplished?  
What always comes before repentance?  
Why?  
Give the basic facts in the sin of David on this occasion.  
Why do people endeavor to hide their wrongdoing?  
What are the two ways of covering sin?

Why did David commit such a base sin?  
Give three prominent reasons.  
Why was David such a polygamist?

#### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances was this text spoken?  
What effect has this psalm had on the peoples of the earth?  
What is the principal theme of the psalm?  
With what is God always pleased with respect to a sinner?  
Why did David confess only his sin against God?  
When people really recognize their sin against God, what will they do about sins against their fellow men?

#### The Issue Parabolically Stated

Who was Nathan and why did he come to David?  
Why did Nathan present his message in parabolic form?  
Why is a parable so effective in teaching an unpleasant truth?  
What did David do before he realized what the message was?  
Why did David condemn the alleged offender as he did?  
Was he really worthy of death?  
Why restore fourfold?  
What is the lesson in this for us?

#### "Thou Art the Man"

What effect did the words of Nathan have on David when he realized that they were intended for him?  
What shows the depth and sincerity of David's penitential sorrow?  
How can sins be forgiven, while their consequences remain?  
Why must people bear the consequences of their sins?  
What did Nathan say about the sin of David and its consequences?  
Show how this worked in his life.  
What was meant by giving the wives of his master into his bosom?  
In what sense did David despise Jehovah's word?  
Is it possible for people to do that now? Give reasons for your answer.  
In what sense did David kill Uriah?  
Discuss the fact that the sword did not pass from the house of David.

#### Confession of Sin and Forgiveness

What does one do when he confesses his sin?  
How faithful was David in this respect?  
What does the Bible teach regarding this question?  
What two psalms are directly connected with David's experience on the occasion of this lesson?  
What are their principal lessons?  
Why is the man happy who has been forgiven?

## Lesson XI—March 18, 1962

# SOLOMON SUCCEEDS DAVID AS KING

## Lesson Text

1 Kings Is 22-35

22 And, lo, while she yet talked with the king, Na'-than the prophet came in.

23 And they told the king, saying, Behold, Na'-than the prophet. And when he was come in before the king, he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground.

24 And Na'-than said, My lord, O king, hast thou said, Ad-o-ni'-jah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne?

25 For he is gone down this day, and hath slain oxen and fatlings and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the king's sons, and the captains of the host, and A-bi'-a-thar the priest; and, behold, they are eating and drinking before him, and say, *Long live king Ad-o-ni'-jah.*

26 But me, even me thy servant, and Za'-dok the priest, and Be-na'-iah the son of Je-hoi'-a-da, and thy servant Sol'-o-mon, hath he not called.

27 Is this thing done by my lord

the king, and thou hast not showed unto thy servants who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?

28 Then king David answered and said, Call to me Bath-she'-ba. And she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king.

29 And the king sware, and said, As Je-ho'-vah liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity,

30 Verily as I sware unto thee by Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, saying, Assuredly Sol'-o-mon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; verily so will I do this day.

31 Then Bath-she'-ba bowed with her face to the earth, and did obeisance to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever.

32 And king David said, Call to me Za'-dok the priest, and Na'-than the prophet, and Be-na'-iah the son of Je-hoi'-a-da. And they came before the king.

33 And the king said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Sol'-o-mon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gi'-hon:

34 And let Za'-dok the priest and Na'-than the prophet anoint him there king over Is'-ra-ël; and blow

ye the trumpet, and say, *Long* live king Sol'-o-mon.

35 Then ye shall come up after him, and he shall come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead; and I have appointed him to be prince over Is'-ra-el and over Ju'-dah.

**Golden Text.**—*"Know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind."* (1 Chron. 28: 9.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Psalm 101.

## Daily Bible Readings

March 12. M.....	Birth of Solomon (2 Sam. 12: 24)
March 13. T.....	David Chooses Solomon (1 Kings 1: 1-31)
March 14. W.....	Adonijah's Effort Fails (1 Kings 1: 32-53)
March 15. T.....	Solomon Chooses Wisdom (1 Kings 3: 4-9)
March 16. F.....	Solomon a Wise Judge (1 Kings 3: 16-28)
March 17. S.....	Solomon's Knowledge (1 Kings 4: 29-34)
March 18. S.....	Solomon's Reign (2 Chron. 1: 7-12)

**Time.**—1015 B.C.

**Places.**—Jerusalem and Gihon.

**Persons.**—David, Bath-sheba, Solomon, Adonijah, Nathan, and others.

## Introduction

Solomon, one of the younger sons of David, was the third king of what we know as the united kingdom; and, like his father and Saul, he reigned for approximately forty years. And it should also be pointed out that Solomon was the last ruler of the united kingdom; for it was he who was directly responsible for its division. It is doubtful if any king ever ascended his throne under more favorable circumstances, or who had brighter prospects for a successful reign, than Solomon. He had both the training and the example of his father to aid him, and his own attitude was such that Jehovah blessed him beyond that of any other king, either before or after him.

If we look at Solomon from the purely national and secular standpoint, he was without a doubt the greatest king Israel ever had, and the only one who could take his place beside the magnificent potentates of the ancient East. The glory which Solomon enjoyed and the impression which he made upon his contemporaries are recorded in some detail in the first ten chapters of First Kings.

So great was the splendor of this monarch, that when Jesus wanted to portray the exquisite beauty of

the lilies of the field, he said, "Yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

The reign of Solomon has been spoken of as the Augustan age of the Jewish nation, with this added peculiarity: he was not only its Augustus, but also, according to tradition, its Aristotle. A new world of thought was opened to the Israelites when Solomon came to the throne. But notwithstanding the fact that he was influenced by worthy and pious aspirations, especially at the beginning of his reign, it will have to be admitted that on the whole his policy was essentially selfish. His chief motives were the love of pleasure and power, of wealth, splendor, and fame; and the main object before him was to promote his own interests, and strengthen and glorify the dynasty which his father David had founded. All of this required that he adopt measures which were obnoxious to many who were around him, and oppressive to the poor. His morning sun rose beautifully; but in the evening it sank amid the clouds and darkness of earthly exhalations which made it difficult to say with certainty how or where it would rise in the morning.

## The Golden Text

*"Know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind."*

These words were spoken by David to his son Solomon on the occasion of the latter's second inauguration into the kingdom. (1 Chron. 29: 22b.) It is well known that in the cases of both Saul and David they were anointed to be king, in more or less private ceremonies, and then later they were inducted into office before the assembly of the people, or at least their representatives. And as we shall see further on in this study, Solomon's first anointing was more or less hastily done because his older brother Adonijah was himself claiming the crown. It was after this first anointing that David, who was very old and decrepit, assembled the leading men of the nation, and addressed them regarding his intention to build the temple. After telling them that Jehovah had denied him that privilege, he then told them that God had chosen Solomon to be his successor, and that the work of building the temple would be entrusted to him. (Chron. 28: 1-8.)

After his words to the assembly,

David then turned to his son, "And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for Jehovah searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. Take heed now; for Jehovah hath chosen thee to build a house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it." (1 Chron. 28: 9, 10.)

The words which David spoke to Solomon, from which our golden text is taken, can very well remind us of our own obligation in the sight of the Lord. If we want to get the full force of the message which was spoken, let us read David's statement with ourselves, that is, each one of us, substituted for Solomon. One can know God only by learning of him from his revealed word, and from one's own experience in seeking to do his will. It is not enough simply to know the truth; one must love it, that is, he must manifest the right attitude toward it; and that is what David meant by serving God with a perfect heart and with a willing mind. (2 Thess. 2: 10-12.)

## The Text Explained

### The Remonstrance of Bath-sheba Corroborated by Nathan

(1 Kings 1: 22-27)

*And, lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet came in. And they told the king, saying, Behold, Nathan the prophet. And when he was come in before the king, he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground. And Nathan said, My lord, O king, hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? For he is gone down this day, and hath slain oxen and fatlings and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the king's sons, and the captains of the host, and Abiathar the priest; and, behold, they are eating and drinking before him, and say, Long live king Adonijah. But me, even me thy servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and thy servant Solomon, hath he not called. Is this thing*

*done by my lord the king, and thou has not showed unto thy servants who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?*

This action and these words of Nathan can be understood only in the light of the preceding part of the chapter from which they are taken. The chapter opens with these significant words, "Now king David was old and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat. Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin: and let her stand before the king, and cherish him; and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat. So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the borders of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king. And the damsel was very fair; and she cherished the king, and ministered to him; but the king knew her not." (Verses 1-4.)

Although Abishag did not actually become the wife of the ailing king, she evidently was so regarded, as may be gathered from the action of Solomon in 1 Kings 2: 13-25. It has already been pointed out in previous lessons that when anyone claimed the wife of a former king, or endeavored to take her to himself, he was by that act also claiming the throne, or taking an initial step in that direction.

Adonijah was apparently the oldest living son of David at the time of this lesson, and it is very evident from verse 6 that his father was very fond of him, and apparently had permitted him to have his way about the things which pleased him. This son, evidently sensing that the days of his father were about over, sought the counsel of some of the leading men of the kingdom, Joab and Abiathar the priest in particular, and had himself proclaimed king. But some of the principal men who had been close to David were not with Adonijah in his efforts to usurp the throne. One of this last group was Nathan the prophet, who was very influential with both David and Bath-sheba, notwithstanding the part which he had in denouncing their sin in years gone by. Nathan realized the gravity of the situation, and he took immediate steps to do something about it, as may be seen in the following statement:

"Then Nathan spake unto Bath-sheba the mother of Solomon, saying, Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our lord knoweth it not? Now therefore come, let me, I pray thee, give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon. Go and get thee in unto king David, and say unto him, Didst not thou, my lord, O king, swear unto thy handmaid saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? why then doth Adonijah reign? Behold, while thou yet talkest there with the king, I also will come in after thee, and confirm thy words."

Bath-sheba appears to have realized the urgency of the situation, and went immediately into the presence of the king, into the room where

Abishag was ministering unto him; and while Nathan counseled her to put the facts before David in the form of questions, it is worthy of notice that she stated every proposition as a matter of fact. And then she added, "And thou, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are upon thee, that thou shouldest tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. Otherwise it will come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders." Bath-sheba evidently felt that it was no time for diplomatic niceties; her life and that of her son were at stake, as well as the fate of the kingdom. She did not, however, violate Oriental etiquette.

It was at this point that Nathan came into the place where king David was and confirmed the words which Bath-sheba had spoken unto him. It is clear from what was said on this occasion, as well as from David's action and the record in 1 Chron. 22: 6-13, that the promise had been made that Solomon would inherit the throne of his father; for so was the will of God. But notwithstanding all this, it was also necessary for Nathan and Bath-sheba to do what they could to bring the promise to pass. This principle has been illustrated time and again (cf. Esth. 4: 13-17), and it is just as applicable in our day as it ever was. God has promised his blessings to us, but we must do our part, if we are to enjoy them.

### David's Pledge to Bath-sheba Reaffirmed

(1 Kings 1: 28-31)

*Then king David answered and said, Call to me Bath-sheba. And she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king.* This whole narrative shows that the customary Eastern protocol was observed, to a large extent, even among the members of David's own household; and while Bath-sheba did not use the form of language which was suggested to her by Nathan, she did, however, conform to the custom which apparently required that she leave the room when Nathan came in.

*And the king swear, and said, As*



*Jehovah liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity, verily as I swear unto thee by Jehovah, the God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; verily so will I do this day.* It has already been pointed out that it is clear from David's reaction to the words which were spoken to him on this occasion, that he had indeed promised Bath-sheba that her son Solomon would succeed him as king. This was the first time in Hebrew history that the reigning monarch had arranged for his successor to inherit the throne. Moses had warned, before Israel entered the land of Canaan, that Jehovah would reserve the right to himself to nominate the king (Deut. 17: 14, 15), and this was done in the cases of both Saul and David.

But beginning with the house of David a new feature entered the picture, namely, all kings from then onward would be of the family of David; and it would be natural to suppose, if nothing more was said on the subject, that the oldest living son would inherit the throne. This was probably one motive which moved Adonijah to act as he did; but although the kingdom had been vouchsafed to the house of David, Jehovah still claimed the right to name the king. "But the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, . . . Behold a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about; for his name shall be Solomon [that is, Peaceful, margin], and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build a house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever." (1 Chron. 22: 8-10.) It was no doubt from this revelation that David was moved to promise Bath-sheba that her son Solomon would succeed him as king.

*Then Bath-sheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did obeisance to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever.* After receiving the king's word that the oath regarding Solomon would be respected, Bath-sheba, in keeping with the custom of the court, demon-

strated her affection for her husband; and while she no doubt would be happy to have her son on the throne, she would also be happy to have her husband continue as long as Jehovah in his providence saw fit. This appears to have been in sharp contrast with Adonijah's attitude, who sought to establish himself on the throne as early as possible. This reminds us of the manner of some even in our day, who seem to try to hurry the passing of their parents or other benefactors, so that they themselves may enjoy the fruits of their labors. But, as quaint old Matthew Henry notes, we should earnestly desire the prolonging of useful lives, however it may be the postponing of any advantages of our own.

### Solomon Anointed King

(1 Kings 1: 32-35)

*And king David said, Call to me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king. And the king said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon: and let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel; and blow ye the trumpet, and say, Long live king Solomon. Then ye shall come up after him, and he shall come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead; and I have appointed him to be prince over Israel and over Judah.* Zadok and Nathan may be thought of as the religious or ecclesiastical leaders, while Benaiah was probably the commander of the "servants of your lord," or the king's guard. These three men had remained loyal to David during his many troublesome days, and they could be trusted to carry out his orders regarding Solomon.

It is well to observe the minute directions which David gave concerning Solomon's ascension to the throne. 1. They were to have him ride upon his father's mule, which no one could do in the absence of royal permission, without forfeiting his life; and since the king had commanded this, it was sufficient evidence to show that he had appointed this son as his successor. It should

also be noted that the mule, rather than the horse, was the royal mount of kings. The horse was often the emblem of war, while the mule was the symbol of peace. (Matt. 21: Iff.)

2. Solomon was to be taken to Gihon for the anointing. This was probably a spring or public watering place in or near the city of Jerusalem, which would insure a large crowd of people to witness the ceremonies. 3. The heir to the throne of David was to be anointed before the people who would be assembled at Gihon by the religious leaders and personal friends and advisors of the king himself. 4. The trumpet was then to be blown, to call attention to the proclamation, "Long live king Solomon."\* This would give the incident the widest kind of publicity.

5. Following this, Solomon was to lead the procession to the throne itself, take his seat upon it, as a sym-

bol that he was then and there assuming the reigns of government, and was about to administer justice and judgment to the people. And that Solomon did just that may be seen from the remainder of the first chapter of 1 Kings, the chapter from which the text of our lesson is taken.

It is thought by many Bible students that David probably composed the seventy-second psalm in commemoration of this great event. Others, judging by the title it bears, are of the opinion that since David was too near death for such a work, his son Solomon put into poetic words the expressions of his father; so that the thoughts were those of David, but the actual writing was that of Solomon. But however the psalm came to be, it commemorates the reign of Solomon, but rises to a higher note and sings of the glorious reign of the Messiah himself.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

What was the order of Solomon's reign and how long did he rule?

What profound effect did he have on the kingdom?

What seemed to be his prospects when he became king?

What can you say of his reign in comparison with others?

What use did Jesus make of it?

What was his general attitude?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?

What was the occasion of Solomon's first inauguration?

What lesson is there in the words of the golden text for us?

### The Remonstrance of Bath-sheba

#### Corroborated by Nathan

What was the condition of king David at this time and what was done about it?

Who endeavored to usurp the throne and why?

How was his scheme defeated?

What counsel did Nathan give to Bath-sheba?

How did she react to his advice?

What did she tell king David the people were expecting of him?

If the pledge had been made regarding Solomon, why was it necessary for Nathan and Bath-sheba to act regarding the matter?

What lesson is there in this for us?

### David's Pledge to Bath-sheba Reaffirmed

How did David react to the messages of Bath-sheba and Nathan?

Why was there so much formality about the matter?

Why was it necessary to confirm the decision to make Solomon king with an oath?

What part in the matter did Jehovah reserve for himself?

How do we know that God selected Solomon to be king after David?

Why then did the king make the pledge to Bath-sheba?

In what way did she respond to David's renewal of the oath?

Discuss the difference between her attitude and that of Adonijah.

What important lesson should we learn from this?

### Solomon Anointed King

Why did king David choose Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah to make Solomon king?

Who was Benaiah and what part did he have in the ceremonies?

What specific directions did the king give these three men?

Why was Solomon to ride upon David's mule?

Why a mule instead of a horse?

Where was Gihon and why go there?

Who was designated to anoint Solomon?

Why blow the trumpet?

Where was Solomon then to lead the procession and why?

What great psalm celebrated the reign of Solomon?

Lesson XII—March 25, 1962

SOLOMON'S SIN

Lesson Text

1 Kings 11: 1-13

1 Now king Sol'-o-mon loved many foreign women, together with the daughter of Pha'-raoh, women of the Mó'-ab-ites, Am'-mon-ites, E'-dom-ites, Si-do'-ni-ans, and Hit'-tites;

2 Of the nations concerning which Je-ho'-vah said unto the children of Is'-ra-el, Ye shall not go among them, neither shall they come among you; for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Sol-o-mon clave unto these in love.

3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart.

4 For it came to pass, when Sol'-ó-mon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with Je-ho'-vah his God, as was the heart of David his father.

5 For Sol'-o-mon went after Ash'-to-reth the goddess of the Si-do-ni-ans, and after Mil'-com the abomination of the Am'-mon-ites.

6 And Sol'-o-mon did that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah, and went not fully after Je-ho'-vah, as did David his father.

7 Then did Sól-o-món build a high place for Che'-mosh the abomination

of Mó'-ab, in the mount that is before Je-ru'-sa-lem, and for Mo'-lech the abomination of the children of Am'-mon.

8 And so did he for all his foreign wives, who burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.

9 And Je-ho'-vah was angry with Sol'-o-mon, because his heart was turned away from Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, who had appeared unto him twice,

10 And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which Je-ho'-vah commanded.

11 Wherefore Je-ho'-vah said unto Sol'-ó-mon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.

12 Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son.

13 Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to thy son, for David my servant's sake, and for Je-ru'-sa-lem's sake which I have chosen.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*” (PROV. 4: 23.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—1 Kings 10: 1-10.

Daily Bible Readings

March 19. M.	.....The First Sin (Gen. 3: 1-24)
March 20. T.	.....Origin of Sin (1 John 3: 1-12)
March 21.	.....W. Warning Against Sin (1 Chron. 28: 1-9)
March 22.	.....T. Occasion of Solomon's Sin (1 Kings 11: 1-13)
March 23. F.	.....Effect of Sin (Isa. 59: 1, 2)
March 24. S.	.....Moses Warns of Sin (Deut. 29: 14-21)
March 25. S.	.....Solomon's Death (1 Kings 11: 41-43)

TIME.—984 B.C. ff.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Solomon, and his wives.

Introduction

After Solomon was firmly established upon the throne of Israel, he went to Gibeon, about five miles northwest of Jerusalem, to sacrifice;

and it was there that Jehovah made the first of three significant appearances to him. At this first appearance Jehovah asked Solomon what

he would like for God to give him. And Solomon, with the heart and attitude of a child, requested wisdom, so that he could be a successful and righteous ruler; and, as a result of the Lord's gift to him, he became the wisest king who ever lived. (1 Kings 3: 4-15; 4: 29-34.) This incident at the very threshold of his reign was perhaps the greatest single event in his life, not excepting the opening and dedication of the temple. High thoughts surged through his mind, both inspiring and humbling him. But that heavenly light afterwards faded within him, and the glory of his great resolution died within his soul.

Solomon's next great move was to build the temple for the worship of Jehovah, a work which had been denied his father David. (1 Chron. 28: 1-3.) This was a tremendous undertaking, and seven years were required to finish it. (1 Kings 6, 7.) Solomon's address to the people, and his prayer to Jehovah at the dedication of the temple, reveal something of the faith which was in his heart. Following these services, Jehovah appeared to him the second time, and assured him of his acceptance of his prayer and the temple, but warned

him of what would happen to him if he failed to keep Jehovah's commandments. (1 Kings 8: 1-9: 9.) The visit of the queen of Sheba, and the impression which Solomon made upon her, are graphically set forth in 1 Kings 10: 1-13. (Matt. 12: 42.)

But as one continues to read the history of this king, it will have to be admitted that it was a strange and startling step from Solomon the wise temple-builder to Solomon the sensual sybarite, filling Jerusalem and its environs with shrines for the worship of heathen gods, but that is exactly what happened, as we shall see in the study now before us. And if Solomon wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes, it is evident that he was aware of his own folly; and as we enter this phase of our study, we naturally think of that which Solomon could have been, but the sad words of the record reveal something of the gathering gloom. It was at this time that Jehovah appeared to Solomon the third time, and pronounced his doom. How can we account for this great change in the life of Solomon? The answer to this question and the lesson involved is the task which is now before us.

### The Golden Text

*"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life"*

This passage is rendered by Young in these words: "Above every charge keep thy heart, for out of it are the outgoings of life," while the Revised Standard Version has, "Keep your heart with all vigilance; for from it flow the springs of life." A. Blomfield calls attention to the fact that if we look at this expression purely from the English version, the meaning amounts to this: that on the state of the heart depends the character of the man. The issues of life are the ends toward which he is going, the total of what he is in principle or feeling, the value which God attaches to him. All of this depends, not on external circumstances, but on the heart; and it is for this reason that it must be purified and elevated, and nursed and guarded as a tender plant in an unfriendly soil.

Dr. Blomfield then goes on to say that if we give these words an interpretation which accords more ex-

actly with the force of the original, they will then mean that from the heart is the fountain or source of life, in the sense of our outlook on life. This is to say that contentment and happiness in this life depend, not upon outward circumstances, but upon that which is within the person—his heart. He then goes on to illustrate what he means in this way: Observe the difference between the man who is blessed with a cheerful and hopeful heart, and the one who has a desponding and complaining one. The one can find happiness even under circumstances which are the most depressing, while the other will turn even the most encouraging conditions into misery.

If we then regard the heart as a great reservoir, which feeds the streams which go out from it, it can at once be seen that the reservoir, not only needs to be kept full, but, and which is more important, it needs to be kept full of that which makes for a better life. If the heart

is kept full of that which belongs to the world, then the life which is fed by it will be of the same character; but if it is filled with that which is pleasing to God, the life which results from its streams will likewise

be acceptable to him. (Prov. 23; 7a.; Phil. 4: 8, 9.) No greater illustration of this truth can be found than that which is seen in the life of Solomon. Compare the Book of Ecclesiastes.

## The Text Explained

### An Ominous Period in the Life of Solomon

(1 Kings 11: 1-3)

*Now king Solomon loved many foreign women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites; of the nations concerning which Jehovah said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go among them, neither shall they come among you; for surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love.*

Instead of "Now" in verse one, the King James Version has "But," which indicates a contrast; and that is also the idea in the term *Now*. Matthew Henry notes that this chapter begins with as melancholy a *but* as almost any we find in all the Bible. He also observes that up to this point we have read nothing of Solomon but what was great and good; but the luster of both his goodness and his greatness is sullied and eclipsed by that which follows. In order to appreciate the great contrast which this chapter introduces, the last two paragraphs of the preceding chapter are quoted next.

"So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. And all the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. And they brought every man his tribute, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, and armor, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year.

"And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen, that he bestowed in the chariot cities, and with the king at Jerusalem. And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he to be as the sycamore-trees that are in the lowland, for abundance. And the horses which

Solomon had were brought out of Egypt; and the king's merchants received them in droves, each drove at a price. And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty; and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring them out by their means." (1 Kings 10: 23-29.)

When Moses delivered the three addresses which make up the most of the Book of Deuteronomy, he gave some specific instructions regarding the conduct of the kings in the days when they should reign over the people of Jehovah; and, furthermore, the king was required to make him a copy of this law and keep it before him, so that he might learn and obey that which Jehovah had commanded. (Deut. 17: 14-20.) But one has only to read the two paragraphs just quoted, and the section of our lesson text now under consideration, in order to see that Solomon violated to the letter every one of the prohibitions given by Moses in the passage just cited.

Solomon's extraordinary gift of wisdom, as Jamieson points out, was not sufficient to keep him from falling into grievous and fatal errors. It is doubtful if a fairer promise of true greatness, or a more beautiful picture of juvenile piety, has ever been seen, than that which this unusual king exhibited at the beginning of his reign. And by the same token, there is perhaps no sadder, more humiliating, or awful spectacle, which can be imagined, than the besotted apostasy of Solomon's old age. His fall is traced to his love of "many foreign women," including the daughter of Pharaoh, who was probably his favorite wife and the heroine of *The Song of Solomon*. (Sol. 6: 8, 9.)

*And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart.* According to Song of Sol-

omon 6: 8 the wives were "queens," of whom he had sixty at the time of that writing, and eighty concubines. This, of course, indicates that his harem was gradually increased to the number given in the text. All of Solomon's wives appear to have been from royal families. The concubines were secondary wives. Compare Abraham's wives: Sarah was his principal wife, while Hagar was his secondary wife. Here is Nehemiah's comment on Solomon and his wives: "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, and he was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did foreign women cause to sin." (Neh. 13: 26.)

### His Incredible Folly (1 Kings 11: 4-8)

*For it came to pass when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with Jehovah his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and went not fully after Jehovah, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, in the mount that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the children of Ammon. And so did he for all his foreign wives, who burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.*

This section of our lesson is the historical account of the sin which Nehemiah referred to in the quotation given above. Instead of exerting an influence upon the world about him by dedicating himself to the cause of Jehovah, Solomon yielded himself to the influence of the world, and took all the homage which it brought to him. In his effort to become worldly great, he surrounded himself with influences which demoralized, pulled to pieces, and brought to decay the spiritual qualities which he possessed.

And not only did Solomon surround himself with worldly influences in general, he apparently married every idolatrous woman whom

he desired. But instead of winning them to the religion of Jehovah, and to the service of the temple which he had built, the reverse was true—they won him to their religion, and even led him to build places of worship for their gods. Jehovah expressly forbade his people's marrying into the nations which are here named, but Solomon's "love" for women was stronger than his love for God.

But Solomon is not the only one who made the fatal mistake of entering into a mixed marriage relationship. It is an undeniable fact that there is, even among otherwise informed Christians, a lack of settled convictions on this question. Many seem to think that those who speak against such unions have no scriptural authority upon which to base their teaching, but that the whole matter is left up to the individual desires. Consequently, so far as the Bible is concerned, there is general indifference regarding this question; but, contrary to general opinion, the Bible clearly teaches that Jehovah has always, in every age of the world, had a uniform law on the subject of mixed marriages. This law is not based on statutes arbitrarily imposed, but on the fundamental principles of the kingdom of heaven.

We do not need any clearer example to show us the outcome of marriages where there is no accord in the deeper things of life, nor a common faith, than that which our lesson for today furnishes. The foreign wives which Solomon brought to his palace had no sympathy for Israel's faith in Jehovah, and they did not hesitate therefore to have Solomon build altars to their gods, for the purpose of offering incense unto them. Alexander Maclaren, in commenting on this, says, "May we not venture to see a warning here against marriages in which there is not unity of the deepest things, and a common faith 'When you run in double harness, take a good look at the other horse.' If a young Christian man or woman enters on such a union with one who is not a Christian, it is a great deal more probable that, in the end, there will be two unbelievers than that there will be two Christians."

### His Disastrous End

(1 Kings 11: 9-13)

*And Jehovah was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from Jehovah, the God of Israel, who had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which Jehovah commanded. Wherefore Jehovah said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to thy son, for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.*

The fulfillment of this statement regarding the rending of the kingdom from the house of David, and the setting up of two kingdoms instead of one, is set forth in the next chapter, and will be considered at the beginning of the fourth quarter. This, as the text affirms, was the direct result of the sins of Solomon, the unmistakable fruit of his sensual life. No one has ever been successful in defying the inexorable law of the harvest. (Gal. 6: 7, 8.) Carnality will eat its way into and destroy character, as surely as an unquenched fire destroys a building and leaves it a heap of charred debris. The wail of Lord Byron could well have been the wail of king Solomon, and for the same reason:

My days are in the yellow leaf;

The flowers and fruits of love are gone;

The worm, the canker, and the grief,  
Are mine alone!

In the words of Adam Clarke, "Had not this man's delinquency been strongly marked by the Divine

disapprobation, it would have had a fatal effect on the morals of mankind. Vice is *vice*, no matter who commits it. And God is as much displeased with sin in Solomon as he can be with it in the most profligate, *uneducated* wretch. And although God sees the same sin in precisely the *same degree of moral turpitude* as to the act itself, yet there may be *circumstances* which greatly aggravate the offence, and subject the offender to greater punishment. . . . Solomon deserved more punishment for his worship of Ash-toreth than any of the Sidonians did, though they performed precisely the same acts. The Sidonians had never known the true God; Solomon had been fully acquainted with him."

The twilight years of Solomon bore grim testimony to the fact that it is possible for a man to fall from God's favor, after a season of fellowship with him. (1 Cor. 9: 27.) The question naturally arises, Did the sun go down upon the sins of Solomon to rise no more? Two significant facts seem to indicate that it did. (1) The king showed no signs of penitence when he was rebuked; and (2) the shrines which he erected to the heathen gods were allowed to remain. (2 Kings 23: 13.) So far as we know, the light of Solomon was swallowed up in total darkness. For him there was no even star, but only sadness of farewell and the mournful moaning of the bar, when he put out to sea.

Solomon and Paul were about the same age when their earthly careers ended, but what a difference between their twilight experiences! Solomon spent his final days in a palace where the air was filled with incense which had been offered to alien gods. Paul's last abiding place was a dark dungeon, but it was fragrant with the Divine Presence. It would be difficult to find two statements which indicate a wider difference in the closing experiences of two men than 1 Kings 11: 4 and 2 Tim. 4: 6-8.

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

What was one of Solomon's first acts after he was firmly established on the throne?

What did Jehovah say to him when he appeared to him there?  
 What was Solomon's reply?  
 What was Solomon's next great move?  
 What did Jehovah then say to him?  
 What strange and startling step did the king next take?

#### The Golden Text

Give some different translations of this text.

What is the real meaning of this passage?  
 Discuss the heart from the standpoint of a great reservoir.

#### An Ominous Period in the Life of Solomon

What is the significance of the term "Now" in verse one?  
 How can we best appreciate the contrast which this chapter introduces?  
 What had Moses said regarding the king over God's people?  
 What was Solomon's attitude toward those laws?  
 What was the real reason for Solomon's great fall?  
 Why didn't his extraordinary gift of wisdom keep him in the right way?  
 What was the difference between a wife and a concubine?  
 From what class of people did Solomon choose his wives?  
 What was Nehemiah's comment regarding him?

#### His Incredible Folly

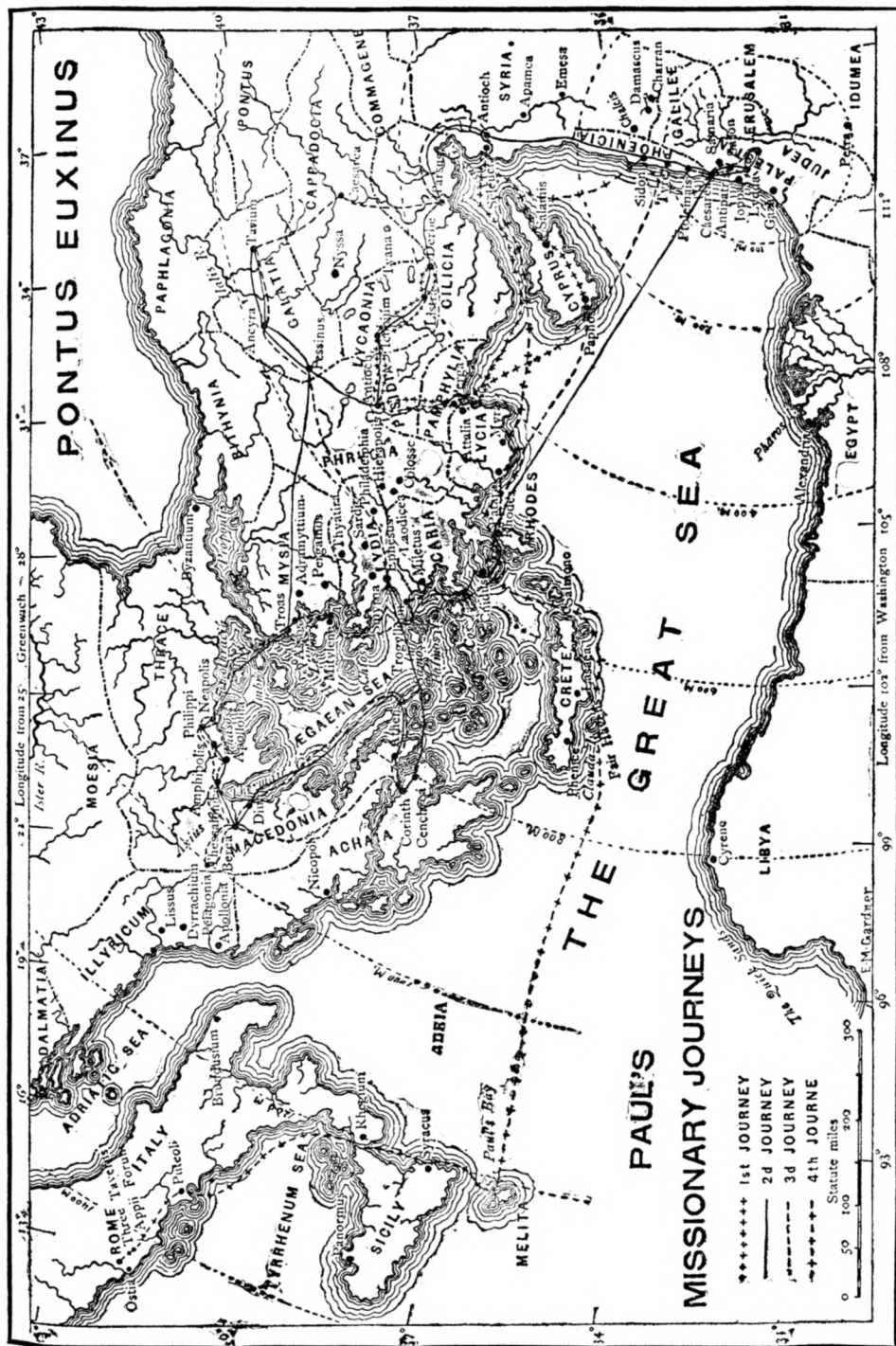
What does this section of our lesson present?

What was Solomon's policy regarding his blessings and opportunities?  
 With what kind of influences did he surround himself and why?  
 Why was it wrong for him to marry the women he did?  
 What is God's will regarding this question today?  
 Why is there so much indifference on the subject by Christian people?  
 What unmistakable example of the influence of such marriages has God left us?  
 What usually happens when a Christian marries a person of the world?

#### His Disastrous End

What was Jehovah's attitude toward Solomon at his third appearance?  
 Under what circumstances was the kingdom divided?  
 Why didn't God take it all away from the house of David?  
 What great law was Solomon unable to defy successfully?  
 What does carnality always do to its victim?  
 Why did Jehovah deal so sternly with Solomon?  
 What does the Bible teach regarding the punishment of sin?  
 What important lesson do we learn from the closing years of Solomon?  
 What does the Bible apparently teach regarding his final doom?  
 What lesson may we learn by considering the differences between the closing years of Solomon and those of Paul?





## SECOND QUARTER

### ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH AND ITS EARLY HISTORY

(First Half of Six Months' Course)

*Aim.—To learn the details of the establishment of the church of our Lord, and to follow its early history as recounted by Luke, its inspired historian.*

Lesson 1—April 1, 1962

### JESUS ASCENDS TO HEAVEN

#### Lesson Text

Acts 1s 1-12

1 The former treatise I made, O The-oph'i-lus, concerning all that Je'-sus began both to do and to teach,

2 Until the day in which he was received up, after that he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

3 To whom he also showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God:

4 And, being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Je-ru'-sa-lem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, *said he*, ye heard from me:

5 For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence.

6 They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Is'-ra-el?

7 And he said unto them, It is not

for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority.

8 But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Je-ru'-sa-lem, and in all Ju'-dae'-a and Sa-ma'-ri-a, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

10 And while they were looking stedfastly into heaven as he went, beheld two men stood by them in white apparel;

11 Who also said, Ye men of Gal'-i-lee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Je'-sus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven.

12 Then returned they unto Je-ru'-sa-lem from the mount called Ol-i-vet, which is nigh unto Je-ru'-sa-16m, a sabbath day's journey off.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—*"When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men"* (Eph. 4: 8.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—Luke 24: 50-53.

#### Daily Bible Readings

March 26.	M. ....	The Empty Tomb (Matt. 28: 1-6)
March 27.	T. ....	Appearance of Christ (Luke 24: 13-17)
March 28.	W. ....	The Great Commission (Matt. 28: 11-20)
March 29.	T. ....	Christ's Resurrection and Ours (1 Cor. 15: 20-28)
March 30.	F. ....	Christ's Power Over Death (John 11: 11-18)
March 31.	S. ....	Risen with Christ (Rom. 6: 1-6)
April 1.	S. ....	Deliverance from Death (Psalm 116: 1-9)

**TIME.**—A.D. 30.

**PLACES.**—Jerusalem and the mount of Olivet.

**PERSONS.**—Jesus, the apostles, and the angels.

## Introduction

The lessons for this quarter and the next one are all based on the Book of Acts, and a few words regarding this part of the inspired revelation probably should be considered before entering into a detailed study of the record itself. Acts is in reality a bridge between the gospel narratives and the epistles; and no one can get the full significance of either without some understanding of the history contained in Acts. The Gospels have impressions of incompleteness. They contain predictions and raise expectations which are unfulfilled and unsatisfied. For example, Jesus promised to build a church (Matt. 16: 18), but there is nothing said in the gospel records about his having done so. He also promised to send the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; John 15: 26), but the four gospel narratives close without any record of that promise being fulfilled. The disciples were commanded to go "into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16: 15), but there is no record of such work in the gospel narratives.

The epistles, on the other hand, speak of many things which were familiar to those to whom they were addressed, concerning which the gospel records are silent. The apostle Paul, for instance. Where did he come from? and when and under what cir-

cumstances did he become an apostle? Paul himself declared that the gospel was preached "in all creation under heaven." (Col. 1:23.) This statement was made approximately thirty years after Christ authorized the work to be done, and the question is, how was that great undertaking accomplished? Jesus had only a few followers when he left the earth, and they were uninfluential and without the physical resources needed for such a work.

Then, too, there were churches in many localities, such as Corinth, Thessalonica, and the region of Galatia; and so we ask, When and how were they established? The personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Lord's people is set forth as a matter of fact in the epistles. (1 Cor. 6: 19, 20; Gal. 4:6; 2 Tim. 1:14.) When was such a blessing as this first realized? The name *Christian* is found in 1 Pet. 4: 16 as applicable to God's people, but who authorized them to wear that name? and when did it first come into use? These are questions which are not answered in either the gospel records or the epistles, but detailed information regarding all of them is found in the Book of Acts. This is enough to show the importance of this part of the New Testament, and the unique position which it occupies.

## The Golden Text

*"When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men"* This, as the marginal note indicates, is a quotation from Psalm 68: 18: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led away captives; thou hast received gifts among men, yea, among the rebellious also, that Jehovah God might dwell with them." But, as is often the case, Paul did not quote the passage verbatim, but adapted it to the purpose in hand, that is, he applied it to the ascension of Christ and the work which he gave his people to do. The term "wherefore" shows that the apostle was confirming by Scripture that which he had just said, namely, "But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

There are two things said of Christ when he ascended on high, namely,

(1) "he led captivity captive," and (2) he "gave gifts unto men." Captivity is the abstract for the body of captives, or, in keeping with the figure Paul uses, prisoners of war. The prisoners which Christ led captive were not the Lord's people who had been held captive in Hades, as some allege, but the enemies of his kingdom, Satan, sin, and death. (2 Tim. 1: 10; Heb. 2: 14; 1 Cor. 15: 26, 55-57.) It is true that these enemies still plague the Lord's people, but they do so only as the Lord permits them to operate. Death still claims all men, but his coming has no terror to the faithful child of God. (Phil. 1: 23; 2 Tim. 4: 6-8; Heb. 2: 15.)

The gifts which Christ gave to men following his ascension were evidently those listed in verse 11. "And he gave some to be apostles; and some prophets; and some, evange-

lists; and some, pastors and teachers." The reference here is to the age of miracles, or, which is the same thing, the childhood state of the church, as one may see by reading Eph. 4: 12-16. Instead of "gave gifts," the passage in Psalm 68 has "received gifts." But, as already pointed out, Paul was adapting the quotation to the mission of Christ, and he may have in doing so been somewhat elliptical. We know from such passages as Matt. 28: 18

and Acts 2: 33 that Jesus himself did receive gifts from the Father; and, as Beet points out, the alteration makes at once evident the connection between the quotation and the matter which Paul has now in hand. The "gifts" received by the conqueror revealed the completeness of his victory; while the *gifts* which the ascended Christ gave to his servants on earth revealed the completion of his work for them.

## The Text Explained

### Introductory Remarks and Promise of the Holy Spirit

(Acts 1: 1-5)

*The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was received up, after that he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles whom he had chosen.* There is no direct testimony as to the identity of the writer of either Luke or Acts, but it appears to be certain that they were both written by the same person. Both were addressed to Theophilus, and the language and style in both compositions indicate a common authorship. It is also noticeable that the writer does not identify himself in either book, but the famous "we" passages in Acts (16: 10-17; 20: 5-21; 18; 27: 1-28: 16) indicate that he was a companion of Paul on a part of his second missionary journey, rejoined him on the third journey and accompanied him to Jerusalem, and later on travelled with him from Caesarea to Rome. *The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible* notes that the earliest tradition of the post-apostolic age assigns both the Third Gospel and Acts to Luke, and the allusions to him in Paul's epistles (Phile. 24; Col. 4: 14) accord with the "we" passages given above regarding his movements in Acts, while no other of Paul's known companions will fit into them. There is hardly a Bible student today who denies that Luke wrote both the Third Gospel and Acts.

Under the title *The Author of Acts and His Hero*, Ramsay says, "It is rare to find a narrative so simple and so little forced as that of *Acts*. It is a mere uncolored recital of the important facts in the briefest possible terms. The narrator's individuality

and his personal feelings and preferences are almost wholly suppressed. He is entirely absorbed in his work; and he writes with the single aim to state the facts as he has learned them. It would be difficult in the whole range of literature to find a work where there is less attempt at pointing a moral or drawing a lesson from the facts. The narrator is persuaded that the facts themselves in their barest form are a perfect lesson and a complete instruction, and he feels that it would be an impertinence and even an impiety to intrude his individual views into the narrative." This is the nature of the book we are to study during this quarter, and the next; and this fact should always be kept in mind. As Luke began the second volume of his history of Christianity, he pointed out to Theophilus that the first volume covers the actions and teaching of Jesus, "until the day in which he was received up," after he had given "commandment," that is, the commission to his apostles, through the Holy Spirit. We shall see, as we proceed with our studies in Acts, that the aim of the author is to show how that commission was executed.

*To whom he also showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God.* Any one who reads the closing part of Luke will readily see that there is an overlapping of some of the facts which are common to both Luke and Acts, but there are no discrepancies. There is no indication in Luke as to the length of time between the resurrection and the ascension, but the record in Acts says that there were forty days. Jesus

was not with the apostles every day of that period, but appeared to them from time to time. The men whom he had selected to be his ambassadors would soon be ready to go before the world with his claims, and it was for that reason that Jesus appeared to them, "by many proofs," and spoke to them concerning the kingdom of God. (Acts 10: 40-42.)

*And being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me: for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence.* This command on the part of Jesus explains why the apostles did not begin their work of preaching immediately after his ascension. In giving his record of the commission, Luke says, "And he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead on the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24: 46-49.)

The apostles were human beings and did not, of course, have the power to make known the will of God by their own unaided efforts. In fact, on the night of the Lord's betrayal, he promised his disciples divine help in the work which they were to do. (John 14: 26; 16: 13.) The Holy Spirit was promised to the apostles, and was given to them, under the figure of a baptism, possibly because of the prominence of baptism in John's ministry—John was a baptizer, and so would Christ be (Matt. 3: 11, 12); but when Peter referred to the matter later on, he simply said that God *gave* them the Holy Spirit. See Acts 11: 15-17; 15: 8, 9. The Holy Spirit is set forth in the New Testament as a *Personality*, and the denominational idea of a literal baptism in the Holy Spirit is nowhere taught in the Word of God.

#### The Lord's Last Interview with His Disciples

(Acts 1: 6-8)

*They therefore, when they were*

*come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?* This question clearly revealed that the disciples were not ready to begin their work of world-wide evangelism. In the first place, the death of Christ had ended their hope that the kingdom would be established. (Luke 24: 21-24.) Secondly, they thought that the kingdom would be a revival of the earthly kingdom of David; and it is possible that their own hopes regarding it had been revived by such remarks by Jesus as the one found in Matt. 28: 18. Their question also shows that the kingdom had not been established thus far in the ministry of Jesus, and it provided Jesus with an occasion to say something to them which they needed to know.

*And he said unto them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority. But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* The state of mind which then characterized the disciples would have resulted in further confusion regarding the kingdom, had Jesus told them when it would be established; for they would have thought that he was simply getting ready to re-establish the earthly kingdom of David. And it was evidently for that reason that Jesus told them that it was not within their province to have such information at that time. "Times" refer to time in general, viewed simply as such; while "seasons" are definite dates within a given period of time.

And so, instead of merely answering the question of the apostles regarding the establishment of the kingdom, Jesus assured them of a greater blessing which they were to receive, namely, the power necessary to become effective witnesses for him throughout the world. This was the power promised by the Father, and for which Jesus told them to tarry in Jerusalem until they received it—the power which the Holy Spirit gave them, thus enabling them to make known the will of God to all men. To bear witness regarding Jesus means to make known the truth regarding him (John 15: 26, 27); but that could be done at the beginning

only by the direct help furnished by the Holy Spirit. The work had its beginning in Jerusalem, where conditions were best suited for it; and then gradually moved outward "unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Mark 16: 15; Col. 1: 23.)

### **The Ascension of Christ and the Return of the Disciples to Jerusalem**

(Acts 1: 9-12)

*And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.* The statement just quoted is evidently an addition to Luke's previous account of the ascension. "And he led them out until they were over against Bethany: and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven." (Luke 24: 50, 51.) The ascension took place on the mount of Olives, or Olivet, the Latin form, having come to us through the Vulgate, the Latin Version of the Scriptures. It was east of Jerusalem, and separated from the city only by the valley of the Kidron. See map. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* thinks that the view of Jerusalem from the mount of Olives must ever be one of the most striking impressions which any visitor to Jerusalem carries away with him.

Luke is the only one of the four gospel writers who gives any details of the Lord's ascension, and Mark is the only other one who makes any direct mention of it as a fact. (Mark 16: 19, 20.) John implies it, as may be seen by reading John 6: 62; 20: 17. Unfriendly critics of the Bible have questioned the fact of the Lord's ascension, due to the fact that the two eye-witnesses (Matthew and John) say nothing about it; while the two who do mention it were not there. They fail, however, to take into account the fact that Matthew and John evidently had a reason for not mentioning it, and that Mark and Luke wrote their accounts by inspiration.

*And while they were looking steadfastly into heaven as he went, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into*

*heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven.* The two men were angels, and the information which they gave to the wondering apostles should inspire hope in the heart of every sincere believer in the message of the New Testament. The Lord, indeed, is coming, but the same inspired record tells us that the time of his coming is known only to the Father. (Matt. 24: 36.) But there are some vital lessons which we should learn from the promise which has been made, namely, (1) To be ready for him at all times (2 Pet. 3: 10-12); and (2) to regard his promised coming as a basis of encouragement and hope (John 14: 1-3).

In speaking of his second coming, Jesus said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only. And as were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Then shall two men be in the field; one is taken, and one is left: two women shall be grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left. Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through. Therefore be ye also ready; for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh." (Matt. 24: 36-44.)

*Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is nigh unto Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey off.* The final verse in Luke's first volume says, "And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, blessing God." (Luke 24: 52, 53.) A "sabbath day's journey," according to Jewish tradition, was based on Josh. 3: 4. The Israelites were required to march about two thousand cubits (approximately three quarters of a

mile) behind the ark, and from this came the belief that the tabernacle was that distance from the camp of Israel; and since the people were

allowed to go to the tabernacle on the sabbath (cf. Num. 28: 1-10), two thousand cubits became the distance allowed for a sabbath day's journey.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today?  
Repeat the golden text.  
Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

What is the basis of our study for this quarter?

Why is it so important to have a knowledge of the Book of Acts?

Illustrate how Acts forms a bridge between the gospel records and the epistles:

- (1) From the standpoint of the gospel narratives.
- (2) From the standpoint of the epistles.

### The Golden Text

From what part of the Bible did Paul make this quotation?  
What use did he make of it?  
What is the force of the term "wherefore"?  
What two things were said of Christ when he ascended on high?  
What is the meaning of "captivity" and what did it include?  
In what sense are Satan, sin, and death now captives?  
What were some of the gifts which he gave to men?

Why were special gifts necessary during the first age of the church?

What truths did the receiving and the giving of gifts on the part of Christ demonstrate?

### Introductory Remarks and Promise of the Holy Spirit

What reasons do we have for thinking that Luke wrote the Book of Acts?  
Tell something of the nature of the book we are to study during this quarter.  
What can you say of the ability of Luke as a writer?

Discuss the general periods covered by him in his two-volume history of Christianity.

What is the general purpose of the Book of Acts?

How long was Christ on the earth between his resurrection and ascension?

Under what circumstances did he show himself to his disciples and why?

Why charge them not to depart from Jerusalem?

How did Luke state the same thing in his first volume?

Why was it necessary that the Holy Spirit come to the apostles?

### The Lord's Last Interview with His Disciples

What question did the disciples ask Jesus at this last meeting?

What did it reveal regarding them?

How did Jesus answer them?

What is meant by "times" and "seasons"?

Under what circumstances did Jesus say that they would receive power?

In what sense were they to be his witnesses?

What was the order of their evangelism and why?

### The Ascension of Christ and the Return of the Disciples to Jerusalem

State the facts of the Lord's ascension.

Compare the account in Luke and Acts.

Why is the mount from which he ascended called both "Olives" and "Olivet"?

Which of the gospel writers records the facts of the ascension?

What message did the angels give the apostles?

What did Jesus himself say about the second coming?

What was a sabbath day's journey?

## Lesson II—April 8, 1962

# THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

## Lesson Text

Acts 2:1-13

1 And when the day of P6n'te-c6st was now come, they were all together in one place.

2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with

other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 Now there were dwelling at Jeru'-sa-lem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

6 And when this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speaking in his own language.

7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Gal-i-lae'-ans?

8 And how hear we, every man in our own language wherein we were born?

9 Par'-thi-ans and Medes and lam-ites, and the dwellers in Mes-o-gó-ta'-mi-a, in Ju-dae'-a and Cap-pa-do'-ci-a, in Pón'-tus and A'-si-a,

10 In Phryg'-i-a and Pam-phyl'-i-á, in É-gypt and the parts of Lib'-y-a about Cy-rš'-ne, and so-

journers from Home, both Jews and proselytes,

11 Cre'-tans and A-ra'-bl-&ns, we hear them speaking in our tongues the mighty works of God.

12 And they were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

13 But others mocking said, They are filled with new wine.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—*"For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence (Acts 1: 5.)*

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—John 16: 1-14.

### Daily Bible Readings

April 2. M..... Joel's Prophecy Regarding the Spirit (Joel 2: 28-32)  
April 3. T..... Joel's Prophecy Fulfilled (Acts 2: 1-37)  
April 4. W..... Work of the Spirit (John 16: 7-15)  
April 5. T..... Gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12: 1-11)  
April 6. F..... Spirit of Truth (John 15: 20-27)  
April 7. S..... Spiritual Manifestations (1 Cor. 14: 1-38)  
April 8. S..... Spiritual Gifts Temporary (1 Cor. 13: 1-13)

**TIME.**—A.D. 30.

**PLACE.**—Jerusalem.

**PERSONS.**—The Holy Spirit, the apostles, and the multitude.

### Introduction

If one would understand the purposes of God regarding the scheme of human redemption, he must trace their progressive development through the Patriarchal and Jewish dispensations, and the first four books of the New Testament. In doing this, he will find that they all point to a time in the future when salvation will be offered to a sin-cursed and dying world.

The time when this great salvation was to be offered to mankind was reached on the day of Pentecost, immediately following the resurrection and ascension of Christ. It is on that day that we reach the point of rest in our study, and see the grand culmination of the Lord's plan for saving the human race. On that day we witness the setting up of the kingdom and the establishment of the church which Jesus said that he would build. (Matt. 16: 18, 19.) No man can understand the plan and purpose of God who is not familiar

with the significance of this, the first Pentecost following the Lord's triumph over death, Hades, and the grave.

Too much stress therefore cannot be placed on the significance of the second chapter of Acts. It is the center of God's revelation to man, and may very appropriately be called the hub of the divine economy. All that which goes before points toward it, and all that follows is tied to it in a very real sense; or, to change the figure somewhat, the entire Bible is geared to and revolves around this remarkable chapter of God's revelation. Any one who understands the significance of the facts contained in Acts 2 is in a position to understand the rest of the principal events and truths of the Bible; but if one does not understand these things, he will find himself in a state of confusion regarding many things connected with the scheme of human redemption.

### The Golden Text

*"For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence "*  
One of the greatest hindrances to profitable Bible study is the habit of

reading into passages a meaning which was not in the mind of the inspired writer. This is due to the preference which is given to preconceived ideas; and as long as that



practice is continued, people are certain to miss the real point in whatever question may be under consideration, with the result that false premises will be made the basis for further study. But when people allow their preconceived ideas to enter the picture, or have a theory to defend, they are usually blind to the obvious.

The words of Jesus in the golden text evidently refer to the statement by John the Baptist in Matt. 3: 11, 12; and if one will only let this passage speak for itself, it will be much

easier to understand what Jesus meant by the words he used. John's statement follows: "I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor; and he will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will bum up with unquenchable fire."

## The Text Explained

### Pentecost and the Coming of the Spirit

(Acts 2: 1-4)

*And when the day of Pentecost was now come.* *Pentecost* was the second of the three great annual feasts of the Hebrews, which were authorized by the law of Moses. (Ex. 23: 14-17.) This feast was never called "Pentecost" in the Old Testament, for the simple reason that *Pentecost* is a Greek term, and the Old Testament was written in Hebrew. The names by which the feast was called during the age of Moses were (1) the feast of harvest; (2) the feast of weeks; and (3) the day of first-fruits. (Ex. 23: 16; 34: 22; Num. 28: 26.) Bible students have long been in dispute regarding the time when this feast was observed, or, which amounts to the same thing, the method of determining the date of its occurrence.

Since the count always began on the first day of the week, Pentecost would also of necessity fall on that day, that is, the first day of the week. The feast of Pentecost, according to Jewish tradition, was celebrated in commemoration of the giving of the law at Sinai, although, so far as we know, that was done without divine authority.

There are several reasons why the Pentecost of Acts 2 is of special significance. (1) That was the first time that Jesus was heard from after his ascension. He had been condemned and put to death on earth by the highest ecclesiastical and civil tribunals known to man, and he had, as it were, appealed his case to the Supreme Court of Heaven. (John 16: 7-11, and especially verse 8.) And it was on this day of Pentecost, when the Jews throughout the world were

assembled in Jerusalem, that the Spirit-filled messengers announced the decision of the Final Judge. (Mark 14: 61-64; Luke 23: 1, 2; Acts 2: 36.)

(2) This was the day on which the Holy Spirit began his work for the conversion of the world. The work of the Spirit was preparatory during the personal ministry of Christ, but something of his mission during the reign of Christ may be learned from John 14: 16-18; 16: 7-14; Acts 2: 37-39; 5: 32; 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20.

Any one who will read these passages carefully will not fail to recognize the Personal aspect of the Spirit. *He*, along with the Father and the Son, is represented as a distinct Personality. This ought to be enough to convince people that the Holy Spirit is not *something* in which people were literally baptized. Robertson quotes Canon Cook as saying that the room was filled so that they might be baptized in the Holy Spirit. His words are, "As a bath is filled with water, that they might be baptized with the Holy Ghost, in fulfilment of Acts 1: 5." Such a view ignores the personality of the Spirit.

(3) It was on this first Pentecost following the ascension of Christ that some important prophecies concerning the present dispensation were fulfilled, or began to be fulfilled. (Joel 2: 28-32; Isa. 2: 2, 3.) (4) On this day the first announcement of a complete salvation from sin was made. Heretofore it had been in purpose, promise, prophecy, and preparation; but on this day the plan was set forth as a fact. (1 Cor. 15: 1-4; and Peter's sermon in Acts 2.) (5) It was on this day that the first law which was ever issued in the name of

Jesus Christ was proclaimed. (Acts 2: 37-39.) (6) It was on this day that Peter, for the first time, used the "keys of the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 16: 18, 19.) (7) And finally, the law of pardon which was announced on this day is the law of pardon for all nations and for all time. (Luke 24: 46, 47; Acts 2: 38; Matt. 28: 20.)

*They were all together in one place.* Bible students have never been agreed regarding the antecedent of "they." Johnson notes, "Not only the apostles, but the hundred and twenty disciples," while Alford says, "Not the apostles only, nor the hundred and twenty mentioned in ch. 1: 15; but *all the believers in Christ*, then congregated at the time of the feast in Jerusalem." Lipscomb and McGarvey, on the other hand, are convinced from the grammatical construction of the closing part of chapter one and the opening of chapter two that only the apostles were meant. We know of course, from the New Testament itself, that the Spirit entered the church at the time of its establishment as a living organism (cf. 1 Cor. 3: 16, 17; 12: 12, 13), for otherwise the body would have no life (cf. James 2: 26); but it appears from Acts 2: 4ff. that only the twelve apostles are contemplated in what is here recorded. There does not seem to be any evidence from which one could fairly conclude that any but the twelve manifested any miraculous power on the occasion now under consideration.

*And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.* It appears to be quite possible that the "sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind" was intended to attract the multitudes, and call them together to the place where the apostles were. At least that was the effect it had on the people, as may be seen from verse 6: "And when this sound was heard, the multitude came together, . . ." The tongues "like as of fire" probably indicated divine favor, or the conferring of the

power necessary to speak inspired language. It is also possible, of course, as Alford notes, that the sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind was the chosen vehicle by which the Holy Spirit was manifested to their sense of hearing, just as the tongues like as of fire manifested his presence to their sense of seeing.

To be "filled with the Holy Spirit" was, as the context clearly sets forth, to be brought under the influence of the Spirit; and it is in order just here to ask who or what was the Spirit with which they were filled? If one is willing to consider that which is said about the Spirit throughout the Old Testament, he will find that it was God's very life principle and the divine energy by which he always carried on his diverse activities. See, for example, Gen. 1: 2; 6: 3; Job 26: 13; Psalm 104: 30; and in the New Testament, Luke 1: 34, 35; Matt. 1: 20. If one has any doubt about the question, it should be cleared up by a careful consideration of these last two passages. *The Spirit is a manifestation of God himself.*

The apostles were the plenipotentiary ministers of Christ, and it was therefore necessary that they be enabled to perform works which only God can do; and it was for this reason that Jesus promised them such power. (Acts 1: 8; cf. John 3: 1, 2.) This power was given to them under the figure of a baptism; and later on when Peter referred to it, he spoke of it as a gift. (Acts 11: 17; 15: 8.)

A failure to understand and accept the figurative import of the baptism in the Holy Spirit has resulted in a rejection of the plain teaching of the New Testament regarding water baptism as a condition of salvation. As long as people are taught that they can and should be baptized in the Holy Spirit, just that long will they refuse to be baptized in water for the remission of their sins. The popular idea of a baptism in the Holy Spirit is nowhere taught in the Word of God. The Lord gives his Spirit to them that obey him (cf. Acts 5: 32), and Acts 2: 38, 39 shows exactly what that obedience is. With the teaching of the Bible regarding who and what the Spirit is in mind, it should not be any more difficult

to conceive of a figurative baptism or overwhelming in the Spirit, than it is to think of a figurative baptism in fire, in suffering, or how one can be immersed in his work.

### The Effect on the Multitude

(Acts 2: 5-12)

*Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speaking in his own language.* This great number of Jews had come to the city of Jerusalem from their homes in various parts of the world for the feast of Pentecost; and they are described as "devout men," that is, men who were devoted to that which they believed to be right; pious, reverent men. And when they heard the apostles speaking in all the languages of the people who were then present, they were confounded, that is, mentally confused.

*And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans? And how hear we, every man in our own language wherein we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judaea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them speaking in our tongues the mighty works of God. And they were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying one to another, What meaneth this?*

It can easily be seen from a map

of Bible countries that these people came from places in practically all directions from Jerusalem; and being pious people, they had no difficulty in recognizing the miraculous in that which was going on before their eyes. No effort was made to deny the reality of the miracle, but instead they ascribed the power which produced it to God. It appears that Luke all but exhausted his vocabulary in describing the effect of the miracle on the multitude. They were confounded, amazed, marvelled, perplexed. Judas was the only one of the original twelve who was not a Galilean; hence, the question, "Are not all these that speak Galilaean?" And their question, "What meaneth this?" shows that they were in a mood to hear an explanation.

### The Reaction of the Mockers

(Acts 2: 13)

*But others mocking said, These are filled with new wine.* These mockers are placed in contrast with the devout men of verse 5, and it is interesting to note the different impressions which the same set of circumstances made on the two classes of hearers. It is possible that these mockers were natives of Judaea, and did not really know that the apostles were actually speaking other languages. They may have thought, as Matthew Henry suggests, that the inspired men were speaking only gibberish and nonsense, such as drunkards sometimes do. But they are referred to as mockers, and that should be a lesson to those who speak disparagingly of that about which they are ignorant. That which people say often reveals their character.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

What preparation is necessary in order to understand God's purpose in the scheme of human redemption?

Why is the second chapter of Acts so important in Bible study?

What are some of the things which took place on the day of Pentecost of that chapter?

In what sense is the second chapter of Acts the center of God's revelation?

Why is it so important to know the facts of this chapter?

#### The Golden Text

What is one of the greatest hindrances to profitable Bible study?

Why do many people often read into Bible statements that which the writer never intended?

What result always follows such a practice?

Under what circumstances did Jesus speak the words of the golden text?

#### Pentecost and the Coming of the Spirit

What was Pentecost?

By what names was it known in the Old Testament?

When was the feast of Pentecost observed and how was the date determined?

Why was the Pentecost of Acts 2 so significant?  
 In what sense did the Holy Spirit begin his work on that day?  
 Discuss the personality of the Spirit and show the significance of that aspect of his character.  
 What were some of the prophecies which were fulfilled or began to be fulfilled on that day?  
 In what sense had the gospel been preached before that time?  
 What was the first law which went forth in the name of Christ?  
 How did Peter use the keys of the kingdom on that day?  
 Discuss the universality of the law of pardon which Peter announced?  
 Who were together in one place when the day of Pentecost was fully come?  
 How do we know that the Spirit entered the church on that day?  
 Under what circumstances did the Holy Spirit come on Pentecost?  
 Why the sound as of a mighty wind and the appearance of tongues as of fire?  
 What was the meaning of being filled with the Spirit?  
 What important lesson do we learn from Luke 1: 34, 35 and Matt. 1: 20?

Under what circumstances did the Spirit come to be called the "Holy Spirit"?  
 Why was it necessary for the apostles to have miraculous power from Pentecost and onward?  
 In what way did Peter later refer to their reception of the Holy Spirit?  
 Why do so many religious people reject water baptism as a condition of salvation?

#### The Effect on the Multitude

Who were dwelling in Jerusalem at the time of this lesson and why were they there?  
 What is the meaning of "devout men"?  
 How did they regard the miracle which they witnessed?  
 How does Luke describe the effect which it had upon them?  
 What question did they ask and what did it show regarding their attitude?

#### The Reaction of the Mockers

Why was a different impression made on them?  
 What does one speech usually show regarding him?

### Lesson III—April 15, 1962

## PETER'S SERMON ON PENTECOST

### Lesson Text

Acts 2:14-16, 22-24, 29-41

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spake forth unto them, *saying*, Ye men of Ju-dae'-a, and all ye that dwell at Je-ru'-sa-lem, be this known unto you, and give ear unto my words.

15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose; seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day;

16 But this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Jo'-el:

22 Ye men of Is'-ra-el, hear these words: Je'-sus of Naz'-a-reth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know;

23 Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay:

24 Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

. . . . .

29 Brethren, I may say unto you freely of the patriarch David, that

he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us unto this day.

30 Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set *one* upon his throne;

31 He foreseeing *this* spake of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left unto Ha'-des, nor did his flesh see corruption.

32 This Je'-sus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses.

33 Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear.

34 For David ascended not into the heavens: but he saith himself,

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

35 Till I make thine enemies the foot-stool of thy feet.

36 Let all the house of Is'-ra-el therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Je'-sus whom ye crucified.

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said

unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?

38 And Peter *said* unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Je'-sus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are

**Golden Text.**—*"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2: 38.)

**Devotional Reading**—Acts 2: 17-21, 25-28, 41-47.

## Daily Bible Readings

April 9. M.....	Peter's Call to Discipleship (John 1: 36-51)
April 10. T.....	Peter and the Keys (Matt. 16: 13-20)
April 11. W.....	Peter's Renewal of Faith (John 21: 15-25)
April 12. T.....	Peter's Willingness to Suffer (Acts 4: 13-20)
April 13. F.....	Prophecy Fulfilled on Pentecost (Isa. 2: 1-4)
April 14. S.....	Remission of Sin Preached (Luke 24: 46-49)
April 15. S.....	Conditions of Salvation (Acts 2: 37-47)

**Time.**—AJD. 30.

**Place.**—Jerusalem.

**Persons.**—Peter and the multitude.

## Introduction

Peter's sermon on the Pentecost of Acts 2 was the first gospel sermon which was ever preached in fact. It was pointed out in the lesson last week that prior to that time the gospel was presented in purpose, promise, prophecy, and preparation; but when the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus became a reality, and he had taken his seat at God's right hand, the way was opened for the gospel to be presented in fact. This was the reason why Jesus would not allow the apostles to tell any one that he was the Christ during his personal ministry. (Matt. 16: 20.) Neither the apostles nor the people were ready for that information then. (Acts 1: 8.)

But when the day of Pentecost came in the year of our study, Jesus had made possible the salvation of the human race by his death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15: 1-4; Heb. 2: 9), and was ready to make intercession for all who would draw near to God through him. This plan had been developing and unfolding all down through the ages, as already indicated, but it was not completed until Jesus made the supreme sacrifice, and had been made both Lord and Christ. Or, to express the matter in a different way, God drafted the

afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him.

40 And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation.

41 They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added *unto them* in that day about three thousand souls.

plan for saving the race (2 Cor. 5: 18f.), Jesus executed it, and the Holy Spirit made it known. The plan, of course, is perfect, and surely no thoughtful person would want either of the Divine Trinity to do his work over. Our only concern therefore should be to learn what the plan is, and then meet its requirements.

Just before Jesus ascended back to the Father, he gave the great commission to his apostles, and it is not out of place to regard that great statement as a kind of blueprint for all gospel preaching from Pentecost and onward. The facts of the commission may be learned from the following six passages of scripture, and they should be carefully considered in connection with the lesson. The six passages are Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15, 16; Luke 24: 46, 47; John 20: 21-23; Acts 1: 8; 2 Cor. 5: 18-20. This commission, in fact, is the key to the proper understanding of the Book of Acts; and when once people fully understand it, they will have no difficulty in seeing that all New Testament preaching, including the sermon to be considered in this lesson, was in complete harmony with terms Jesus announced in his final charge to his disciples.

## The Golden Text

This part of our study is found in the lesson text, and will be treated in its proper order.

## The Text Explained

### An Introductory Explanation

(Acts 2: 14-16)

*But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spake forth unto them, saying, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at and give ear unto my words.* It is always interesting to know who the preacher is when a great sermon is preached, especially a sermon which is recorded in the Bible. This information is supplied in the text now before us, namely, the apostle Peter, the man to whom Jesus promised to give the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and since the kingdom and the church are one and the selfsame institution, it is the purpose of this sermon to tell people how to enter the kingdom or become members of the church. Not only did Peter have the terms of the commission before him; he also had the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. See John 14: 26; 16: 13; Acts 2: 4. It is important, therefore, that special care be given to the consideration of this sermon; for it sets forth in detail the truths which those in need of salvation must understand and accept, if they are to be freed from their sins. "Ye men of Judaea" were the ones who lived there, while "all ye that dwell at Jerusalem" were the ones who lived outside of Judaea and had come to the city for the feast of Pentecost. See verse 5.

*For these are not drunken, as ye suppose; seeing it is but the third hour of the day; but this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel.* Peter's sermon was very skillfully opened, his first effort being to remove prejudice from the hearts of those who were critical. He spoke in general terms, which had the advantage of avoiding a personal issue with the mockers, while at the same time causing those who had taken the miracle seriously to look with disgust upon their thoughtless brethren. Some preachers, alas! create more prejudice by their rash statements at the beginning of their sermons, than they are able to remove during the remainder of their efforts.

Peter's answer to the charge of

intoxication was not a complete refutation of that which the mockers had said, for men might drink at any hour of the day; but since the time in question was the morning hour of prayer, corresponding to the morning sacrifice (Luke 1: 10), before which no pious Jew would eat or drink, and especially on a feast day, it was not necessary for the apostle to say anything more about the allegation. The remainder of his sermon would wholly disprove it. (Eccles. 10: 16; Isa. 5: 11; 1 Thess. 5: 7.)

Joel was one of the minor prophets of the Old Testament, and in quoting his prophecy, Peter was, in effect, saying that there is another and better way of accounting for the demonstrations of the hour, than the charge of drunkenness. The apostle's use of the words of Joel not only explained the perplexing phenomena which they saw and heard (cf. verse 33); it also served to answer the question of the multitude, "What meaneth this?"

### The Issue Clearly Stated

(Acts 2: 22-24)

*Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay; whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.*

It would be difficult to conceive of a greater impact than that which these words produced in the already confused and greatly disturbed minds of the people who were listening to the words of Peter. Each statement he made was calculated to make them reel and stagger, as under a rapid succession of heavy blows. After showing that the miracle which they had just witnessed was a divine manifestation, the apostle next put the issue regarding Jesus of Nazareth squarely before them by a series of statements which showed the contrast between their attitude toward Jesus,

and that of God. The whole idea was to show that they had acted in direct opposition to God.

Peter first showed them that God approved the man whom they condemned; and he did it in a way which they themselves knew about—"by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, *even as ye yourselves know*." The *mighty works* were outward expressions of miraculous power; *wonders* were deeds so strange as to produce astonishment; *signs* indicated divine approval. All three were miracles, as that word is generally understood; but they were miracles regarded from different points of view. "Mighty works" showed the inherent power which Christ possessed; "wonders," the effect which his deeds had on the people; while "signs" demonstrated that God was with him. (John 3: 1, 2.) And the fact that they knew all this left them without excuse.

The apostle next pointed out to them that their treatment of Jesus was not due to weakness on his part, but rather to the fact that God, in his omniscience, had decreed that he should die for the sins of the world. God often allows wicked people to have their way with the righteous, but that by no means proves that they are stronger than those who put their trust in God. (1 Peter 2: 21-24; Rom. 12: 17-21.) This should be an impressive lesson to those who feel that they have the power to treat their so-called weaker brethren as they please. The Lord will deal with them appropriately at the proper time.

And because Jesus did not meet with their expectation, they, by the hand of lawless men, put him to death; but God raised him up, another example of the contrast between the people and God. God raised Christ from the dead, because it was not possible for death to hold him. People sometimes speak of the resurrection of Christ as a miracle; but from this we learn that it would also have been a miracle if he had not been raised from the dead. It was not possible for death to hold the *principle of life* which Jesus possessed; and it would have been a violation of God's law had the Holy One been given over to corruption.

*Holiness* can never see corruption; and *life* can never be given over to death. The resurrection of Christ therefore was not an exception to the law of death; it was in complete harmony with the eternal principle of life. It would have been a miracle, too, let it be repeated, if Christ had not been raised from the dead. A miracle is an act of God without regard to law, and if Christ had not been resurrected it would have been necessary for God to have violated or disregarded his own law of life.

In commenting on this section of our lesson, Professor McGarvey says, "Never did mortal lips announce in so brief a space so many facts of import so terrific to the hearers. We might challenge the world to find a parallel to it in the speeches of her orators, or the songs of her poets. There is not such a thunderbolt in all the burdens of the prophets of Israel, or among the voices which echo through the Apocalypse. It is the first public announcement to the world of a risen and glorified Redeemer."

#### The Climax and Results of the Sermon (Acts 2: 29-41)

*Brethren, I may say unto you freely of the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us unto this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne; he foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.*

Having referred to the resurrection of Christ in the previous section of our lesson, Peter then quoted from one of the psalms of David which was generally regarded as Messianic, namely, Psalm 16. Furthermore, in the prophetic utterance regarding the Messiah, David habitually spoke in the first person; and so, in any given case, if it can be demonstrated that he was not speaking of himself, the inevitable conclusion is that he was speaking of the coming Christ. This is the point which Peter made in his use of the quotation found in verses 25-28. David himself died, was buried, and his tomb was still there, and he could not

therefore be the one who was not left in Hades, and whose flesh did not see corruption. David therefore was not referring to himself, but to the Messiah. This was Peter's first proof of his declaration that Christ had been raised from the dead. David had predicted it.

*This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we are witnesses.* His second point of proof was the testimony of the apostles themselves, who had seen him after his resurrection. Inasmuch as we probably have only a condensed statement of Peter's actual sermon (cf. verse 40), it is fair to assume that he said more about the apostolic testimony than Luke reported. See Acts 10: 40, 41. But after the multitude had witnessed the miracle in connection with the coming of the Spirit, and listened to the words which Peter had spoken thus far, it would not be difficult for the pious among the multitude to believe that he was telling the truth about the resurrection.

*Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear. For David ascended not into the heavens: but he saith himself,*

*The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,  
Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.*

Peter had showed from David that the Christ was not only to be raised from the dead, but was to be raised up to sit on David's throne; and since that was to take place after his resurrection, rather than before, the conclusion was that the reign was not to be an earthly one. And too, the closing words of Peter's quotation from Psalm 16 (see Acts 2: 28) implies that Christ would ascend to God's presence following his resurrection. And that is what Peter assumed in the beginning of his third argument regarding the resurrection, namely, "For David ascended not into the heavens," but he predicted that the Christ would; and since even the Pharisees admitted that the Christ was David's Son (see Matt. 22: 41-46), Peter's next quotation from the words of David (Psalm 110: 1) implies not only his resurrection, but also his ascension. The apostle's third and concluding argument that the

resurrection of Jesus had taken place was based on the miraculous manifestations of the hour: "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear." The people, of course, would have to understand that Peter spoke by inspiration; but they could do that when they saw and heard the supernatural manifestations. God would not give such power as the apostles possessed to impostors.

*Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified.* This was the divinely reached irresistible conclusion, and it was armed with unspeakable terrors for the guilty hearers. To *know assuredly* is to believe with confidence, or, more literally, to know beyond the shadow of a doubt. In other words, they were called upon to change their minds regarding Christ, or become believers in him.

*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?* The original word for "pricked" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Its practical meaning is the painful emotional sting which the words of Peter produced in them. Figuratively, they were cut to the heart, or were profoundly disturbed in their conscience; all of which implies that they believed what Peter said regarding Christ. Faith is a change of mind with reference to Christ, and as is always the case, it is brought about by the word of God. (Horn. 10: 17; Acts 2: 4.) The question, "What shall we do?" shows that they realized their undone condition, and wanted to know what they could do in order to be freed from their terrible guilt.

*And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* Goodspeed renders this verse in these words, "Peter said to them, 'You must repent, and every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, in order to have your sins forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' " The original for "unto"



(*eis*) is the same word which is rendered *unto* in Matt. 26: 28. There can therefore be no doubt about the design of baptism in the passage now before us—"in order to have your sins forgiven."

It is possible, of course, that the people who asked the question about what they should do (verse 37) only had in mind what to do about getting rid of the guilt of killing Jesus, but it is hardly probable that they failed to realize their undone condition before God. At any rate, Peter took the wider view and told them how to get the forgiveness they needed; and what was said to them is equally applicable to any one out of Christ and for any sin. The people to whom Peter spoke had just witnessed the giving of the Holy Spirit according to Joel's prophecy; and inasmuch as Joel's prediction included more than simply the apostles (see Acts 2: 17-21), Peter, in effect, said to the inquirers, "Take the necessary steps to get your own lives acceptable to God, and you, too, shall receive the Holy Spirit."

In saying that they would receive "the gift of the Holy Spirit," Peter did not mean that they would receive a gift bestowed by the Holy Spirit, but that they would receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. Thayer notes that the grammatical construction in the original, genitive of the thing given, makes this fact certain. The expression in Acts 2: 38 means exactly what the identical expression means in Acts 10: 45. In commenting on Acts 2: 38, Nichol and Whiteside say, "The people on that occasion evidently accepted the words with their natural import, as we should today. If a father should say to his son, 'You shall receive the gift of \$100,' no one would misunderstand. At the house of Cornelius 'the Holy Spirit fell on them that heard the word.' (Acts 10: 44.) The next verse says, 'On the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit.' If we let the Bible explain itself, and leave theorizing off, we will save much

trouble." (*Sound Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 107.)

*For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as the Lord our God shall call unto him.* The "promise" was the promise of the Holy Spirit to obedient believers, as set forth in the last part of verse 38. "For" connects the closing part of verse 38 with verse 39. "That we might receive the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith." (Gal. 3: 14b.) "Through *the* faith" in the original, which means through the gospel. Cf. Acts 6: 7. The Spirit is promised to every obedient believer in Christ, but the Bible nowhere teaches that every one who receives the Spirit will receive miraculous power: that always depended on the *will* of the Spirit himself. Cf. 1 Cor. 12: 11; 13: 8; Eph. 4: 8-16. In view of the wording of the commission (Matt. 28: 19; Mark 16: 15; Luke 24: 47), it is fair to assume that Peter and the other apostles expected the conversion of the Gentiles, but they evidently did not know the *manner*. They apparently thought that they would become Christians through the medium of the Jewish religion. This false notion was later corrected.

*And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation.* We learn from this that Luke did not report all that Peter said, but we evidently do have all the essential facts. "Testified" referred to the *argumentative* part of the sermon, while "exhorted" referred to the *hortatory* part. The exhortation to save themselves shows their personal responsibility. God supplied the means, but they had to make the appropriation.

*They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls.* "They then that received his word were baptized," that is, all who believed what Peter said, and were willing to do as he commanded. The expression "unto them" is not in the original.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Why is Peter's sermon on Pentecost so significant?

Why was it necessary to wait until that day to preach it?  
Trace the essential steps in perfecting the plan of salvation.  
What should be our greatest concern regarding it

What bearing does the commission which Christ gave just before he ascended have on all gospel preaching?

#### An Introductory Explanation

Why was it necessary for Peter to make this explanation?

Why was Peter the preacher on this occasion, rather than one of the other apostles?

Why could Peter speak so positively to the people before him?

How did he dispose of the charge of drunkenness on the part of the apostles?

What important lesson should preachers of today learn from this?

Why did Peter make the quotation from Joel?

#### The Issue Clearly Stated

What effect did the words of this section of our lesson have on the multitude?

What was Peter's purpose in saying what he did about Jesus of Nazareth?

How did he go about setting these facts before the multitude?

What rendered the people without excuse in their opposition to Jesus?

What is the significance of mighty works, wonders, and signs?

Why was it possible for the people to treat Jesus so shamefully?

How can people show real strength in dealing with their "weaker" brethren?

Why did the people want to kill Jesus and what means did they employ?

Why was he raised from the dead? Discuss the significance of your answer.

#### The Climax and Results of the Sermon

Why did Peter introduce the quotation from David?

How did he go about proving that David was speaking of Christ?

What was Peter's concluding argument for the resurrection of Jesus?

What general conclusion did he then reach?

What does it mean to "know assuredly"?

What effect did Peter's sermon have on the multitude?

In what sense were they "pricked in their hearts"?

What question did they ask? and why?

How do we know that they believed in Christ?

What was Peter's answer to them?

What did he mean by "the gift of the Holy Spirit"?

What promise was made to all who are called unto the Lord?

What connection does it have with the gospel?

What was Peter's attitude toward the Gentiles and the church?

How did Luke treat Peter's sermon?

How did he emphasize personal responsibility?

What was the general result of the sermon?

Why the personal testimony of the apostles regarding the resurrection?

## Lesson IV—April 22, 1962

# A MIRACLE AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE

## Lesson Text

### Acts 3:1-11

1 Now Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth *hour*.

2 And a certain man that was lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the door of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

3 Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked to receive an alms.

4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us.

5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something from them.

6 But Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Je'-sus Christ of Naz'-a-r6th, walk.

7 And he took him by the right hand, and raised him up: and immediately his feet and his ankle-bones received strength.

8 And leaping up, he stood, and began to walk; and he entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God:

10 And they took knowledge of him, that it was he that sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

11 And as he held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Sol'-6-mon's, greatly wondering.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk* (Acts 3: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 3: 12-18.

## Daily Bible Readings

April 16. M.....	Healing in the Name of Christ (Acts 3: 1-10)
April 17. T.....	The Power of Faith (Acts 3: 11-16)
April 18. W.....	Salvation Only through Christ's Name (Acts 4: 8-12)
April 19. T.....	Purpose of Miracles (Heb. 2: 1-4)
April 20. F.....	Effect of This Miracle at the Beautiful Gate (Acts 3: 7-11)
April 21. S.....	Attitude of the Rulers (Acts 4: 13-22)
April 22. S.....	Prayer of the Disciples (Acts 4: 23-30)

TIME.—A.D. 30.

PLACE.—The temple in Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Peter, John, the lame beggar, and the people.

### Introduction

Any historical account of the early church is not only interesting reading material; it is important in tracing the fortunes of the Lord's people during the apostolic age. In commenting on his account of the life of Christ, John says, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." (John 20: 30, 31.) And in a similar manner, it is certain that things in the history of the early church were not recorded by the inspired penman, but those which have been placed in the record are there for a purpose.

In verse 43 of the chapter which precedes our lesson text, we read this statement, "And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles." And then a little further on we are told in the same paragraph that the disciples had favor with all the people. See verses 44-47. But when we come to the lesson for today, we are to see a situation which will re-

sult in a changed attitude on the part of people toward the church; and that, apparently, is one of the reasons why this historical record has been preserved in the New Testament account of the early church.

If we were outlining the Book of Acts, we might list the section in which our lesson is found as *The Progress of the Church: Its First Persecution*. The first ten verses of chapter 3 may be looked upon as a kind of transitional record. The miracle which was performed by Peter and John is an example of the kind of signs referred to in 2: 43, and it also becomes the occasion for the changed attitude on the part of the people toward the church. It is true that the people who saw the miracle were filled with wonder and amazement, and were quite willing to listen to Peter's sermon which followed; but the leaders of the Jews were "sore troubled because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead." And it was from this attitude that the trouble started. (Acts 4: 1-4.)

### The Golden Text

This portion of our lesson is found in the main text, and it will be treated in its regular order.

### The Text Explained

#### The Setting for the Miracle

(Acts 3: 1-3)

*Now Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.* There is no way of knowing just how long after Pentecost it was when the facts of this lesson took place, but taking all things into consideration, it is probably not out of place to suppose that the events of chapter 2 and 3 were

within the same general period of time. The important thing, however, is to see the Lord's people at work among the people who were in need of the salvation provided by Jesus and set forth in the gospel which he authorized to be preached. Peter and John were not only doing their individual duty as Christians; they were also seeking opportunity for teaching others.

No faithful Christian can isolate

himself from the people of the world, nor is it the will of the Lord that he should do so. In his prayer for the disciples just before he was taken from them, Jesus said, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one." (John 17: 15.) Christians are in a very real sense the representatives of Christ, and since it is unthinkable that he could be in the world and not be a blessing to it, it is, of course, very necessary that his people should seek to do good to those who are about them. Peter says, "But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, *that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light*" (1 Pet. 2: 9; cf. Tit. 2: 14.)

We learn from Acts 2: 46 that the meeting place of the disciples of Christ was in the temple. They did not go there to engage in the temple worship which was authorized by the law of Moses, but to serve the Lord in their newly found relationship with him through Christ. "And day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people." See verses 46, 47a. The time of the day is given as "the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour," or three o'clock in the afternoon. The Jewish day was reckoned from six to six, so that the third hour corresponded to nine o'clock, Roman time, which was the same as ours, and so on throughout the day.

The hours for burning incense in the temple were the third and the ninth; and it is fair to assume from Luke 1: 10 that it was the custom of the people to gather on the outside for prayer while the incense was being burned. It is very likely that the apostles and other Christians continued to observe the various hours of prayer, and the gathering of the people at the temple would also give them an opportunity to teach those who were willing to listen to their message. At any rate, Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer.

*And a certain man that was lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the door of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked to receive an alms.* Josephus, presumably describing this Beautiful gate, said that it was made of Corinthian brass, "and greatly excelled those that were only covered over with silver and gold." There were nine gates on each side of the temple, and Josephus goes on to say that "the magnitudes of the other gates were equal one to another; but that over the Corinthian gate, which opened on the east over against the gate of the holy house itself, was much larger; for its height was fifty cubits; and its doors were forty cubits; and it was adorned after a most costly manner, having much richer and thicker plates of silver and gold upon it than the other." (Wars of the Jews 5: 5, 3.)

The lame beggar who was lying at the Beautiful gate of the temple was indeed an actual person, but it may very properly be said that he also represents an ever-present condition, namely, that of needy men. (Mark 14: 7.) And as one reads this narrative, the whole question of how Christianity works upon the lives of people today can very well come into focus. Every thoughtful person will readily admit that a vital faith in Christ, spread throughout the community, would penetrate the lives of people in every direction; but the practical question is, Where is the power of Christ applied and how does it do its work. Much of the disappointment which some people experience with reference to Christianity arises because they look for its results in the wrong place. They expect fruit without the root, or, to drop the figure, they are looking for external results instead of making sure that inward contact with Christ is the basis of all other transformations.

The man in the lesson now before us was asking for material help, which he very probably needed; but he had other needs which were greater and which he, apparently, was not aware of. But his attitude is representative of the average per-

son today, as, for example, there are people who seem to feel that Christianity should concern itself with social reform. Jesus does promise that the needs of life will be added to those who seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness (Matt. 6: 33); but those things are not ends within themselves. Christianity does have the power of social betterment, but instead of simply giving people the things which they want, the religion of Christ gives men the mind to work for the general improvement of all concern. (Eph. 4: 28.) And even those who are without any ability to work themselves should be made to realize that there is more to life than simply to beg for a dole with which to keep soul and body together.

But notwithstanding the fact that in transforming character Christianity works from within, this is not to say that better external conditions are not important. There are people who seemingly can never be reached until they are touched through some change in the conditions of their lives. They are so steeped in hardships and embittered by the trials which they must endure that their mind and soul are almost incapable of listening to any Christian appeal, to say nothing of responding to it. When Moses went to the children of Israel in Egyptian bondage with a message of hope, they hearkened not unto him "for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage." (Ex. 6: 9.) And so, if for nothing else than to reach such people with the gospel message, it is the duty of the Lord's people to do what they can to relieve others of the evils which ravage the human spirit and keep it in bondage. But better external conditions alone will not remake the man, nor brace the impotent will.

#### The Miracle Performed

(Acts 3: 4-8)

*But Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something from them.* If the crippled beggar was at the door of the temple, Peter and John were at the door of opportunity. Opportunity, in fact, is often the gift of God to his people. Jesus told the

church in Philadelphia that he had set before them a door opened, which none could shut. The marginal reading for "set" is *given*, and since the "door" was probably the door of opportunity, it is clear that it was the Lord's gracious gift to his people there. All opportunities for service in the kingdom of Christ are gifts from God.

This is the way that Paul felt about the matter, when he said, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith." (Gal. 6: 10.) There are some who seem to think that Christian people are not obligated, as a church, to minister to those of the world who are in need; but the letter from which the foregoing passage is taken was addressed to the *churches* of Galatia. These congregations were exhorted to "work that which is good toward *all* men," which certainly includes men of the world. The expression "and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith" indicates that the Lord's people have the first claim upon the generosity of their brethren.

This opportunity for doing good came to Peter and John at the hour of prayer, which at least can suggest to us that if we would spend more time in prayer for all men, it would not be very difficult to find many opportunities for service in the name of Christ. Jesus taught his disciples to pray that God's will may be done on earth, and it is done in heaven (Matt. 6: 10), and Paul frequently called upon his brethren to pray that he might have opportunities for furthering the cause of Christ among the people around him. (Col. 4: 3.) It is impossible to pray earnestly for people, and then not do what we can for their welfare.

Peter's words "look on us" are also suggestive. As already pointed out, the Lord's people are his representatives here upon the earth, and it is to them that those in need should look for a practical plan of assistance. (Acts 6: 1-4.) We are not to conclude from the passage just cited that only the "method" employed by the Jerusalem church is open to the Lord's people now; but we should learn that the church should en-

deavor to meet the needs of those who are in distress to the extent of its ability. "New occasions teach new duties," so far as the application of the principle is concerned. As long as Christian people "work that which is *good* toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith," they will be acting within the framework which has been ordained by God for his people. (Tit. 3: 1; 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.) Both congregations as such and individual Christians are obligated to minister to those in need. (1 Tim. 5: 16; 1 Cor. 16: 15, 16.)

*But Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk. And he took him by the right hand, and raised him up: and immediately his feet and his ankle-bones received strength. And leaping up, he stood, and began to walk; and he entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.* There are many things which are of more value than money. The value of money does not inhere within itself, but arises simply from the fact that it furnishes a ready means of exchange. Silver and gold, therefore, are worth only that which they will purchase; and they cannot purchase health, happiness, nor acceptance with God. (Acts 8: 18f.) There are many people today like Peter and John, in that they do not possess silver and gold; but there is none too poor to give *such as he has*. And if Christians are willing to use what they do have in the Lord's service, they can be assured that their needs for good works will be supplied by God himself. (2 Cor. 9: 6-11.)

"Go break to the needy sweet charity's bread,

For giving is living," the angel said.

"And must I be giving again and again?"

"Oh no," said the angel, piercing me through;

"Just give till the Master stops giving to you!"

—Anon.

It will be helpful to us just here to ask, What did Peter give to the lame beggar in the absence of silver and gold? (1) He gave him health

and the ability to walk, things which he had never enjoyed in all the forty years of his life. (4: 22.) (2) He gave him hope. There is no reason for saying that the poor man ever expected to be more than a beggar. He never dreamed of himself being a helper. It is a great privilege to bring hope to others. There are many worthy souls who know how to make the sorrowing heart sing, and the cloudy skies bright; but there are others who can leave one thoroughly discouraged after only a very few minutes talk. (3) He gave him faith—faith in himself, his fellow men, and in Christ. (4) He gave him love. Many people can put money into the hands of the needy, but it is often done without love. Some one has summed up the deeds of Peter on this occasion in these words:

Peter stood at the temple gate, as the cripple begged outside,

"Give of your alms to a needy one," the helpless beggar cried;

But Peter was poor, as the world holds wealth, no silver or gold had he,

While the crowds dropped coins with lavish show, for their fellow men to see;

Yet Peter stretched forth his empty hands to answer the pleading call

(And I think the cripple looked and knew his gift would excel them all);

"In the name of Jesus, rise and walk, henceforth in health to live;

Silver and gold have I none," he said, "but such as I have, I give."

Down the ages the call rings forth its message, that all may heed,

Silver and gold, in this world of ours, is never the greatest need;

There are tears and sorrows and troubled hearts abroad in the

world today,

That all the silver and gold on earth never could drive away;

Every day we may give ourselves in friendship, to those we meet,

The clasp of our hands, the smiles of our lips, the service of willing feet.

However small it may seem to us, it may help some soul to live,

If we mold our lives on Peter's rule, "Such as I have, I give."

## The Effect on the Multitude

(Acts 3: 9-11)

*And all the people saw him walking and praising God: and they took knowledge of him, that it was he that sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.* The multitudes, when left to themselves, are nearly always favorably impressed when Christians do their duty; and it would be much easier to win them to Christ, if their leaders would leave them alone. It is evident from this study that all that is needed to bring about a great victory for the cause of Christ is for his people to do their duty, that is, to use what they have and do what they can. God never requires any one to undertake more than his ability and opportunity will enable him to do. (Matt. 25: 14-30.) **Ability 4-opportunity = responsibility.**

When Jehovah wanted to teach Moses that he could do more than he himself suspected, he asked him what he had in his hand; and then with the rod and God's help he learned that he could become the deliverer of Israel. (Ex. 4: 1-5.) Andrew didn't think that five loaves and two fishes would go very far in feeding a great multitude, but he

learned that with the Lord's help they were more than enough. Head John 6: 1-14. The poor widow did not have much money, but she was able to give more than all the others. (Mark 12: 41-44.) If we are willing to do our part, God will add his blessing, and the world will be made to see the glorious results of Christianity.

*And as he held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.* Solomon's porch was one of the porticos which were built on the outer edges of the temple grounds. It appears that they were used for crowds to gather to listen to addresses. McGarvey says that they afforded sufficient room for each of the apostles to preach to large groups, and still be far enough apart to avoid confusion of sound. Solomon's porch appears to have been on the eastern side of the temple, and it was in it that Jesus was walking during the feast of dedication. (John 10: 22, 23; see also Acts 5: 12.) When the people assembled in Solomon's porch on the occasion of our lesson, they were evidently in a mood to listen to the apostles; for they were "greatly wondering." The address which followed was Peter's second recorded sermon.

## 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 historical records of the New Testament?

Why are the records so important?

What kind of impression had the church made on the public up to the time of this lesson?

What probable reason may be assigned for recording the incidents of this lesson?

How is this historical section related to the other parts of Acts?

In what way did these circumstances become the occasion for a changed attitude toward the church and the apostles?

### The Setting for the Miracle

Under what circumstances did Peter and John go into the temple?

Why can't a faithful Christian isolate himself from the people of the world?

What prayer did Jesus offer for his disciples before he left them and why?

What special relationship do Christians have here upon the earth?

How can they show forth the "exce-

Where was the public meeting place of the disciples at first?

Why go there at the hour of prayer?

What else was done at the time the people were engaged in prayer?

What situation was the occasion for the events of this lesson?

Where was the cripple man lying and why there?

Why was the gate called "Beautiful"?

What lesson does he suggest for us today?

In what peculiar way does Christianity work among people?

Why are some people disappointed with reference to the religion of Christ?

In what was the lame man primarily interested?

How does his attitude compare with that of many today?

What is the major benefit of material help in leading people to Christ?

### The Miracle Performed

What is the place of "opportunity" in the Christian experience?

How did the position of Peter and John illustrate this principle?

What exhortation did Paul give the churches of Galatia regarding opportunity?

What does it mean to work that which is good toward all men?

Why do Christians have the first claim of the generosity of their brethren?  
 What relationship often exists between prayer and opportunity?  
 Why is it impossible to pray earnestly for people and at the same time not do what one can for their welfare?  
 What is suggested by Peter's "Look on us"?  
 Why should needy people look to the Lord's people for a plan of assistance?  
 What form should that plan take?  
 In what sense do "new occasions teach new duties"?  
 What was Peter's response to the lame man's plea for help?

What promise has the Lord made regarding benevolent work?  
 What were some of the things which Peter gave the cripple?  
 How may his rule apply to us?

The Effect on the Multitude  
 What impression did the people receive from Peter's miracle?  
 Why is it often difficult to lead those who have been favorably impressed to Christ?  
 What does it usually take to bring a great victory for the Lord?  
 What makes a person responsible?  
 What great opportunity was given Peter following the miracle?

## Lesson V—April 29, 1962

### PETER AND JOHN ARRESTED

#### Lesson Text

Acts 4: 1-3, 7-22

1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sad-du-cees came upon them,

2 Being sore troubled because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Je'-sus the resurrection from the dead.

3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in ward unto the morrow: for it was now eventide.

. . . . .

7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, By what power, or in what name, have ye done this?

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders,

9 If we this day are examined concerning a good deed done to an impotent man, by what means this man is made whole;

10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Is'-ra-el, that in the name of Je'-sus Christ of Nôç'-ð-reth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* in him doth this man stand here before you whole.

11 He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner.

12 And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.

13 Now when they beheld the bold-

ness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Je'-sus.

14 And seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

16 Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been wrought through them, is manifest to all that dwell in Je'-ru'-sa-lem; and we cannot deny it.

17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

18 And they called them, and charged them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Je'-sus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye:

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard.

21 And they, when they had further threatened them, let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people; for all men glorified God for that which was done.

22 For the man was more than forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was wrought.



GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness."* (Acts 4: 29.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 4: 23-31.

### Daily Bible Readings

April 23.	M.	Faithfulness of the Disciples (Acts 4: 31-37)
April 24.	T.	..... Growth of the Church (Acts 5: 11-16)
April 25.	W.	..... Opposition from Jewish Leaders (Acts 5: 17-28)
April 26.	T.	..... Peter and John Boldly Answer (Acts 5: 29-32)
April 27.	F.	..... Gamaliel's Counsel (Acts 5: 34-40)
April 28.	S.	..... Continued Activity of the Disciples (Acts 5: 41, 42)
April 29.	S.	..... A Prophecy of Persecution (Matt. 5: 10-12)

TIME.—A.D. 30.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Peter, John, and the Jewish rulers and leaders.

### Introduction

During the Lord's last discourse to his disciples, he said, "If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no excuse for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin: but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this is come to pass, that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." (John 15: 18-27.)

These words were spoken by Jesus

to his disciples to prepare them for just such a situation as is described in our lesson today. The Lord's people and the world are diametrically opposed to each other, and a conflict between them is always inevitable. When we think of the *world*, we usually think of irreligious people, whereas, the New Testament regards all people who are out of Christ as being of the world. Prior to his death on the cross, the people who opposed the Lord's people in this lesson were the people of God under Moses; but when Christ died the law was nailed to his cross, and all men were declared to be under sin. (Col. 2: 14; Rom. 3: 9; Gal. 3: 22.) From Pentecost and onward, only those who are called out of the world in response to the gospel are righteous before God. (Acts 10:34, 35; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14.)

Our lesson at this time is a record of the first conflict which occurred between the followers of Christ and the people of the world; and the facts which are set forth in the text are a clear demonstration of the truthfulness of the words which Jesus spoke to his disciples on the night of his betrayal, as quoted above. The issue is clearly drawn: Jesus is in the center, as it were, and while the world seeks to counteract his claims, the Spirit and the disciples bear witness of him.

### The Golden Text

*"And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness "* These words are taken from the prayer which the body of

believers offered, following the release of Peter and John by the Sanhedrin. "And being let go, they came to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and the el-

ders had said unto them. And they, when they heard it, lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, O Lord, thou that didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David thy servant, didst say,

Why did the Gentiles rage,  
And the peoples in a g i n e vain  
things?  
The kings of the earth set them-  
selves in array,  
And the rulers were gathered to-  
gether,  
Against the Lord, and against his  
Anointed:

for of a truth in this city against thy holy Servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel foreordained to come to pass. And now, Lord, look upon thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, while thou stretchest forth thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of thy holy Servant Jesus. And when they had

prayed, the place was shaken where-in they were gathered together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness." (Acts 4: 23-31.)

This prayer is a model which should be carefully studied by all Christians today who are opposed by the forces of the evil one. The disciples put their trust completely in God, and did not show the slightest trace of resentment toward their persecutors. They recognized that the scriptures were being fulfilled, and that God is amply able to deal with any situation which might arise. Their only concern was that they be granted the boldness which was needed in speaking the word of God. Their prayer was answered, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. (Acts 16:22-34.) "And they were all [that is, the company of disciples] filled with the Holy Spirit." The original word for "filled" in Acts 4:31 is the same as that in Acts 2: 4, but there is no evidence of miraculous power being manifested here on the part of the disciples, as there was by the apostles on Pentecost. The simple presence of the Holy Spirit in people is not, in and of itself, a guarantee of miraculous power. (Eph. 5: 18; 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20.)

## The Text Explained

### Peter and John Taken into Custody

(Acts 4: 1-3)

*And as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, being sore troubled because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in ward unto the morrow: for it was now eventide.* "And as they spake unto the people" refers to the sermon recorded in the preceding chapter, verses 12-26, and probably to other teaching which Luke did not report (cf. Acts 2:40). As the apostles Peter and John were in the midst of their preaching, they were interrupted by the Jewish leaders.

The men who cut short the apostolic preaching were the priests, whose duty it was to conduct the Jewish worship in the temple, the "captain of the temple," or the commander of the guard made up of Levites which

stood on duty at the gates and elsewhere, to maintain order within the temple and its grounds (called "door-keepers" in 1 Chron. 26: 1-19), and the Sadducees. The text says that they were sore troubled because (1) they taught the people, and (2) proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. Before Jesus died his principal opponents were the Pharisees, because of his opposition to their traditions and hypocrisy; but after his resurrection the Sadducees were the ones who were sore troubled, because they denied the resurrection. (Acts 23: 6-8.)

If the *priests* in question were not themselves Sadducees, they probably joined with those who opposed the apostles because they felt that their services were being disturbed by their preaching to the people, and probably because they felt that the ministry of teaching belonged to them and their associates, rather than to the representatives of Jesus.

But because of the late hour, they put the apostles in ward until the next day. But notwithstanding the excitement which must have arisen over their arrest, the sermon which was cut short was not without effect; for many of them that heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

### A Clear Reply to a Vague Question

(Acts 4: 7-12)

*And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, By what power, or in what name, have ye done this?* At least a part of the group mentioned in verses 5, 6 made up the main body of the highest court of the Jews, known as the Sanhedrin. Annas is here called the high priest, but in John we read that Caiaphas was high priest that year. Some hold that Annas was deposed by the Roman governor, and that Caiaphas had been made his successor. (John 18: 12-14; cf. Luke 3: 2.) That may have been true, but at any rate Annas was still sufficiently influential among the Jews to require that he be given a place of honor in their deliberations. Peter and John had both been in the presence of this august body before—when their Lord was being tried before it; but it is very evident that their attitude then and now was very different.

The vagueness of the question which was put to them could not have been by accident. The men who asked it were trained specialists in the art of interrogating witnesses; and if it had been the disposition of Peter and John to quibble regarding it, they could have replied, "Done what? this preaching? this miracle? or what?" Their would-be judges knew that nothing contrary to the law had been done, but they evidently framed the question as they did in the hope that the "bewildered" followers of Jesus would be frightened into saying something which would give them the basis for a charge against them. That, of course, was a contemptible attitude, and one which was totally lacking in courage; and it is extremely unfortunate that such a spirit did not die with those hypocritical guardians of their profession.

*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of*

*the people, and elders, if we this day are examined concerning a good deed done to an impotent man, by what means this man is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in him doth this man stand here before you whole.* The cunningly devised question which was directed to them served the apostles well, for it provided them with the opportunity to select the type of answer best suited to their purpose of witnessing for Christ; and it is certain that no answer which could have been selected would have been more unwelcome to their judges.

But the answer which Peter made was not one which he and John framed. Jesus had previously warned his disciples while they were in training that such things would happen to them; and he explained to them then that divine help would be given to them. An example of this is found in the following passage: "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. But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." (Matt. 10: 16-20.)

This is another example of how the Spirit manifested his power through the apostles. Peter was filled with the Spirit, and the Spirit spoke through him. This is what the New Testament means by direct inspiration. The particular answer which was given at this time was one which even the Sanhedrin would not dare deny, namely, regarding the manner in which the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple was made whole. He was there in their presence, and all the people knew about it. The wonderful power which brought about his cure was attributed to the name of Jesus Christ of

Nazareth, whom they crucified, but whom God raised from the dead. This was not only a clear and specific answer: it also served to put the rulers and elders in direct opposition to God whom they professed to serve.

*He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner.* The quotation which Peter applied to the judges before whom he stood was from Psalm 118:22, and it served to put them in the ridiculous position of trying to build a house, while rejecting the very stone which was cut out for the corner, and without which the building could never be completed. (Matt. 21:42; Luke 20:17.) These Jewish leaders must have remembered the words which Jesus had used in this connection, and that would serve only to intensify the charge which Peter made against them.

*And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.* No clearer statement of fact regarding the relation of Christ to the salvation of the human race, nor a more emphatic one, could have been made. There was no doubt about it as Peter's words rang out in that solemn assembly. (John 14:6.) This is a lesson which must be learned and accepted before salvation can be enjoyed. To trust in the name of Jesus as the New Testament teaches is to have access into the family of God here and now; and then after a life of faithful service in his kingdom here below, the Christian is assured a home of eternal bliss in the world which is to come. (Mat. 10:32, 33; Rev. 3:5; 2 Pet. 1:10, 11.)

### "That It Spread No Further"

(Acts 4: 13-22)

*Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.* Whether or not the men of the Sanhedrin recognized Peter and John as the two disciples of Jesus who were present when he was

condemned to death is not clear; but whether they did or not, they recognized them for what they were on this occasion: they belonged to the same category, in their estimation, in which they had found Jesus. They had killed Jesus, but they will deal more cautiously with these men, at least for the time being.

The word "unlearned" literally means unlettered or uneducated, in contrast with the cultural training of the rabbis, while "ignorant" indicated what the world usually means by the term *layman*. Peter and John were, in the estimation of the Sanhedrin, *private citizens* in contrast to the officials, all of which implied that they were without professional knowledge. These would-be judges recognized that these men had something which they did not expect; and with the man who had been healed standing with them, there was nothing that they could say against it. Their aim had been to maintain their *status quo*, but they had signally failed even in that.

*But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been wrought through them, is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.* These facts reveal something of the depths of depravity to which these religious leaders had descended. They privately admitted that the power of God had manifested itself through Peter and John (John 3: 1, 2), and they knew that it would be useless to deny it; but they had rejected Jesus as the Messiah, had put him to death, had tried to prevent his resurrection (Matt. 27: 62-66), and now they must either admit their error, confess their sin, and change their religious attitude, or continue their fight against the claims of Christ.

The value of this lesson to us is seen in the fact that it has been brought down to date. One of the chief things in which denominational leaders are united is their persistent effort to see that the teaching of Jesus regarding baptism as a condition

of salvation "spread no further among the people." They have both misunderstood and rejected his teaching on this subject, a thing which they could easily see, if they would only read that which the New Testament says about it. (Acts 13: 27; Matt. 22: 29; Mark 16: 15, 16, Acts 18: 8.) It is sad to observe that there is hardly a denominational preacher anywhere now, who does not do his utmost to make sure that the people reject this teaching. They themselves have been taught to reject it; and being confronted with preaching which emphasizes the Lord's teaching on this subject, they must either continue their denial of it, or admit their mistake and change religiously. Privately, they admit that which the Bible says, but publicly, they reject both precept and example, as set forth in the Scriptures. (Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Cor. 4: 6; 2 John 9.)

*And they called them, and charged them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them,*

*Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard. And they, when they had further threatened them, let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people; for all men glorified God for that which was done. For the man was more than forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was wrought.*

The action of the Sanhedrin was a confession of their failure, but they were not willing to admit their error. This is a trait of human nature seen all too often today. We also see the proper spirit which should be shown by all Christians who are faced with a threat like the one aimed at Peter and John. (Acts 5: 27-29.) Sometimes people are brought into such situations for the Lord's sake, *for a testimony to those who oppose the gospel plan of salvation*; and then at the proper time God will deal with them appropriately. (Rom. 2: 16; 2 Thess. 1:7-10.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What instruction did Jesus give his disciples before his death regarding the attitude of the world toward them?  
What encouragement did he give them in this connection?  
In what way would they and the Spirit bear witness of Jesus?  
Why is the world opposed to the Lord and his people?  
Does one have to be irreligious in order to be of the world? Give reasons for your answer.

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?  
In what sense is this prayer a model for people today?  
Why were they filled with the Spirit on this occasion?  
What is always necessary before any one who has the Spirit can manifest miraculous power?  
Why can't the Lord's people exercise miraculous power today?

### Peter and John Taken into Custody

Under what circumstances were these apostles arrested?  
Who were the men who made the arrest?  
Why were the Sadducees, rather than the Pharisees, involved in this?  
Who were the men who made the arrest?

How did the general public feel about the apostolic preaching?

### A Clear Reply to a Vague Question

Before what kind of court were the apostles brought?  
What was the nature of the question directed to them?  
Why such a indefinite charge?  
What advantage did this give Peter and John?  
How was it possible for them to give such a forceful answer?  
Why couldn't the would-be judges say anything against their reply?  
Into what kind of a situation did Peter and John place the Sanhedrin?  
What was their argument regarding the rejection of the stone?  
What had Jesus previously said about the same thing?  
What did Peter say about the name of Christ and salvation?  
Why is the lesson regarding this so important to us today?  
What does it mean to trust in the name of Jesus?

### "That It Spread No Further"

What kind of impression did Peter and John make on the Sanhedrin?  
What was meant by unlearned and ignorant men?  
Why didn't the Jewish leaders admit their mistake and change their attitude?  
What is the value of this lesson to us?  
What did the Sanhedrin do to Peter and John?  
What was the attitude of the apostles?  
What should we learn from this?

## Lesson VI—May 6, 1962

## GOOD AND BAD PEOPLE IN THE EARLY CHURCH

## Lesson Text

Acts 4: 32-37; 5: 1-10

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one *of them* said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

33 And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Je'-sus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need.

36 And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Bar'-na-bas (which is, being interpreted, Son of exhortation), a Le'-vite, a man of Cy'-prus by race,

37 Having a field, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

1 But a certain man named An-a-ni'-as, with Sap-phi'-ra his wife, sold a possession,

2 And kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, An-a-ni'-as, why

hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land?

4 While it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5 And An-a-ni'-as hearing these words fell down and gave up the ghost: and great fear came upon all that heard it.

6 And the young men arose and wrapped him round, and they carried him out and buried him.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much. And she said, Yea, for so much.

9 But Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to try the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them that have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out.

10 And she fell down immediately at his feet, and gave up the ghost: and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her by her husband.

**Golden Text.**—*"And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things"* (Acts 5: 11.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Acts 5: 12-16.

## Daily Bible Readings

April	30. M.	An Example of Liberality (Acts 4: 36, 37)
May	1. T.	A Liberal Congregation (Acts 4: 32-35)
May	2. W.	Sin of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1-11)
May	3. T.	Result of Sin by Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 12-16)
May	4. F.	Destiny of Liars (Rev. 21: 8)
May	5. S.	Lying Tongue (Prov. 6: 16-19)
May	6. S.	A Tongue of Deceit (Psalm 120)

**Time.**—A.D. 30, 31.

**Place.**—Jerusalem.

**Persons.**—The multitude of the disciples, Barnabas, Peter, Ananias, and Sapphira.

## Introduction

The early church, within a relatively short time, numbered many thousands, and they evidently came from practically all walks of life. It

is true that they were bound together by the ties of a common faith, but it is at the same time nothing short of remarkable that so many people, with so many different backgrounds, could live together for so long without having a major sin charged against them. The gospel had evidently had its way with them, and they had been able to remove all selfishness from their lives. The early church had many admirable traits of character, but there was none more striking than the all but universal interest in the common welfare. When people are willing to push self into the background and concentrate on the good of others, it is difficult for wrongdoing to arise. Some one has said, Begin at either end of sin, and you will find "I" in the middle. That is true, and it is doubtful if any sin is entirely free from selfishness.

The magnificent generosity which was displayed by the early church was not the result of a commandment from the Lord to that effect, but rather to the love which had been generated in their hearts by the gospel. Jerusalem, no doubt, had many poor people all the time; but when we take into consideration that multiplied thousands had come to the city for the feast of Pentecost, and that in all probability many of them had been converted to Christ and were providentially detained in the city until they could be grounded in

the truth, it is easy to see that it would not take very long for many of them to exhaust their own means of support. But those who were there with money or property were not willing for their brethren to suffer need while they were able to help them; and it was for that reason, along with their greater love for God, that they were willing to share with others. (1 John 3: 17, 18.)

While it is regrettable that such is the case, yet no one should be surprised that both the good and the bad are found in the church. Jesus himself foretold that during his earthly ministry. "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." (Matt. 13: 47, 48.) The Lord, of course, wants the church to be kept pure, and he expects his people to see that it is, to the best of their ability; but the matter is not left entirely to them, as the next verses of the parable plainly state. "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." (Matt. 13: 49, 50.) Church-membership will bring no permanent benefit to the unfaithful.

### The Golden Text

*"And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things."* This is the first time the original word for church (*ekklesia*) occurs in the Book of Acts. Its only previous occurrences in the New Testament are in Matt. 16: 18 and 18: 17. In Matt. 16: 18, the term is used in the sense of the entire body of the Lord's people upon the earth, or, which is the same thing, his kingdom (see verse 19); while in 18: 17 the idea is that of the congregation or "local assembly." See marginal note. In Acts 5: 11 the reference is to all the Lord's people in Jerusalem, that is, all who had become members of the church up to that time; but there is no reason for saying that they were all meeting in one location. If people will keep in mind the various senses in which

the word "church" is used in the New Testament, it will be much easier for them to understand the apostolic teaching regarding it.

The term "fear" is used in the sense of awe, dread, and respect, and it followed the punishment which was meted out to Ananias and Sapphira. Both the church and the people of the world saw two things which caused the feeling to come upon them, namely, (1) what happens to people who attempt to deceive God, and (2) the soul-searching ability which had been given to the apostles. God has always demanded reverence on the part of those who draw near to him; and he has also required respect for those to whom he has committed special work. (Lev. 10: 1-3; Num. 16: 1-50.)

There are many people today who

do not have the proper respect for the church in a given community, and the reason for it is that no effort is made on the part of the leaders to deal properly with those who refuse to conduct themselves according to the Lord's requirements for his people. And it often happens that the

reason the leaders take no action against flagrant offenders is because their own lives are not above reproach. But when the church is kept pure, according to God's will, people both inside and out will respect it; and believers will the more be added to the Lord. See Acts 5: 13, 14.

## The Text Explained

### The Love and Unity of the Early Church

(Acts 4: 32-35)

*And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.* As was suggested in the Introduction, there is no indication that the practice of the early church with reference to their goods was ordained of the Lord, that is, by special command. What was done grew out of the love they had for the Lord and for each other, and was intended to meet an emergency which resulted during the time the church was getting started. As already indicated, many of the people who were converted to Christ were probably among those who had come to Jerusalem for the feast; and if they had returned immediately to their homes without proper instruction, they would have been in danger of falling by the wayside. It appears that in the providence of God the church was kept in Jerusalem until adequate instruction could be given; and later on when they were driven out by persecution, they were fully prepared to go "about preaching the word." (Acts 8: 4.) There is too much instruction in the New Testament regarding the rich and the poor for any thoughtful person to conclude that the Lord intended for his people to have all things common all the time. (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:1-15; Gal. 2: 10; 1 Tim. 6: 17-19; James 2: 1-6.)

The church in Jerusalem was united by a common faith, and was animated by a common Spirit. (1 Cor. 12: 12, 13.) The very first record of church history says, "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:42.) And as long as that condition prevailed, they could not

be otherwise than united in heart and soul; and they could not refrain from using what they had for the good of all concerned, when the need arose. "So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith." (Gal. 6: 10.) "But who-so hath the world's goods, and be-holdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17.) A united church is never a selfish church, either as a congregation or as individual members.

*And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.* This is an example of "supported truth," which means that the preaching of the apostles was more effective because the church was backing it up by faithful Christian living, which showed itself in perfect unity and unexcelled benevolence. This ought to be an impressive lesson to all of us today. The strongest kind of gospel preaching can be made ineffective by unfaithfulness on the part of those who profess to be the Lord's people.

*For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need.* These verses explain how the process worked. Those who had possessions sold them, and took the money to the apostles; and then each person who had need was given that which supplied his need. This shows plainly that there was no equalization of property, but that each person received only that which he needed. This is confirmed and illustrated in the case of Ananias and



Sapphira, as we shall see further on in this lesson.

### An Example of Generosity

(Acts 4: 36, 37)

*And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, Son of exhortation), a Levite, a man of Cyprus by race, having a field, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.* For some reason Luke saw fit to single out Barnabas as an example of those who sold their possessions in order to provide for the less fortunate. It may have been because of the prominence which was later given to him, or it may have been in order to provide a suitable contrast to the case of Ananias and Sapphira. At any rate, we have the information regarding him who is called a "good man" in the Scriptures. (Acts 11: 24.) Luke wrote this history long after the events here recorded took place, and after Joseph had had the opportunity to demonstrate his ability as an exhortor. It was apparently because he did possess that talent that he was sent to Antioch, after some of the men had preached the gospel to the Greeks following the dispersion which grew out of the persecution which arose about Stephen. (Acts 11:19-23.)

We are not told where the land of Barnabas was located, but it may have been in Cyprus. Being a Levite, he would not have an inheritance in Israel, as the other tribes did. See Lev. 25:32-34; Num. 35:1-8; Deut. 12:12; 18:6-8. But wherever his property may have been located, Barnabas was himself proficient in the grace of stewardship. He recognized the ownership of God, and was willing to put himself and all he had at his disposal. It seems fair to assume from 1 Cor. 9: 1-10 that Barnabas disposed of his means of livelihood, and gave himself over entirely to the work of preaching the gospel.

### A Case of Covetousness

(Acts 5: 1-10)

*But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.* There is no

indication regarding the length of time which elapsed between the action of Barnabas and that of Ananias and Sapphira, but it seems quite evident that the two accounts were intended to contrast two different attitudes on the part of those who had possessions and sold them for the benefit of others—one sincere, the other hypocritical. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was the first sin which was recorded against the church—a sin with reference to an offering. But that was not the first time that the Lord's people had sinned according to that principle. The first sin committed after man began to worship at the altar was Cain's sin, and it had to do with an offering. (Gen. 4: 1-15.) The first sin recorded under the law of Moses in connection with the worship also had to do with an offering—the sin of Nadab and Abihu. (Lev. 10: 1-7.) And the first sin recorded against the people of Israel in Canaan was likewise in connection with an offering—the sin of Achan. (Josh. 6, 7.) These should be impressive lessons to us.

Ananias and Sapphira evidently wanted the kind of praise for themselves which was given to Barnabas and others who were making genuine sacrifices for the cause of the Lord, but they also wanted to keep at least a part of their money. This made it necessary for them to pretend to give all, while in reality they were giving only a part. That is the primary meaning of a hypocrite—one who pretends to be that which he is not. They wanted to get for themselves credit for love and zeal, but they wanted to get it at a reduced rate, with only a portion of the sale price of their possession. Or, to state the same thing in other words, they were trying to serve two masters; but, as is always the case, they wound up by serving only one. There are many people today who pretend that they are giving all they are able to give, when deep down in their hearts they know that they are keeping back for selfish purposes that which in reality belongs to God. But the Lord is no more pleased with them than he was with Ananias and Sapphira, and a day of reckoning will surely come. (Gal. 6: 7, 8.)

*But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the*

*Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.* This is one of the instances in the Bible in which the Holy Spirit is called God. "Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the *Holy Spirit?* . . . thou hast not lied unto men, but unto *God.*" (Isa. 6: 8-10; Acts 28: 25f; Jer. 31: 31-34; Heb. 10: 15f; 2 Cor. 3: 17, 18.) The deity of the Holy Spirit is clearly affirmed. The Spirit is spoken of as a person whom one might attempt to deceive.

We learn from this part of the text that no demand had been made to the effect that those with material possessions should dispose of them, and contribute the proceeds for the relief of those in need. This is positive proof that those who did so were prompted by their love for the Lord and his people. We also learn that Satan has the power to tempt men, but that man, because of his free moral agency, also has the power to resist the temptation, or, if he chooses, he may yield and give himself into the service of the evil one. Man therefore has a tremendous responsibility, and should ever be grateful for the help which the Lord is ready to give him. (1 Cor. 10: 13; James 1: 2-8.)

*And Ananias hearing these words fell down and gave up the ghost: and great fear came upon all that heard it. And the young men arose and wrapped him round, and they carried him out and buried him.* It appears that there can be no doubt regarding the miraculous death of Ananias, but there may be some question as to whether or not Peter was aware of what was going to happen to the pretender as he was uttering his words of rebuke. But the propriety of this sudden stroke of the divine will may be seen when we consider what the effect would have been, if Ananias and Sapphira had succeeded with their plans for deception. Sooner or later the fraud would have been discovered, and the people would naturally have questioned as to whether or not the Holy Spirit was able to detect the scheme which had been perpetrated. But when the secret plot was made

known by the Spirit-filled apostle and the sinners were punished for their sin, there was no doubt about the divine ability to know the hearts of all men.

The "young men" were evidently members of the church; and since they took Ananias out and buried him without first telling his wife that he had passed away, it is fair to assume that they were acting under the direction of Peter. (Lev. 10: 1-7.) The expression "and great fear came upon all that heard it" gives a clue regarding the urgency of the entire transaction. No one could be in doubt as to the seriousness of the whole situation. The "rest" of those who might have been inclined to follow the example of Ananias and Sapphira were deterred: but the people, that is the general public, magnified them; and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. (Verses 13, 14.)

*And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much. And she said, Yea, for so much.* We have no way of knowing just how Sapphira was kept in ignorance regarding her husband's death, but must accept the affirmation of the text that such was the case. Peter, before telling her that he was dead, asked her about the transaction; and in doing so made it possible for her to reveal the state of her own heart before judgment was passed on her. No one therefore could say that she was punished unjustly.

*But Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to try the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them that have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out. And she fell down immediately at his feet, and gave up the ghost: and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her by her husband.* Thus, the guilty pair were united in death, as they had been in their conspiracy; and their example as the first in the church to fall the victims of sin will, as long as time continues, serve as a warning to all who seek to clothe themselves with the garments of hy-

pocrisy. There were others who fell martyrs to the cause of truth, and the names of some of them are found in God's record—the New Testament;

but Ananias and Sapphira died victims of their own base passions, and are enrolled forever with Judas and others who yielded to temptation.

## 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 Jerusalem church continuing so long without having a major sin charged against it?

What were some of the outstanding characteristics of the early church?

What is the relationship of selfishness to sin?

Why was the Jerusalem church so considerate of the welfare of the needy?

What brought about such a great need for benevolent work?

Why isn't it surprising that there were evil people in the first church?

What important lesson should such people learn about the question of church-membership?

### The Golden Text

Discuss the first occurrences of the original term for "church" in the New Testament.

Why is it important to understand the various uses of the term "church" in the Scriptures?

What "fear" came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things?

What two important things did they see?

What has God always required on the part of those who would draw near to him?

Why isn't the church respected more in some communities?

Why do leaders sometime overlook sinful practices by members of the congregation?

### The Love and Unity of the Early Church

In what sense were the members of the early church of one heart and one soul?

Why didn't any one say that ought of the things he possessed was his own?

How do we know that the Lord never meant for his people to have an equal amount of property?

What was the basic reason for the wonderful unity of the Jerusalem church?

What is the Lord's general teaching regarding "good works" for all his people?

What effect did the life of the church have on the preaching of the apostles?

What lesson should that teach us?

How was the benevolent attitude of the early church put into practice?

### An Example of Generosity

What was the probable reason for singling out that which Barnabas did?

What does the New Testament say about his general life?

Why was his service so useful in the early church?

Why was he willing to sell all he had and give the money for the Lord's work?

How does his conduct illustrate the basic meaning of "stewardship"?

### A Case of Covetousness

What is significant regarding the sin of Ananias and Sapphira?

What else do we learn from the Bible regarding "first sins"?

What was the prime motive behind the sin of Ananias and Sapphira?

How does their action illustrate the primary meaning of the term "hypocrite"?

What application of the principle of their conduct is sometimes seen today?

What general teaching is found in the New Testament on this subject?

What did Peter tell Ananias that he was attempting to do?

What else did he tell him regarding his possession and the money he received for it?

What lesson do we learn from the sudden death of these hypocrites?

Why did Peter question Sapphira before telling her of her husband's death?

What lesson do Ananias and his wife continuously teach those who read the New Testament?

## Lesson VII—May 13, 1962

## THE SEVEN CHOSEN

### Lesson Text

Acts 6: 1-10

1 Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Gre'-cian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

2 And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will continue stedfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word.

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Ste'-phen, a man full of faith and of the Holy

Spirit, and Philip, and Proch'-o-rus, and Nī-ca'-nor, and Ti-mon, and Par'-me-nas, and Nic-o-la'-us a proselyte of An'-ti-och;

6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them.

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Je-ru'-sa-lem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

8 And Ste'-phen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people.

9 But there arose certain of them that were of the synagogue called *the synagogue* of the Lib'-er-tines, and of the Cy-re'-ni-ans, and of the Al-ex-an'-dri-ans, and of them of Ci-li'-ci-a and A'-si-a, disputing with Ste'-phen.

10 And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake.

**Golden Text.** — *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."* (Gal. 6: 2.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.** — Acts 5: 17-29.

### Daily Bible Readings

May 7. M.....	Brotherliness Demonstrated (Acts 4: 32-35)
May 8. T.....	Systematic Service (Acts 6: 1-7)
May 9. W.....	Cooperation Involved (Rom. 15: 1-9)
May 10.....	T. Church Obligation (James 1: 27; 1 Tim. 5: 16)
May 11. F.....	Helpfulness to All (Gal. 6: 1-10)
May 12. S.....	True Love for Brethren (1 John 3: 13-24)
May 13. S.....	Development through Generosity (Psalm 112: 1-10)

**TIME.**—A.D. 31.

**PLACE.**—Jerusalem.

**PERSONS.**—The twelve, the multitude of the disciples, and the seven.

### Introduction

Our last lesson emphasized the unity and benevolent work of the Jerusalem church, while this one begins by calling attention to the fact that the perfect unity which had bound the disciples together was now in danger of being disrupted. It also sets forth a practical plan for administering the funds which had been contributed for the needy, and especially the needy widows of one segment of the brethren. The church was still under the personal direction of the apostles themselves, and was receiving the best teaching possible (Acts 2:42); but even that did not prevent problems from arising in the church. And as long as the church is made up of human beings, problems will continue to trouble the Lord's people.

But the fact that "humanisms" manifest themselves in the church does not mean that Christian people should allow them to destroy the work which has been ordained for them to do. The presence of "problems" should be a challenge to every faithful child of God, and especially the leaders, (1) to try to find a solution for them, and (2) to save those

who are involved in the problems. The presence of problems in the church does not always necessarily mean that the ones who are primarily responsible for raising them are themselves in the wrong. Problems often arise when no one involved is really at fault; but if no effort is made to solve them according to the teaching of the New Testament, it probably will not be very long before there will be brethren who are involved in wrong-doing.

No thoughtful person would contend that there is a specific plan revealed in the Word of the Lord for the settlement of any and every problem which might arise; but it is true that the over-all teaching of the New Testament is sufficient for any and all situations which can come before Christian people. "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; cf. 2 Pet. 1:3.) When the Lord's people are familiar with and are able to apply the *prin-*

*ciples* which are set forth in the New Testament, and are willing along with that to manifest the spirit of

Christ, there are few problems with which they will have to deal that are beyond a reasonable solution.

### The Golden Text

*"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."* Many people, when they are confronted with this passage, want to skip down and call attention to verse 5, which says, "For each man shall bear his own burden." And then the question arises, "If each man must bear his own burden, how can some one else bear it for him?" But instead of presenting a contradiction, these two passages, when carefully considered and taken together, give us a brief description of the essence of Christianity—a definition in few words of the spirit of the Christian life.

The Christian faith is based upon two great underlying principles, which, while not strictly original with it, are, nevertheless, in their higher expression, among the most precious of its gifts to men. The first one explains the mystery and comprehensiveness of the scheme of salvation for the individual believer; while the second sets forth the divine beauty and eternal reality of the church as a community of souls in which each individual member must bear his own burden, while all the members are bound together, bearing each other's burdens, and united in him who is the great Burden-bearer of humanity and the head of the church which is his body. Thus, there is individual responsibility, and

there is also mutual responsibility; and no one can in reality bear his own burdens, without at the same time endeavoring to bear the burdens of others.

When Paul said that "each man shall bear his own burden," he was speaking of the burdens which no one can transfer from himself to another. Every individual has burdens which he cannot get rid of, just as no soldier on active duty can transfer his equipment to another. When God created man he laid firm and deep the foundations of individual life and character. Every man therefore is responsible for his own being and destiny; and he must bear the burdens which belong to his individual lot. But when Paul said that we are to bear one another's burdens, he had in mind those burdens which can be borne without their being transferred from the one to whom they belong.

How sweet, how heav'nly is the  
sight,

When those that love the Lord  
In one another's peace delight,  
And so fulfil the word.

When each can feel his brother's  
sigh,

And with him bear a part;  
When sorrow flows from eye to eye,  
And joy from heart to heart.

### The Text Explained

#### A Difficult Situation Corrected

(Acts 6: 1-6)

*Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.* "These days" probably refer to the general period with which chapter 5 closed. The church from its beginning had been bound together by the ties of almost perfect fellowship; but as this chapter opens the scene is changed somewhat, and for the first time the spirit of unity is threatened with the murmurs of dissatisfied disciples. The "Grecian Jews" were Israelites who

lived outside Palestine, and who spoke the Greek language and who had acquired Greek culture. The "Hebrews" were Jews who lived in the homeland, spoke the language and followed the customs of Palestine. The former were called "Hellenists," while the latter were called "Hebrews."

It was pointed out in a previous lesson that many of the people who had come to Jerusalem to the feast of Pentecost were probably among those who were converted; and that they were providentially detained in Jerusalem until they were properly grounded in the truth. These were very likely some of the people who

were having to be aided with the gifts of others, being, as they were, away from home and their normal means of livelihood. The facts set forth in the passage now under consideration make this view almost certain, since the *Grecian Jews* were those who lived outside Palestine. There is no indication that the neglect of the widows was intentional. The number of disciples had reached into the thousands (Acts 4: 4), and it would be difficult, unless some brethren were especially charged with that responsibility, to supply the needs of every deserving person. But neglected people are not happy people, and so, whether unintentionally or not, complaints were certain to be registered.

*And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables. Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will continue stedfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word.* This, as already indicated, was the first real test of the unity which had characterized the church during the first years of its existence, but the apostles who were guided by the Holy Spirit were not willing for it to be replaced by dissension. The problem which had been created by the neglect of the Grecian Jewish widows needed a solution; and they had one to propose. Whatever the previous plan for distributing the supplies to the needy had been, it was no longer adequate; and the apostles themselves were not willing to take the required time from their own duties and see to it themselves personally. A need had arisen and a plan to meet it had to be formulated; and that appears to have been the Lord's method of introducing new arrangements into the work of the church.

The church up to this time had been under the immediate oversight of the apostles, but the time would soon come when congregations would be established in other parts of the country; and they would need men to serve as overseers. These men would be known as elders, overseers, and shepherds (Acts 20: 17, 28; Eph. 4: 11), whose principal duties are in-

dicated by the terms which are used to designate them. But, for the time being, the apostles would continue that work, which was more important than serving tables; and the men who were chosen on the occasion now before us were to have that responsibility.

*And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus a proselyte of Antioch; whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them.* These seven men are not called "deacons" in the text now under consideration, but they were appointed to *serve* tables, that is, *minister to tables*, as the marginal note has it; and since the word "serve" (*diakoneo*) is the verb form of the noun *diakonos* (deacon), it appears certain that the seven were deacons. Furthermore, the expression "serve . . . as deacons" (1 Tim. 3: 13) is a translation of *diakoneo*, the very same word that is used in the text now before us. The early disciples were not called "Christians" until several years after the church was established (Acts 11: 26), but that does not mean that they were not Christians during the time between Pentecost and Antioch; they simply were not *called* Christians; and what was true of them is also true of the men who occupied a position in the church which was later designated by the term "deacon."

There are some other matters which should be observed in connection with the selection and appointment of the seven men to serve tables, namely, (1) the *selection* was made by the "brethren," that is, the church, and not by the apostles. This does not mean that the brethren were free to choose just any seven men; the character of the ones to be chosen was carefully stated by the apostles themselves. This same principle holds good today in the matter of the selection of those who are to serve—elders and deacons; but the New Testament just as specifically sets forth the character of those who are to be chosen. (1 Tim. 3: 1-13; Tit. 1: 5-9; 1 Pet. 5: 1-3.) No church is ready to select men for these places which has not been taught the truth

regarding such matters; but when an informed congregation is permitted to select the men who are to serve in these capacities, more interest in and respect for their work will be manifested.

(2) The men selected by the Jerusalem church to serve as deacons were all from the group which did the murmuring, as may be seen by considering their Greek names. The generous spirit which was manifested by the Hebrews toward their Hellenist brethren doubtless had a sobering effect on the latter; and the motive behind it was evidently to settle the difficulty, and see that it remained settled. (3) The laying on of hands was a part of the ceremony employed by the early church in separating various ones to special work. (Acts 13: 1-3; 1 Tim. 4: 14; 2 Tim. 1: 6.) In some instances, during the days of miracles, special power was granted through the laying on of hands; but that was not the primary purpose of the act. Its ordinary purpose was to indicate that the one on whom hands were laid was to act on the behalf of those by and for whom hands were laid, as in the case of elders and deacons acting for or on behalf of the church. In commenting on the first passage cited, McGarvey says, "This incident clearly demonstrates another fact in regard to this ceremony, that it possesses none of the magical power to impart spiritual grace which has been superstitiously ascribed to it; for surely Barnabas and Saul were not destitute of any grace which could be imparted to them by Symeon, Lucius and Manaen. The truth is, that this ceremony, now no longer called ordination in the English Scriptures, was nothing more than a method of solemnly commending a man to God for the ministration to which he was being set apart."

The entire congregation was pleased with the proposal made by the apostles for dealing with the situation which had arisen because of the neglect of the Grecian widows in the daily ministration, and which threatened the peace which the church had enjoyed since it became a reality. The brethren, accordingly, made the selection of the men, and the apostles appointed them "over this business." This orderly procedure will satisfy every demand

which can confront a church today in the selection and appointment of elders and deacons. Two of the seven appointed in Jerusalem, Stephen and Philip both became effective preachers of the gospel, and we shall study more about Stephen in this lesson, and about both of them in future lessons.

### The Rapid Growth of the Church

(Acts 6: 7)

*And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.* The New Testament declares that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and this section of our lesson is a forceful demonstration of the truthfulness of that statement. (Rom. 1: 16.) When Luke says that the word of God increased, the reference is not to the amount of the word, but to its effect in the lives of the people who heard it. The church was still at peace, and the apostles, having been relieved of the responsibility which would have been theirs, in all probability, if the seven men had not been appointed to oversee the work of feeding the needy, were free to devote their time to prayer and to the ministry of the word; and with their popularity with the people, generally speaking, greater results were seen from their efforts. There is no way to estimate, with any degree of accuracy, the number of disciples at this time. But inasmuch as the number had, previous to this time, already reached about five thousand men, to say nothing of women (Acts 4:4), and since the number of disciples at the time of this lesson was being multiplied *exceedingly*, the entire company must have reached many thousands.

The significant remark regarding the priests should not be overlooked. Their relationship to the Jewish religion made them the chief conservators of old forms, and the ones who would offer the strongest opposition to any revolutionary changes. And so, when they began to leave their posts of duty in order to accept a new religion, the old system was in grave danger of falling. Robertson calls this a sad day for Annas and Caiaphas, since the majority of the priests were probably Sadducees. In

saying that they were "obedient to the faith," Luke means that they were obedient to the gospel. (Rom. 1: 5; Gal. 1:23; Jude 3.)

### The Activities of Stephen

(Acts 6: 8-10)

*And Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people.* One of the qualifications of the seven who were to be appointed to oversee the tables was that they be full of the Holy Spirit, but that statement, in and of itself, does not indicate that they could exercise miraculous power. The Holy Spirit dwells in every Christian today, but they cannot perform any miracles. Miraculous power by any person in the church, including the apostles, depended not on the fact that the Spirit dwelt in him, but on the will of God. (1 Cor. 12:11; Acts 2:4.) There was evidently a reason why Stephen was given this power to perform miracles, and the next two verses indicate something of the result which followed his demonstrations.

*But there arose certain of them that were of the synagogue called the Libertines, and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake.* Bible students are not agreed as to the number of synagogues mentioned here, but from the wording of

the text it appears fair to assume that there was only one. However, that is not an important question. The principal point to keep in mind is that Stephen was brought into conflict with these Libertines, that is, former slaves who had gained their freedom, and with the others from the cities and countries named. These were all Grecian Jews, as was Stephen, and it is altogether possible that the latter belonged to the very synagogue in question, and had been active in its service prior to his obeying the gospel. This synagogue was the meeting place of these Grecian Jews when they were in Jerusalem; and it is possible that some of them were there most of the time, while in school or for other reasons. It is also possible that Saul was also among the number from Cilicia. (Acts 22: 3.)

With this kind of background before us, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Stephen was given this miraculous power in order to fit him for the great contest in which he was engaged. The great wonders and signs which he wrought among the people would have the effect of bringing him into conflict with his fellow Hellenists; and when the disputes arose, the Holy Spirit used him to present the truth to the people who were present. At any rate, that is what did happen; and the combined efforts of the many who made up the synagogue were wholly unable to withstand "the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake."

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

How is this lesson related to the previous one?

Why is it that problems arise in the church among good people?

In what manner should these problems be regarded?

What should the leaders endeavor to do about them?

Do problems in the church necessarily mean that those who are responsible for them are in the wrong? Give reasons for your answer.

What is the best way to try to solve the problems which arise in the church?

### The Golden Text

What is the usual attitude of many people when they read this text?

What question next comes into their mind?

What do verses 2 and 5 together set forth?

Why must every person bear his own burden?

How can Christian people bear each other's burdens?

### A Difficult Situation Corrected

When and under what circumstances did this difficult situation arise in the church?

Who were the Grecian Jews and who were the Hebrews?

How did the apostles propose to deal with the newly arisen problem?

Why shouldn't they "serve tables"?

What important lesson should we learn from this for our day?

What was to be the duty of the seven men who were to be selected and appointed?

By what designation are they known today?

Could the seven be "deacons" without being called deacons? Give reasons for your answer.



Who were to be responsible for the selection of the seven?  
 Why isn't this principle practiced today in the selection of elders and deacons?  
 Why were all seven men chosen from the "murmuring" group?  
 Why did the apostles lay their hands upon these men?  
 Show how the whole procedure resulted in preserving the peace of the church.

#### The Rapid Growth of the Church

What is God's plan for the growth of the church?

In what sense did the word of the Lord increase?  
 Why did the number of disciples increase so rapidly?  
 What significant remark was made regarding the priests?  
 What does it mean to obey "the faith"?

#### The Activities of Stephen

What probable reason can you suggest for Stephen's ability in this respect?  
 With whom did he dispute and with what success?

## Lesson VIII—May 20, 1962

# STEPHEN, THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR

## Lesson Text

Acts 6: 8-15; 7: 54-60

8 And Ste'-phen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people.

9 But there arose certain of them that were of the synagogue called *the synagogue* of the Lib'-er-tines, and of the Cy-re'-ni-ans, and of the Al-ex-an'-dri-ans, and of them of Ci-li'-ci-a and A'-si-a, disputing with Ste'-phen.

10 And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake.

11 Then they suborned men, who said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Mo'-ses, and *against* God.

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and seized him, and brought him into the council,

13 And set up false witnesses, who said, This man ceaseth not to speak words against this holy place, and the law:

14 For we have heard him say, that this Je'-sus of Naz'-a-reth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Mo'-ses delivered unto us.

15 And all that sat in the council,

fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

54 Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Je'-sus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord;

58 And they cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59 And they stoned Ste'-phen, calling upon *the Lord*, and saying, Lord Je'-sus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him"* (Acts 8: 2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 7: 51-53.

## Daily Bible Readings

May 14.

May 15. T.....

May 16.

May 17. T.....

May 18. F.....

May 19. S.....

May 20.

M. The Death of Stephen (Acts 7: 54-60)

..... Persecution Certain (John 16: 31-33)

W. Cross to Be Borne (Matt. 16: 24-26)

..... Patient in Suffering (2 Tim. 1: 8-12)

..... Suffering with Christ (Rom. 8: 12-18)

..... Paul a Patient Sufferer (2 Tim. 4: 1-9)

S. Paul's Reference to Stephen's Martyrdom (Acts 22: 3-21)

**Time.**—A.D. 32.

**Place.**—Jerusalem.

**Persons.**—Stephen, certain Grecian Jewish partisans, the Sanhedrin, and Saul.

## Introduction

The early church, as we have already seen, did not break away from everything connected with the law and customs of Moses at first, but continued to conform to some of them, such as visiting the temple at the hours of prayer and walking orderly, after the manner of the law. (Acts 21: 24.) This accounts, in part at least, for the fact that the church was not assailed at first with implacable animosity. The Sadducees did try to silence the preaching of the apostles, because they were troubled over the emphasis placed on the fact that Christ had been raised up from the dead; but there was nothing like a concentrated effort on the part of all the Jews to oppose the newly formed church. (Acts 5: 33-42.)

But when the time arrived in the development of the great fundamental principles of the gospel when the apostles and others began to speak of the law of Moses as a temporary arrangement in the economy of God (Gal. 3: 15-4: 7), which was to be superseded by a spiritual and enduring system, both the Pharisees and the Sadducees combined their efforts and resources to crush the entire Christian movement; and if the disciples of Christ and their teaching had

not partaken of the indestructibility of God, the Jewish leaders would doubtlessly have succeeded in their endeavor. The occasion for the onslaught at the time of this lesson was the situation which grew out of the zeal and ability of Stephen, one of the seven who had been selected by the Jerusalem church and appointed by the apostles to see that the needy disciples received their portion in the daily ministration.

Judging from his name, Stephen must have been a Hellenist, and when his influence began to be felt beyond the tables which he had been serving, a conflict with his fellow Hellenists was inevitable. After observing that nothing is said in the record regarding the work for which he had been appointed, Smith's Bible Dictionary says that Stephen seems to have been an instance, such as is not uncommon in history, of a new energy derived from a new relationship. He seemingly went beyond his six deacon-companions, and entered the field of polemics. He first arrested the attention of his opponents by his miraculous ministrations; and this led to a series of disputations which eventually caused his death.

## The Golden Text

*"And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him."* The action of these devout men was in contrast with that of the frenzied mob which had murdered Stephen. The text itself gives no indication as to whether or not the men who buried Stephen were members of the church. David Thomas says that two objections have been urged against their being considered disciples of Christ, namely, (1) the high improbability of their being allowed by the infuriated persecutors to perform this act, had it been known that they were Christians; and (2) the epithet "devout men" is nowhere else applied to Christians. The accuracy of this last statement, however, is not certain. Ananias is called a "devout" man in Acts 22: 12; and while both Young and Strong in

their concordances say that the word for "devout" in this last passage is from a different Greek word, the original text of Westcott and Hort has the same word in both places.

It is, of course, possible that the men who buried Stephen were or were not members of the church, and again it is possible that some of them were and some of them were not. The question, in and of itself, is not important. But whoever they were, it is well to note that not all the Jews in Jerusalem at the time of Stephen's martyrdom were mad with rage. There were some who had a calm and pious sympathy for the victim, even if not for his cause. And this is also a good time to consider the fact that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." When people lose their temper and attack

those they don't like with angry words, if not with actual stones, that in itself is a good sign that at least they themselves are the ones who are in the wrong.

The word for "lamentation" is found nowhere else in the New Testament. Its literal meaning is to *beat*, and the reference is to the practice of beating the breast as a sign of great distress. Some Bible students think that the term "over" is not used merely in the sense of

*about or concerning*, but in the literal sense of mourning over the dead body. But be that as it may, there is every reason to regard their lamentation as being genuine. It also required courage on their part to make this demonstration in the face of the angry Sanhedrin; since it implied that they did not regard their action in putting Stephen to death as being justified. Devout men do not honor a criminal in this way.

## The Text Explained

### The Occasion for the Trouble

(Acts 6: 8-10)

This section of our lesson is rendered in *The New English Bible* in these words: "Stephen, who was full of grace and power, began to work great miracles and signs among the people. But some members of the synagogue called the Synagogue of Freedmen, comprising Cyrenians and Alexandrians and people from Cilicia and Asia, came forward and argued with Stephen, but could not hold their own against the inspired wisdom with which he spoke." We do not have any information regarding the particular points which Stephen discussed with his opponents, but we probably can get some idea of what they were from the accusations which were made against him, as we shall see in the next section of our lesson text.

And likewise, the names of those who disputed with Stephen are not given, but it is entirely probable that one of the chief antagonists was none other than Saul of Tarsus. We know that he was from Cilicia (Acts 22: 3), and that he was in Jerusalem and had part in the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7:58; 22:17-20). If he was one of the disputants, the immediate effect of the contest, as Taylor suggests, was only to inflame the rage of the controversialist; but we may well believe that the truths which he heard from Stephen became the germs of much which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, later on developed into the epistles with which we are now so familiar. It is well to note the contrast between the spirits which characterized the opposing sides in this controversy. The text says that the men who argued against Stephen were

not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke, or, as *The New English Bible* says, they "could not hold their own against the inspired wisdom with which he spoke." This is comparable to a statement which Paul later wrote to the church in Corinth. (1 Cor. 2:6-10.) And if the men who were listening to Stephen had possessed the proper attitude of mind, the result would have been entirely different. (Acts 17: 1-12.) But with hostility to truths which they could neither deny nor refute, they were wholly unwilling to consider calmly the fact that they themselves might be in error. An inflamed mind and a raging heart will completely unfit any person either to hold the truth or learn it, and will in the end injure him who is characterized by such a spirit. In the language which Jesus later addressed to Saul, "It is hard for thee to kick against the goad." (Acts 26. 14.)

The Accusation before the Sanhedrin

(Acts 6: 11-15)

*Then they suborned men, who said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and seized him, and brought him into the council, and set up false witnesses, who said, This man ceaseth not to speak words against this holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us.*

When men whose chief purpose is to "win their point" and maintain the *status quo* are defeated in debate, their usual course is to try to destroy

the influence of their opponent, if not the man himself. This was true in the case of Stephen, as it had been in the case of Jesus; and in both cases the result was the death of the men in question. But that was as far as the religious bigots could go. They could not destroy the influence of Jesus, but they did tend to accelerate it; and in the case of Stephen, the blood of the martyr became the seed of the kingdom. Luke tells us that a great persecution was launched against the Jerusalem church on the day of Stephen's death, and that all of the disciples except the apostles were scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria; and that they went about preaching the word. (Acts 8: 1-4.)

This was the first persecution which was aimed at the church as a whole. Hitherto the fear of the people had restrained the violence of the persecutors, but a change in the public attitude came about following the martyrdom of Stephen. McGarvey points out that the previous persecutions had been conducted by the Sadducees, who had comparatively little influences with the Jewish people as a whole, and he also notes the fact that they had tried to array the authority of the apostles against the Sanhedrin, and made little effort to go beyond the twelve. But the persecution which arose in connection with the death of Stephen had the support of the Pharisees, who were popular with the public, and their fury knew no bounds. (Gal. 1: 13, 14; Acts 26: 5, 10, 11.)

And another thing, the Pharisees did not make the same mistake that the Sadducees did when they brought Peter and John into court, that is, with no specific charge against them. The persecutors of Stephen "suborned," that is, instigated, secretly instructed, and probably bribed, men to testify against him. (1 Kings 21: 10, 13.) This was also the plan which the Jewish leaders followed at the trial of Jesus. (Matt. 26: 59-61.) And in both instances, that of Jesus and Stephen, they took enough of the truth, with their perversions, to make the charges seem entirely reasonable. In commenting upon their method of procedure, McGarvey says,

"The general charge was that he had committed blasphemy—a crime punishable with death under the law,

blasphemy against Moses, in saying that Jesus would change the customs which Moses had delivered; and blasphemy against God, in saying that he would destroy God's holy temple. It is quite probable that Stephen had, in the course of the debate, quoted the prediction of Jesus that the temple would be destroyed, but had not said that Jesus would destroy it; and as his enemies could see that the destruction of the temple would necessarily bring to an end the temple services, they put their own inference into his lips, in charging him with saying that Jesus would change the customs delivered by Moses. The specifications were so nearly true as to form a plausible ground for the accusation, while the falsity of the witnesses lay in the additions they made to Stephen's words, and in construing what he said as blasphemy."

*And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.* If one wonders about the features of Stephen as he stood before the Jewish Supreme Court, there are a few things which he should keep in mind. 1. He was a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit—full of grace and power; his antagonists were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. 2. He was standing where Jesus stood when he was condemned to death; he was arraigned on a similar charge; had the same judges; and knew full well that they were there, not to try him, but to condemn him. 3. He knew that the supreme hour of his life had come; and as he surveyed the panorama which was unrolled before him, he could not but be illuminated by the glory of him toward whom his face was turned. The brightest shining of personality is never self-originated; for the best absorbers are always the best reflectors. Stephen was the channel of the glory, and not the source of it.

### Rage and Martyrdom

(Acts 7: 54-60)

*Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.* The things which the Sanhedrin heard were the things which Stephen spoke, as he concluded his address to them. After reviewing the history of Israel

and showing that their fathers had consistently rejected God's purpose for them, Stephen closed with these words: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them that showed before the coming of the Righteous One; of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers; ye who received the law as it was, ordained by angels, and kept it not."

In saying that they were "cut to the heart," Luke means that they had inwardly felt the effects of the charge which Stephen had made against them. Taylor says that he had touched the sore spot in their consciences with the smarting acid of his searching speech, while Robertson likens it to the sending of a saw through the hearts of the Pharisees which rasped them to the bone. They were cut to the quick, or, to drop the figure, they were infuriated, exasperated. The original word is found in only one other place in the New Testament—Acts 5:33. A different word is used in Acts 2: 37. In saying that "they gnashed on him with their teeth," the meaning is that they rushed at him like a pack of hungry, snarling wolves—a sign of violent rage. This was the end to all the pretense of judicial soberness.

*But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.* This vision was vouchsafed to Stephen to encourage him in his most critical experience in life. He knew that his earthly life was about over, and he was permitted to behold the place of his final abode. Jesus is represented as "standing," as if to welcome the first of his disciples who was giving his life for him. This record has been preserved for the instruction and comfort of all others who are called on to make the supreme sacrifice.

*But they cried with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down*

*their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.* This was indeed a strange way for the Supreme Court of the Jewish people to break up; and even if the members of the council sought to justify their loud crying and the stopping of their ears on the ground that they did not want to hear any more blasphemous words from Stephen, the manner in which they conducted themselves was wholly unbecoming to men who posed as judges. The least that can be said of them is that they completely lost control of themselves.

Halford E. Luccock notes that the action of the hostile crowd after Stephen's address followed a pattern endlessly repeated. They closed the avenue through which new information might have reached them, and took refuge in "rushing." They ceased to think, and were motivated by hate. In other words, physical action, directed by prejudice and self-interest, took the place of thinking and learning. Rushing is always easier than keeping the ears open, so that the mind may receive data for positive and constructive thinking. It is easy for us to look back and criticize the Jewish leaders, but it would be much better for us to ask, What is our most characteristic reaction to new and disturbing ideas? Do we keep our voices still and our ears open, or do we "rush"?

This is the first mention of Saul, who later became the apostle Paul; but he never would have become an apostle, if he had been unwilling to listen. (Acts 22: 1-16.) There are some who are wont to question the record of the stoning of Stephen by the Jews, on the ground that they had no right to inflict capital punishment, that being reserved to the Romans. Mobs in this country do not have that right either, but that fact does not prevent lynchings now and then. Some Bible students think that the incident took place between the recall of Pilate, and the appointment of his successor; but even at that, the Sanhedrin was motivated by mob spirit in their action toward Stephen.

*And they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this,*

*he fell asleep.* Not only did Stephen imitate Jesus in praying for his enemies who were killing him, but the fact that he addressed his words to Jesus shows that he regarded him as a Divine Person. He requested from the Son precisely that which the Son requested from the Father. His prayer amid the shouts and the crash of crushing stones made a profound impression upon Saul, and perhaps many more. (Acts 22: 17-20.)

The idea of death as a sleep, advanced by Jesus and the New Testament writers (John 11: 11; 1 Thess. 4: 13-15) introduced into Christian thinking a new concept of man's demise. Our word "cemetery," in fact, is from this word—the sleeping place of the dead; and as used in the text now before us, it is "a picture word of rest and calmness which stands in dramatic contrast to the rage and violence of the scene."

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

Why wasn't the church persecuted by the Jews from its beginning?

Who were the first to persecute God's people in Christ and why?

Why was the persecution of this lesson instigated?

What was the immediate occasion for it?

#### The Golden Text

What is suggested by the expression that *devout* men buried Stephen?

Who were these devout men? Give reason for your answer.

Give the significance of the term "lamentation" in this connection.

#### The Occasion for the Trouble

Why were the Grecian Jews so violently opposed to Stephen?

Who was probably among their number? Give reasons for your answer.

What can you say regarding the contrast of "spirits" on the part of the disputants?

Why do people react so violently when they can't answer an argument?

In what way does the Lord's language to Saul in Acts 26: 14 apply to such people?

#### The Accusation before the Sanhedrin

What was the aim of Stephen's opponents?

What, then, did they try to do to him?

Show how the same principle failed to work in the case of Jesus.

Why was the persecution of this lesson so successful so far as the Jews were concerned?

What mistake did the Pharisees avoid?

What is the meaning of "suborned"?

What of the truthfulness of the charges made against Stephen?

Why did the face of Stephen appear as the face of an angel?

Would the same thing be possible to Christians today under the same circumstances? Give reasons for your answer.

#### Rage and Martyrdom

Heard what things?

In what sense were they cut to the heart?

How did they "gnash on him with their teeth"?

What vision was vouchsafed to Stephen and why?

Why was Jesus standing?

What is the value of the vision to us?

What effect did the words of Stephen regarding the vision have on the council?

In what sense are many people today like the Jews of that day?

Why do so many people want to close their eyes and ears to new ideas?

Why did the Sanhedrin inflict the death penalty on Stephen?

What was Stephen's reaction when they stoned him?

What attitude did he manifest toward Jesus?

In what sense is death a sleep?

## Lesson IX—May 27, 1962

# THE CONVERSION OF THE ETHIOPIAN TREASURER

### Lesson Text

Acts 8: 26-40

26 But an angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Je-ru'-sa-lem unto Ga'-za: the same is desert.

27 And he arose and went: and behold, a man of E-thi-o'-pi-a, a eunuch of great authority under Can-da'-cß, queen of the E-thi-o'-pi-ans,

who was over all her treasure, who had come to Je-ru'-sa-lem to worship;

28 And he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet I-sa'-iah.

29 And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran to him, and heard him reading I-sa'-iah the prophet, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31 And he said. How can I, except some one shall guide me? And he besought Philip to come up and sit with him.

32 Now the passage of the scripture which he was reading was this,

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;

And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb,

So he openeth not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away:

His generation who shall declare?

For his life is taken from the earth.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of

whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other?

35 And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Je'-sus.

36 And as they went on the way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing.

40 But Philip was found at A-ζó'-tu:s: and passing through he preached the gospel to all the cities, till he came to Caes-a-re'-a.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Understandest thou what thou readest?"*

(Acts 8: 30.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 8: 5-12.

### Daily Bible Readings

May 21. M.	The Commission Includes All Nations (Matt. 28: 18-20)
May 22. T.	Gospel to Be Preached (Luke 24: 44-49)
May 23. W.	Must Be Heard, Believed, Obeyed (Mark 16: 14-20)
May 24. T.	First Gospel Sermon After Resurrection (Acts 2: 22-47)
May 25. F.	Power of the Gospel (Rom. 1: 13-17)
May 26. S.	Must Obey the Gospel (1 Pet. 4: 16-19)
May 27. S.	Identity of Philip (Acts 6: 3-5; 21: 8, 9)

TIME.—Probably A.D. 33.

PLACE.—On the way between Jerusalem and Gaza.

PERSONS.—The Holy Spirit, an angel, Philip, and the eunuch.

### Introduction

The Book of Acts falls naturally into two major parts, namely, chapters 1-12 and chapters 13-28. And each of the two major parts of the book are further divided into two parts each. The first seven chapters and the first four verses of chapter eight deal with the origin, progress, and dispersion of the church in Jerusalem, while the remainder of chapter eight, and on through chapter twelve, gives the account of the spread of the gospel in Judaea and adjacent countries. More is said about the labors of Peter in the first twelve chapters of the book, than about any of the other apostles. He is sometimes referred to as the apostles to the Jews. (Gal. 2: 7.)

But beginning with chapter thirteen, the emphasis shifts to Paul. The first part of the second half of the book (13: 1-21: 16) deals primarily

with his three great missionary journeys, while the last part (21: 17-28: 31) tells of his four years' imprisonment, first in Jerusalem, then in Caesarea, and finally in Rome. The entire Book of Acts is a record of the carrying out of the great commission which Jesus gave to his disciples just before he left them to return to his Father, and this part of the divine record must be understood in the light of that final charge. It may well be said, in fact, that Christianity from Pentecost and onward is but an extension of the work which Jesus began in his personal ministry.

As already indicated, the lessons which we have studied so far in the Book of Acts have had to do with the beginning and progress of the church in Jerusalem. But with the martyrdom of Stephen, the scene changes.

"And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him. But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and dragging men and women committed them to prison.

"They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word." (Acts 8: 1-4.)

The lesson for today, therefore, begins the account of the work of preaching the gospel outside Jerusalem; and as we begin this study, it will be well for us to get before us a fresh view of the great commission. See Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15, 16; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:21-23;

Acts 1: 8; 2 Cor. 5:18-20. The Book of Acts has often been called the book of conversions. It contains that which the Lord wants people to know about the subject. There is no better way of making plain any proposition than by effective illustration. Not only does the writer of the Book of Acts give examples of conversion—examples which took place under the preaching of inspired men—he gives a variety of examples which illustrate how the conversion of men and women was accomplished under various and sundry conditions. The attending circumstances often differed widely, but it is a fact capable of demonstration that in every case those who were converted to the Lord did exactly that which he set forth in the commission to his apostles—no more no less.

### The Golden Text

This phase of our lesson is a part of the principal text, and it will be considered in its regular order.

### The Text Explained

#### Philip and the Eunuch Brought Together

(Acts 8: 26-31)

*But an angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza: the same is desert.* It has already been pointed out in this study that the Book of Acts records a great number of cases of conversion, and that they occurred under various and sundry circumstances. The evident purpose of all this was and is to set forth the different aspects of the subject, about which interested people need to know. One such feature has to do with the parts which the divine and the human perform in connection with conversion; and the case now before us contains one of the clearest illustrations of the principle on record. It shall be our purpose in this study to consider carefully that which each did, and thereby distinguish between the divine and the human in the example now before us.

The first actor in the "drama" now under consideration was "an angel of the Lord." The artist's conception of an angel is usually that of a white being with golden hair and long wings. But in the Bible sense of the

term, an angel is simply a *messenger*, that is, one who is sent. An angel could, and sometimes did, take the form of a human being. (Heb. 13: 2; Gen. 18: 1-8; 19: 1-11.) The angel in the case now before us represented the divine side in the conversion of the eunuch, and his work was to bring the preacher and the man to be converted together. The angel did not say a single word to the eunuch; and, so far as the eunuch knew, the angel had no part in his conversion.

The angel's instruction to Philip was to "arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza: the same is desert." Philip apparently was in Samaria when the angel spoke to him (Acts 8: 5-25), and if so, he was about thirty-six miles north of Jerusalem. His instruction was to travel "toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza: the same is desert." Gaza was on the seacoast, southwest of Jerusalem. See map for the relative locations of Samaria, Jerusalem, and Gaza. The "desert" probably referred to an unhabited section of the country through which the road from Jerusalem to Gaza passed. The original word for "desert" is *eremos*, the identical term from which we



have "wilderness" in Luke 15:4, where the shepherd was evidently pasturing his sheep. We learn from Mark 6: 30-39 that a "desert place" could have *green grass*, and that, of course, implies that it was not a barren waste, with no water supply: simply uninhabited.

*And he arose and went: and behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure, who had come to Jerusalem to worship; and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.* Philip promptly obeyed the voice of the angel; and when he reached the designated road, he saw the man whom Luke described in the passage just quoted. The eunuch was either a Jew or a proselyte, and was what we would call the Secretary of the Treasury. The original word for "Candace" is *Kandake*, which Thayer says was "a name common to the queens of a region of Ethiopia whose capital was Napata; just as the proper name *Ptolemy* was common to the Egyptian kings." The New English Bible renders the passage: "This man was a eunuch, a high official of the Kandake, or Queen, of Ethiopia in charge of all her treasure."

The eunuch was evidently a devout man, and had probably been to Jerusalem to worship during one of the annual feasts of the Jews. The fact that he was a "eunuch" would keep him from entering the "assembly of Jehovah" (Deut. 23: 1), but that would not keep him from entering the court of the Gentiles, where men from all nations, both clean and unclean, might worship. (1 Kings 8: 41-43; Matt. 21: 12-16.) The fact that the eunuch was reading his Bible was indicative of his frame of mind; but when Philip reached the road the Ethiopian was travelling, he did not know that he was to contact him; for he had done all the angel told him to do.

*And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some one shall guide me? And he besought Philip to come up and sit with him.* The part which

the Holy Spirit had in the conversion of the eunuch is briefly stated in one short sentence: "And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." This is in marked contrast with the popular denominational teaching on this subject today. But, so far as the Bible teaching is concerned, the Spirit did not tell Philip anything else to do; for he knew that when once a man with the evangelistic zeal of Philip came face to face with an opportunity like this, he would preach Jesus unto him. That is what he had been doing in Samaria. (Acts 8: 5.)

It is a noticeable fact that the Holy Spirit did not say a word to the man to be converted. Like that of the angel, his part was to get him and the preacher together. There is not, in fact, an example in all the New Testament in which the Holy Spirit, or any one representing the divine side of the question, ever dealt directly with the sinner in an effort to convert him. This brings us to the end of the work which was done by the agents of the divine side in the conversion of the eunuch. We shall next consider

#### The Work of the Evangelist (Acts 8: 32-35)

*Now the passage of the scripture which he was reading was this,*

*He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;  
And as a lamb before his shearer  
is dumb,*

*So he openeth not his mouth:  
In his humiliation his judgment  
was taken away;*

*His generation who shall declare?  
For his life is taken from the earth.*

*And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other? And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Jesus.* It is well to keep in mind the fact that Philip was not an apostle in the sense the twelve were. He, along with Stephen and five other men, was selected to administer to the needy in the Jerusalem church, but like Stephen, his labors went beyond the serving of tables. He was driven out of the city by the persecution which arose over the martyrdom of

Stephen, and did extensive preaching in Samaria, as we have already observed. He is called an *evangelist* in Acts 21:8, which means that he was a herald of the gospel message, the message which was first made known by the inspired apostles of Christ. (1 Cor. 2: 6-10.)

As already suggested, Philip promptly obeyed the voices of the angel and the Spirit. His zeal for God and the salvation of men is indicated by his running to the chariot. When he reached the chariot he heard the man of Ethiopia reading the prophet Isaiah; and upon asking if he understood what he was reading, he received the polite reply, "How can I, except some one shall guide me?" This attitude on the part of the eunuch shows that he did not consider Philip's question improper or impolite. It is never difficult for the preacher and the one who needs to be converted to get together, when they manifest the sincerity which these two men did.

The eunuch was reading from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, as the divisions are made in our versions of the Bible, and Philip, "beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Jesus." How much is condensed in this statement! How much is implied in these words of the inspired text! *He preached unto him Jesus!* He could begin at this scripture and preach unto him Jesus; for it was Jesus about whom Isaiah was speaking. But let us ask, What would one preach to another, if he preached unto him Jesus?

1. He would tell of his coming into the world, and of the principal events in his life, climaxing them with the significance of his death, burial, and resurrection. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that he was "determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2), and that is what he preached. "Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the

third day according to the scriptures." (1 Cor. 15: 1-4.) The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, according to the scriptures, are the fundamental facts of the gospel, and no one can preach Jesus who does not emphasize them.

2. He would likewise tell of the provisions which the Lord made that men might enjoy this salvation. See Luke 24: 46, 47; Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 36-39. This is the message of the entire Book of Acts.

3. He would also tell of the promises which Jesus made to all who obey the gospel. These promises include (1) the remission of sins; (2) the gift of the Holy Spirit; and (3) eternal life to all who are faithful to him until death. (2 Pet. 1:4.)

It should be kept in mind that the body of Christians in the Jerusalem church were not preachers, in the popular meaning of that term; but when the persecution which stemmed from the death of Stephen drove them from the city, those who were scattered abroad went about preaching the word. They were all familiar with the word, and they knew what it had done to them; and it was for these reasons that they could tell others about it. This should be an impressive lesson to all of us. Any Christian, in a reasonable time, should be able to teach others. (Heb. 5: 11-14.)

### Obedience and Rejoicing

(Acts 8: 36-40)

*And as they went on the way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?* The eunuch gave every indication that he wanted to know the truth, and it was for that reason that he listened to Philip with an open heart. The New Testament abounds in evidence that the Lord will bless all such people in coming to a knowledge of his will. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself." (John 7: 17.) "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 honorable estate, and of men, not a few." (Acts 17: 11, 12.)

*And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.* Those who customarily use the King James Version often wonder why verse 37 is omitted in the American Standard Version, the version which is used in these lessons. It should be noted in the first place that this omission is not peculiar to the American Standard Version; practically all modern versions omit the verse in question. McGarvey says that "in regard to scarcely any reading are the textual critics more unanimously agreed, or on better manuscript evidence, than the rejection of this verse as an interpolation."

This does not mean that what verse 37 contains did not take place; it simply means that Luke did not make a record of it. The context, in fact, requires that Philip did make some kind of reply to the eunuch's question; and the general teaching of the New Testament on the question indicates that the reply was substantially that which the interpolator reported, as well as the confession which the eunuch made. Luke did not always record everything which took place in a given situation. (Acts 2:40.) Some people are wont to criticize a version for leaving out a passage which is in another translation; but it appears that they seldom consider the fact that some version might add a passage which does not belong to the original record.

The eunuch became a believer as a result of his hearing that which Philip preached unto him (cf. Rom. 10: 17), and he immediately translated his faith into action by doing what Jesus commands people to do in order to enjoy the salvation which he made possible and offers to men. The fact that there was sufficient water for immersion is implied in

the context. "Behold, here is water" and "they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him." It is not a mark of faith in the veracity of the Scriptures to intimate that there was not sufficient water to make possible that which the Bible specifically says did take place.

*And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus; and passing through he preached the gospel to all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.* The baptism of the eunuch took place between their going down into the water, and their coming up out of it, which, of course, was immersion. The expression "caught away" (*ἁρπαζό*) probably means suddenly and miraculously. Cf. 2 Cor. 12: 2, 4; 1 Thess. 4: 17; Rev. 12:5; where the same original word is used. Azotus was the old city of Ashdod. See map. Caesarea was the home of Philip, or at least it was later. See Acts 21:8. It should be observed that the rejoicing on the part of the eunuch came *after his obedience*.

Let us suppose that the eunuch, as he went on his way rejoicing, met some one who noticed that he was very happy and ventured to ask him the reason for it. What would the eunuch have told him? He could not have told him about the instruction which the angel and the Spirit gave Philip; for he did not know of that. He could only have told him what happened at the time, and subsequent to the time, that Philip approached him and rode with him along the road. He could have told him how he was reading something from Isaiah which he did not understand, and how that Philip, beginning at that scripture, preached unto him Jesus; and his own reaction to the gospel message.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Give an analysis of the Book of Acts.  
Discuss the principal personalities and events in each of the four divisions.  
How is the great commission related to the Book of Acts?

In what way is Christianity related to the personal ministry of Jesus?

What new phase of our study is begun in this lesson?

Why is the Book of Acts called the book of conversions?

What was the probable reason for recording so many examples of conversions?

What peculiarity is common to an oi them?

### Philip and the Eunuch Brought Together

What significant facts are learned from the conversion of the eunuch?  
 Why should people be able to distinguish clearly between the human and the divine in conversion?  
 What is the Bible conception of an angel?  
 What was the mission of the angel who spoke to Philip?  
 Why didn't he say something to the eunuch?  
 What instruction did the angel give to Philip?  
 Where was the "way" to which he was to go?  
 What was the "desert" in question?  
 When Philip reached the designated way, whom did he see?  
 Who was the eunuch?  
 Who was Candace?  
 What were some of the indexes to the character of the eunuch?  
 Why would he be interested in reading the prophet Isaiah?  
 What further information did Philip receive when he saw the man in the chariot?  
 Why didn't the Holy Spirit say more to the evangelist?  
 Why didn't he directly influence the man to be converted?  
 Discuss in full the divine influence in conversion.

### The Work of the Evangelist

Give the principal facts in the life of Philip, leading up to this point in his career.  
 What is the difference between an "evangelist" and an "apostle"?  
 How did Philip manifest his zeal?  
 How did he introduce himself to the man in the chariot?

What of the appropriateness of that method with people today?  
 What was the reaction of the eunuch to Philip's question, and what did it indicate?  
 From what part of Isaiah was the eunuch reading?  
 Why was that a suitable text for preaching Jesus?  
 What does it mean to preach Jesus?  
 What are the fundamental facts of the gospel?  
 How may the salvation of the gospel be obtained?  
 What are the promises connected with the gospel, that is, some of the major ones?  
 Why were so many of the early Christians able to preach the word?  
 What lesson should we learn from this?

### Obedience and Rejoicing

What has the Lord promised regarding those who sincerely desire to do his will?  
 What evidence did the eunuch give of this attitude on his part?  
 Why did he ask about baptism?  
 What are the facts regarding the omission of verse 37 from the text of our lesson?  
 Why do people question the "omission" rather than the "addition" of a passage to the manuscript in question?  
 How do we know that the eunuch was a believer?  
 Would Philip have baptized an unbeliever? Give reasons for your answer.  
 What is said regarding the eunuch's baptism?  
 What happened to Philip after the baptism?  
 In what way was the eunuch affected and why?  
 If someone should have asked him regarding his rejoicing, what would have been his reply? Why?

## Lesson X—June 3, 1962

# THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS

### Lesson Text

Acts 9: 1 9, 17-19

1 But Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2 And asked of him letters to Damas'-cus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Je-ru'-sa-lem.

3 And as he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damas'-cus: and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven:

4 And he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord?

And he said, I am Je'-sus whom thou persecutest:

6 But rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

7 And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but beholding no man.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw nothing; and they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damas'-cus.

9 And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.

• • • • •

17 And An-ð-ηΓ-Ss departed, and entered into the house; and laying

his hands on him said. Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Je'-sus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou earnest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

18 And straightway there fell from

his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized;

19 And he took food and was strengthened.

And he was certain days with the disciples that were at Da-mas'-cus.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief"* (1 Tim. 1: 15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 9: 10-16.

## Daily Bible Readings

May 28. M.....	Saul, a Persecutor of Christians (Acts 9: 1-8)
May 29. T.....	Conversion of Saul (Acts 22: 1-16)
May 30. W.....	Luke's Account of Saul's Conversion (Acts 9: 9-16)
May 31. T.....	Sacrifice Saul Made for Christ (Phil. 3: 1-14)
June 1. F.....	Paul's Call from God (Gal. 1: 11-17)
June 2. S.....	Appointed for Service (1 Tim. 1: 12-17)
June 3. S.....	Faithfulness of Paul (2 Tim. 4: 1-9)

TIME.—A.D. 33.

PLACE.—Damascus.

PERSONS.—Jesus, Saul, and Ananias.

## Introduction

With the exception of Jesus Christ himself, Saul of Tarsus, who became the apostle Paul, was probably the greatest exponent of Christianity the world has ever seen. The original conception of the Messiahship of Jesus was Jewish, and the religion which he founded was cradled, so to speak, in Judaism; and, humanly speaking, no religion which was intended for all mankind could have had a more unpromising cradle. The Jews were not a missionary people, in the commonly accepted meaning of that term, and they certainly would not be inclined to accept the Gentiles as fellow Christians; to say nothing of taking the gospel to them. They were, to be sure, zealous in their efforts to proselyte others (Matt. 23: 15), but it does not appear that they had any interest in converting the Gentiles as such.

This, of course, meant that in order for the Christian message to reach all mankind, a unique person would have to be found, and that person proved to be the apostle Paul. He was a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, and a Roman citizen (Acts 22: 3, 27, 28), all of which meant that he had a direct connection with the three great influences of his day—the religion of Palestine, the language and culture of Greece, and the govern-

ment of Rome. Although a Hebrew of Hebrews (Phil. 2: 5), he also knew the Greeks and Romans as few Jews knew them, and he was therefore eminently fitted to deal with the two worlds of his day. His extraordinary vigor and vitality, and his freedom from the narrow limits of Judaism, made it possible for his unusual powers to have a world-wide scope.

Taylor supposes that Saul was about thirty-five years old when the persecution arose about Stephen. He had had a prominent part in the murder of that good man, and he was also a leader in the cruel treatment of the disciples of Christ, which resulted in their being driven from Jerusalem. But notwithstanding his ferocious part in the persecution, Saul was always a man who was sincerely trying to please God. (Acts 23: 1; 24: 16.) And when once he learned the truth, no man was ever more diligent in his effort to build up that which he once destroyed. (Gal. 1: 23.) The real key which unlocked the gates of the early tide of Christian evangelism was Paul's inspired, practical, and powerful proclamation of the universal gospel. He was able to show that God's love for national Israel had merged into a wider love for spiritual Israel, composed of people from all nations.

## The Golden Text

*"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."* Paul prefaced this statement with these words, "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance," which is one of the five *faithful sayings* found in his letters to Timothy and Titus. This first saying begins with the words "Christ Jesus" which carried special significance for the Jews. "Christ" is the *Messiah* or the *Anointed One*, which was the theme of the prophets and poets of the Old Testament, and the hope of every faithful Jew. "Jesus" means *saviour*, the same name or title which Joshua bore, the great leader who led Israel into Canaan and to the possession of the promised land. The name *Christ Jesus*, then, was an auspicious combination, and signified the realization of Israel's hope.

The expression "came into the world" implies the pre-existence of Christ Jesus, and the incarnation, a doctrine widely proclaimed by Paul and John, especially. Some of the great passages on this subject are John 1:1-18; Col. 2:8-15; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1: 1-14. He came from the bosom of the Father, where he had been from eternity. In giving the Word to be made flesh, God was giving his Son; for the Word was God. It was therefore literally true that God was in Christ reconciling the

world unto himself. (2 Cor. 5: 18f.) And it was for this reason that Jesus could say, "No man hath seen God at anytime; the only begotten Son, who *is* in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John 1: 18.) And again, "And no one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven." (John 3: 13.)

The all-inclusive purpose of the coming of Christ Jesus into the world was "to save sinners"; and since he could and did save the *chief of sinners*, as Paul reckoned himself, then there is hope for all men who are willing to turn to Christ, regardless of their condition. No one can understand the purpose and mission of Christ in the world who does not keep this fact in mind. He came to reveal sin, to condemn it, to show God's hatred of it, and to save men from it by giving himself as a willing sacrifice, in order that he might bear the curse of it. For this end he was born, lived, and died, and for this consummation he is now employing his risen and exalted powers. This is the beginning and end of the gospel message, and whatever else Jesus was and did, we must begin and end with this exalted purpose if we are to understand the rest.

## The Text Explained

### A Commission for Destruction

(Acts 9: 1, 2)

*But Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and asked of him letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.* Luke resumes his account of the conduct of Saul, which he began in Acts 8:3, "But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and dragging men and women committed them to prison." This is still Saul's attitude when he comes into view again. Here is his own testimony, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this I also did in Jerusalem: and I both shut up

many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my vote against them. And punishing them oftentimes in all the synagogues, I strove to make them blasphemous; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities." (Acts 26:9-11.) Saul was a relentless persecutor, and one with less courage would have despaired of success in destroying the new faith, after hearing that new congregations were springing up in other parts of the country.

But the spread of Christianity did not discourage Saul. According to Conybeare and Howson, the Sanhedrin claimed authority over Jews in foreign cities in religious matters, just as they did in Jerusalem. Julius Caesar issued a decree, which was

later confirmed by Augustus, which permitted Jews everywhere to live under their own laws, and it appears that at the time of this lesson the state of affairs in the eastern provinces was such that arrests like those which Saul proposed to make would attract little or no attention, so long as the rights of Roman citizens were respected. And furthermore, the authority of the high priest, aside from any political concessions which the Roman government had made, was recognized by the Jews in all sections of the empire, in much the same way that the supremacy of the pope is acknowledged, in our day, by Roman Catholic churches in all lands.

Damascus is usually spoken of as the oldest city in the world, and if not the oldest, as *The Expositor's Greek Testament* notes, it may at all events be called the most enduring city in the world. Its location was about one hundred and forty miles northeast of Jerusalem, and was at the time of this lesson, the capital of Syria. The city was founded, according to Josephus (Ant. 1:6, 4), by Uz, a grandson of Shem. See Gen. 10: 21-23. G. A. Smith points out that Damascus was the stage of two great crises: the scene of the conversion of the first apostle of Christianity to the Gentiles; and the first so-called Christian city to be taken by the Moslems. There appears to have been a large Jewish population in Damascus when Saul went there, and it is possible that the number of Christians was somewhat impressive. Note the plural "synagogues."

Many reasons have been assigned for referring to the Christian life as "the Way." (Acts 19: 9, 23; 24: 14, 22.) It may have been because it was "a new and living way" (Heb. 10: 20), which required that all who entered it change the direction of their lives. At any rate, it was well known to the people of that day. The Christian people at that time were clearly distinguished from those of the world. Paul's fury knew no bounds and he had no respect for women, any more than he did for men.

### The Heavenly Vision

(Acts 9: 3-9)

*And as he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus: and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of*

*heaven: and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* We learn from Paul's two accounts of this event that it was at midday, or about noon, and that the light was above the brightness of the sun. (Acts 22: 6; 26: 13.) We are also told that the voice which he heard was in the Hebrew language. (26: 14.) This was one day in the life of Paul which was unique in all of his experience; and it was a day which he never forgot. He had always been zealous for the faith of his fathers; and because he was conscientious, a vision like this for him would never be wasted.

*And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.* When Luke wrote his abridged account of the conversion of Saul, he evidently had in his plans the incorporation of Paul's two versions of the incident in his record, thus making the complete account dependent on the three briefer reports. Although the light which flashed out of heaven was above the brightness of the midday sun, Saul looked into it and saw Jesus. (Acts 9:17; 1 Cor. 15:8.) He did not know the identity of the person whom he saw, and whose voice he heard; but he evidently recognized him as a supernatural being. This is certain, as the question which he asked shows: "And I said, What shall I do, Lord?" (22: 10.) The direction which the Lord gave in verse 6 of the text now under consideration was in response to Saul's question, "What shall I do, Lord?"

It is doubtful if there ever was a man who so completely emptied himself and stood ready to listen to that which the Lord had to say, as did Saul of Tarsus. His attitude is a splendid commentary on Matt. 16: 24. Everything at that time was diametrically opposed to that which he thought was right, but that did not deter him; his life-long desire and determination to please God were as pronounced as ever. And this was not true of him merely on the occasion of his accepting Jesus as his Lord; it was true throughout his life as a Christian. "Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto

him." (2 Cor. 5:9.) Saul had no trouble in understanding how he was persecuting "Jesus": he knew that he was persecuting the followers of Jesus, and that, of course, meant that he was persecuting their leader. Christ always identifies himself with his people. (Luke 10: 16; Matt. 25: 34-45.)

It should be carefully noted that Jesus did not personally tell Saul what to do. This was because he had already committed the work of making known the way of salvation to men. (2 Cor. 5: 18-20.) It should also be kept in mind that Jesus did not appear to Saul to convert him, but to make him a witness. "But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein

I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee." (Acts 26: 16, 17; cf. 22: 14, 15.) The preparation for Saul's apostleship was one thing, but his becoming a Christian was another; he had to obey the gospel just like any one else, and it was necessary for him to learn the truth in the God-ordained method, that is, from those who were charged with teaching it. There is no instance on record in which a Divine Person, since the day of Pentecost of Acts 2, ever told a human being what to do to be saved.

*And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but beholding no man.* In Paul's report of this incident to the Jews in Jerusalem, he said, "And they that were with me beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me." (Acts 22: 9.) It has already been pointed out that Jesus spoke to Saul in the Hebrew language. (Acts 26: 14.) Furthermore, the marginal reading for "voice" in the text now before us is "sound" Hearing the *sound*, but beholding no man. With all these facts before us, the evident meaning is that the men who travelled with Saul heard the sound of the conversation between Jesus and Saul, but they did not understand what was said. He both saw and understood Jesus, but the others did neither.

*And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he*

*saw nothing; and they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.* The fact that he opened his eyes does not imply that they had been closed since the light first came upon him. If that had been true, then he would not have seen Jesus. He evidently gazed into the light as long as he was able to do so, with the result that when he later opened his eyes, he discovered that he was blind. The others were not thus affected, and they were able to take him by the hand and lead him into the city. Saul's blindness was proof that something had really happened to him, and that it was no hallucination. The entrance into the city was altogether different from that which Saul had planned. Instead of a victorious persecutor and conqueror of the disciples of Jesus, he was himself a penitent believer in Christ and as helpless as a child.

*And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.* We learn from the Lord's instruction to Ananias that Saul was praying during the time he was waiting for some one to tell him what to do. This fact, along with the case of Cornelius (Acts 10:4) shows that it is not wrong for one to pray before he becomes a Christian, or that God will not hear his prayer. It all depends upon the attitude of the person who does the praying, and the subject of his prayer. Saul's conduct was a manifestation of his penitence. The *three days* should be understood according to the Jewish method of computing time. The first day was the remainder of the day on which Saul saw Jesus—at noon. The second day was all of the day following the incident on the Damascus road; while the third day was that portion of the day before Ananias came to him.

### Enlightenment and Obedience

(Acts 9: 17-19)

*And Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou earnest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened.*



The Lord's instruction to Ananias and the latter's reaction to it is found in the devotional reading for today, and constitutes a vital part of the narrative which we are studying. Ananias was one of the men whom Saul meant to arrest and take to Jerusalem; but after each understood the will of the Lord for him, they had no trouble in getting together and making known and doing that which was required of them both. Submission to the Lord makes brothers of all men! McGarvey thinks that Ananias addressed Saul as "brother," not because he was a fellow Israelite, but because he was now a fellow-believer, and in the way of obedience. The fact that Ananias could tell Saul what happened to him before he reached the city, would be sufficient proof to convince the latter that he was the man whom Jesus had prepared him to expect.

He was to receive the Holy Spirit, but whether before or after his baptism is not stated, nor is it a question which should concern us. (Acts 8: 15, 16; 10:44-48.) The "scales" which fell from Saul's eyes were probably a deposit which had formed on them as a result of the inflammation

caused by the intense glare of the light from heaven. Luke does not say that they were *scales*, but "as it were" scales. The original words for both "scales" and "fell" are found only here in the New Testament, and were medical terms.

The terms of pardon were announced by Jesus in his final commission to his disciples, namely, faith, repentance, and baptism (Matt. 28: 19; Mark 16: 15, 16; Luke 24:46, 47); and it is very evident from the inspired account of Paul's conversion that he followed in detail the order laid down by Jesus. It is a noticeable fact that of all the cases of conversion recorded in the Book of Acts, Saul's was the only one characterized by the personal appearance of the Son of God himself. But Jesus did not personally tell him what to do, but only directed him to the place where he could find out what to do. If Saul was saved "the moment that he believed," as is popularly taught today, then he was saved three days before his sins were washed away; for that took place only when he was baptized. (Acts 22: 16; cf. 1 Pet. 3:21.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What can you say of Paul's place in Christianity?  
Why was such a man as he needed for the spread of the gospel?  
What special preparation and fitness did he possess?  
What great characteristic did he always maintain?  
Why was he so successful in his work as a preacher?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstance did Paul utter these words?  
What appeal was there in the combination "Christ Jesus"?  
What is implied by the expression "came into the world"?  
For what great purpose did he come?  
Why did Paul refer to himself as the chief of sinners?

### A Commission for Destruction

How did Luke begin his record of Saul's conversion?  
Why was he such a violent persecutor of the church?  
Why did he want authority from the high priest?  
What authority did the high priest have over Jews outside Jerusalem?

Where was Damascus?  
Give some leading facts regarding the city.  
Why was the religion of Christ spoken of as the "Way"?

### The Heavenly Vision

Under what circumstances did this vision appear to Saul?  
What were the principal facts regarding it?  
How did Saul react to it?  
What are some of the advantages of having three brief accounts of the vision?  
How do we know that Saul actually saw Jesus?  
How did he react when he realized that it was Jesus who was speaking to him?  
What was always the rule of Saul's life?  
In what sense was he persecuting Jesus?  
Is such a thing possible today? Give reasons for your answer.  
Why didn't Jesus tell Saul what he should do?  
Why, then, did he appear to him?  
Where must all people obtain their information regarding the way of salvation?  
What is said regarding the men who journeyed with Saul?  
What was Saul's condition when he arose from the earth?  
What did he do when he reached the city?

### Enlightenment and Obedience

What instruction did the Lord give Ananias regarding Saul?

Why could Ananias and Saul meet on such cordial terms?  
 What is the "key" to brotherhood in Christ?  
 Why did Ananias call Saul "brother"?  
 Why did Ananias say that he was sent to Saul?

What happened when Saul received his sight?  
 How do we know that Saul's conversion was according to the Lord's terms of pardon?  
 What was unique regarding it?  
 When was he saved?

## Lesson XI—June 10, 1962

# THE CONVERSION OF CORNELIUS

## Lesson Text

Acts 10: 30-48

30 And Cor-ne'-li-us said, Four days ago, until this hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house; and behold, a man stood before me in bright apparel,

31 And saith, Cor-ne'-li-us, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

32 Send therefore to Jop'-pa, and call unto thee Si'-mon, who is surnamed Peter; he lodgeth in the house of Si'-mon a tanner, by the sea side.

33 Forthwith therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord.

34 And Peter opened his mouth, and said,

Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him.

36 The word which he sent unto the children of Is'-ra-el, preaching good tidings of peace by Je'-sus Christ (he is Lord of all) —

37 That saying ye yourselves know, which was published throughout all Ju-dae'-a, beginning from Gal'-i-lee, after the baptism which John preached;

38 *Even* Je'-sus of Naz'-a-reth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Je-ru'-sa-lem; whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree.

40 Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest,

41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, *even* to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

42 And he charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God to *be* the Judge of the living and the dead.

43 To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins.

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word.

45 And they of the circumcision that believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gen'-tiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47 Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Je'-sus Christ. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

GOLDEN TEXT. — "*There is no distinction between Jew and Greek.*" (Rom.

10: 12.)

DEVOTIONAL Reading. — Acts 11: 1-18.

## Daily Bible Readings

June 4. M..... Cornelius a Devout Man (Acts 10: 1-8)  
 June 5. T..... Peter's Vision (Acts 11: 5-10)

June 6. W.....	Gospel for All Men (Acts 11: 11-18)
June 7. T.....	Peter's Sermon at Caesarea (Acts 10: 34-48)
June 8. F.....	Peter's Defense of His Actions (Acts 11: 1-14)
June 9. S.....	All Nations Blessed by Christ (Isa. 2: 1-4; Micah 4: 1-4)
June 10. S.....	Jew and Gentile One in Christ (Gal. 3: 26-29)

TIME.—A.D. 40, probably.

PLACE.—Caesarea.

PERSONS.—Peter, Cornelius, and those with them.

## Introduction

With the Bible as our guide, along with our knowledge of human nature, we know that the best and most effective way of getting the facts of the plan of salvation before others is to state the plan and then illustrate it by showing how the plan was carried out in the case of individual instances of conversion. This is a method of teaching the truth which is within the reach of practically any one who can be charged with the responsibility of teaching; and it goes without saying that the most satisfactory illustrations of conversion are those which have been recorded in the New Testament.

The case of conversion before us at this time is remarkable, first, because it was the initial case of conversion from among the Gentiles, but also, and chiefly, because it plainly implies that, regardless of the righteousness of any one's character, all men need a Saviour. The man who was converted on the occasion of our lesson today was not a bitter enemy of Jesus, as was Saul of Tarsus; he was not a cruel and rapacious man, like the Philippian jailor; neither was he guilty of crucifying the Son of God, as were the people of Acts 2; instead, he was a man of benevolence, devotion, and uprightness of life. The account of his conversion, therefore, should be of unusual interest to us.

It is interesting to observe that when we meet with a representative of the Homan military system in the New Testament, he is usually a man who wins our esteem and admiration. For example, the centurion at Capernaum, who built a synagogue for the

Jews, whose servant Christ healed, and whose faith he singled out for the highest praise. (Luke 7: 1-10.) The centurion Julius who was in command of the soldiers and prisoners on the ship which started out with Paul on his journey to Rome. (Acts 27: 1ff.) The centurion who was in command at the crucifixion of Jesus, and who, when the Lord died, exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God." (Matt. 27:54.)

And then the centurion of our lesson today, Cornelius. He was stationed in Caesarea, and was in command of a crack company of soldiers, to express the matter in the language of our day, a part of a Homan legion, known as the Italian band. The age in which Cornelius lived was one of unspeakable corruption and licentiousness (Rom. 1:28-32), with Roman soldiers exercising great power. But with all this, Cornelius was an unusually good man. (Acts 10: 1, 2, 22.) Much is being said in these times about the relative importance of heredity and environment. They are both important, and any one is vitally affected by them; but, in the final analysis, it is the individual himself who is responsible for channeling these influences. Even the casual observer knows that in many instances men with the best environments have failed; while others have come to nobility of character and greatness of achievement in spite of unfavorable surroundings. Compare Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden; Joseph in Potiphar's house; Daniel in the court of Nebuchadnezzar; and the saints in Caesar's household. (Phil. 4: 22.)

## The Golden Text

*"There is no distinction between Jew and Greek "* It is always much easier to understand the significance of a Bible statement, if it is considered in its context. Those who are

familiar with the Book of Romans know that the passage which serves as our golden text for today is taken from that section of the letter which deals with the reason for God's re-

jection of the Jews. Paul's over-all purpose in writing the letter was to set forth the distinction between two great religious systems, the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. The Judaistic conception of the gospel, held by many Jewish brethren in the church, made it exceedingly difficult to present the kind of message that would appeal to all men. (Mark 16: 15.) And, too, the vast majority of the Jews rejected the gospel outright.

This failure of the Jews to accept the gospel raised a serious question, and many gospel preachers of that day were no doubt frequently asked to explain this strange conduct on the part of the people to whom the promises of the Old Testament had been made. This refusal to accept the gospel, of course, led to the rejection of the Jews, and prompted the question, Was God unfaithful to his promises in his rejection of Israel? Paul devoted three chapters to the discussion of this problem (9-11), and in them he explained that the reason behind the action

of the Jews was a lack of faith on their part. They were not ready to accept the long-promised Messiah, but Paul expressed the hope that they would eventually do so.

Even a casual reading of Paul's epistles will show that one of his greatest problems was to try to remove the barrier which separated the Jews from the rest of mankind. The law of Moses which had served as a middle wall of partition was removed with the death of Christ (Col. 2: 14; Eph. 2: 14-22; Rom. 10: 4), but Jews, as a rule, failed to see this. But as Paul taught the matter, it is God's eternal purpose to gather into one body men of every nation, and thereby restore harmony between them and between them and God. And with that idea of the question, he said, "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him: for, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom. 10: 12, 13.) This is a lesson that we should all learn well.

## The Text Explained

### Cornelius' Introduction

(Acts 10: 30-33)

*And Cornelius said, Four days ago, until this hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house; and behold, a man stood before me in bright apparel, and saith, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call unto thee Simon, who is surnamed Peter; he lodgeth in the house of Simon a tanner, by the sea side.*

Although himself a Gentile, Cornelius both recognized and observed Jewish religious ordinances. The "ninth hour of prayer" was the time when the evening incense was burned, and at which time the people gathered around the temple for prayer. (Acts 3: 1; Luke 1: 8-10.) It was what we would call three o'clock in the afternoon. Furthermore, the "four days" (Jewish time) which Cornelius mentioned were exactly "three days" (our time or, which is the same thing, Roman time). The angel appeared to Cornelius at three o'clock in the afternoon (ninth hour), and soon there-

after the three men started for Peter. They reached Joppa "on the morrow" about noon (sixth hour), and spent the rest of the day and the night as guests in Simon's house. On the next day they, Peter, and six Jewish brethren, started for Caesarea, and reached Cornelius the following day, at the ninth hour—three days exactly. (Acts 10: 5-9, 23, 24, 30.)

Cornelius also had the same attitude toward angels that characterized the Jews. The fear which they entertained for these supernatural beings was evidently instinctive; for there is no revealed reason why men should stand in awe of them. However, even the best of people always experienced great fear when angels appeared to them. (Judg. 13: 20-23.) But although the angel appeared to Cornelius, he did not learn from him anything about his religious duty; he was given only direction to send for a man who would tell him. "And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, and saying, send to Joppa, and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy

house." (Acts 11: 13, 14.) There is no substitute for the gospel message in the matter of salvation.

The question is often asked, "Will God hear the prayer of an alien?" The case now before us, as well as that of Saul of Tarsus, should give us some light on the subject. Both men prayed, and their prayers were heard by the Lord. The angel said to Cornelius, "Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God." (Acts 10: 4.) There are some people who quote John 9: 31 with an air of finality on the subject; and since that passage says that God heareth not sinners, they immediately conclude that no unbaptized person has the God-given right to offer any kind of prayer. But the "sinner" in John 9: 31 was not an "alien," but an unfaithful or sinful child of God, that is, a Jew. What we should remember is that God will not hear the prayer of any person, child or alien, who turns his ear away from hearing his word. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." (Prov. 28: 9; 15: 8.) Both Saul and Cornelius were doing their best to learn what the Lord wanted them to do, and they promptly obeyed as soon as they found out what was expected of them.

*Forthwith therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord.* While the messengers were on their way from Caesarea to Joppa, the Lord was preparing Peter for his first contact with the Gentiles in an effort to save them. The apostle had referred to the bringing in of the Gentiles some eight or ten years before this (Acts 2: 38, 39), but he did not comprehend how the matter would be accomplished; and now it required a miracle to convince him that it was to be done directly, and not by way of Judaism. (Acts 11: 1-18.)

Cornelius assured Peter that he did exactly as the angel had instructed him, and he "complimented" the apostle on his willingness to come to him, after hearing Peter's words of explanation: "And as he talked with him, he went in, and findeth many come together: and he said unto them, Ye yourselves know how it is

an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to join himself or come unto one of another nation; and yet unto me hath God showed that I should call any man common or unclear; wherefore also I came without gainsaying, when I was sent for." (Verses 27-29a.) Both the preacher and the audience were in the proper frame of mind for teaching and learning the will of the Lord.

### Peter's Sermon

(Acts 10: 34-43)

*And Peter opened his mouth, and said,*

*Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him.* Peter began his sermon with a declaration which has often been sadly misinterpreted. Some have insisted that he taught that a good moral life is all that is necessary. But if that had been what the apostle meant, then Cornelius was already pleasing to the Lord; for he *was* a good moral man. Obedience to the Lord, and not simple morality, is necessary in order for one to be saved. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 7: 21.) "Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation." (Heb. 5: 8, 9.)

To "fear" God is to reverence him, while to *work righteousness* is to do that which he commands—that which will result in one's becoming righteous in God's sight. "Brethren, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." (Rom. 10: 1-3.) Just any kind of "obedience" will not result in the righteousness of God. Peter does, however, make it plain that any one, any where, who will reverence God and do his will, is acceptable to him.

*The word which he sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)—that saying ye yourselves know, which was published throughout all Judaea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; even Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*

It is clear from the words just quoted that Cornelius and those with him had a general idea of the work of Christ; but the thing which they did not know was that they were included in the salvation which he was offering through the gospel. The truth of the matter is that the moral life of Cornelius was above reproach; but he was not saved. (Acts 11: 14.) Peter had just told him that God would accept any one who would reverence him and do his will, and now he is rehearsing the facts of the gospel which sets forth the Saviour through whom he must go to God. (John 14: 6.)

*And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.* Peter was evidently stating things just as they happened, and was not trying to make a convincing story by saying that both friends and foes saw Jesus after he was raised up from the dead. The unbelieving Jews and the fickle multitude would not have been valid witnesses to the Lord's resurrection, and he was therefore not exposed to them. Paley says that the "historian's candor" adds credibility to the narrative.

*And he charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead. To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins.* Instead of eulogizing Cornelius for his high moral character, Peter told him that Jesus

had charged them to preach that he has been ordained of God to be the Judge of all men. (Matt. 28: 18; John 12: 48-50; 2 Cor. 5: 9, 10.) And so, regardless of one's moral character, he must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. He also pointed out that the prophets bore witness to Jesus, and that through his name every one that believes on him shall receive remission of sins. "Believe" is used here in its comprehensive sense. (John 3: 36.) The scriptures themselves are the best commentary on the proposition regarding the remission of sins. (Luke 24: 46, 47; Acts 2: 37, 38; 10: 47, 48.)

### The Results that Followed

(Acts 10: 44-48)

*While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word. And they of the circumcision that believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.* The evident purpose of this miracle was to convince the Jewish brethren, and others through them, that the Gentiles were entitled to gospel privileges, including church membership. The reception of the Holy Spirit was proof that they were accepted of God (Acts 5: 32), and the fact that they spoke with tongues demonstrated to the Jews that they did have the Spirit.

It is a fact, worthy of notice, that in every case where the Holy Spirit was imparted miraculously, one or more of the apostles was (or were), present. They were the plenipotentiary ambassadors of Jesus, with power to make all necessary decisions respecting his kingdom. The first example occurred on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit enabled the apostles to speak with tongues and make known the conditions of salvation. (Acts 2.) The second was at Samaria when Peter and John approved the reception of the Samaritans (John 4: 9) into the church (Acts 8: 14-17). The third was the case now before us. The fourth was at Ephesus, where Paul showed officially that the baptism of John was no longer acceptable. (Acts 19: 7.)

*Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.* This is positive proof that Peter regarded the miracle as God's way of showing that the Gentiles were acceptable to him. "The water" (the article is in the original) designates water as the recognized and customary element of baptism; and the command to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ was in keeping with the commission which Jesus gave to his disciples. (Matt. 28: 19.)

The conversion of Cornelius, more than any other conversion recorded

in the New Testament, proclaims the truth that all men, regardless of their moral character, need a Saviour. (Rom. 3: 10, 23; 1 Tim. 2: 5; John 14: 6.) It is important to remember that the first man who was converted to Christ from the Gentiles was not a thief nor a drunkard nor a malefactor of any kind; instead, he was a high-minded man, the very pick of the Gentile world. Although the miraculous has passed away, and no one need expect an angel to appear to him, as was true in the case of Cornelius; but there are reasons for believing that the providence of God is often responsible for one's being placed in the position, and under favorable circumstances, for being taught the truth regarding himself and his salvation in Christ.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What is the most effective way of teaching the plan of salvation?  
Who should be able to employ this method? Give reasons for your answer.  
Why is the case of Cornelius a remarkable case of conversion?  
What was always true of the centurions of the New Testament?  
Give some facts regarding Cornelius.  
What can you say regarding the relative importance of heredity and environment?  
Give some examples to illustrate your meaning.

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstance did Paul write the words of this text?  
Why did the Jews reject the gospel of Christ?  
What great problem confronted Paul during his life as a preacher?  
Why is there no distinction between the Jew and the Greek?  
What lesson should we learn from this?

### Cornelius' Introduction

How do we know that Cornelius lived under Jewish religious influence?  
How long after his vision before Peter arrived? Give reasons for your answer.  
Why did Cornelius fear the angel?  
What did he learn from the angel regarding his own need?  
Why isn't there any substitute for the gospel?  
Will God hear the prayer of an alien? Give reasons for your answer.  
What was the attitude of Saul and Cornelius when they prayed before being baptized?

How did the Lord prepare Peter for this visit?  
What lesson did he need to learn?  
How did Cornelius react to Peter's statement regarding his coming to him?  
Discuss the attitude of both the preacher and the audience on this occasion.

### Peter's Sermon

What impression did Peter mean to leave on his audience by his opening remarks?  
What does it mean to fear God and work righteousness?  
In what way had Cornelius and those with him probably learned of the work of Jesus?  
What fact regarding it had they failed to learn?  
Why did the Lord choose witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus?  
What effect does that fact have on people today?  
What did Jesus charge the apostles to preach?  
What witness did the prophets bear to Jesus?  
In what way were people to receive remission of sins?  
What does it mean to "believe" on Jesus?

### The Results that Followed

What happened while Peter was yet speaking?  
What was the evident purpose of the miracle?  
Who was always present when the Holy Spirit was imparted miraculously, and why?  
What shows Peter's understanding of the miracle on the occasion now before us?  
Why say "the water"?  
What are some of the lessons we learn from the conversion of Cornelius?  
What encouragement should people today receive from it?

## Lesson XII—June 17, 1962

## THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH

## Lesson Text

Acts 11: 19-30

19 They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Ste'-phen travelled as far as Phoe-ni'-ci-a, and Cy-prus, and An'-ti-och, speaking the word to none save only to Jews.

20 But there were some of them, men of Cy'-prus and Cy-re'-ne, who, when they were come to An'-ti-och, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Je'-sus.

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord.

22 And the report concerning them came to the ears of the church which was in Je-ru'-sa-lem: and they sent forth Bar'-na-bas as far as An'-ti-och:

23 Who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord:

24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and

much people was added unto the Lord.

25 And he went forth to Tar'-sus to seek for Saul;

26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto An'-ti-och. And it came to pass, that even for a whole year they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people; and that the disciples were called Chris'-tians first in An'-ti-och.

27 Now in these days there came down prophets from Je-ru'-sa-lem unto An'-ti-och.

28 And there stood up one of them named Ag'-a-bus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over all the world: which came to pass in the days of Clau'-di-us.

29 And the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwell in Ju-dae'-a:

30 Which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Bar'-na-bas and Saul.

**Golden Text.**—*"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."*  
(Acts 11: 26.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Isa. 12.

## Daily Bible Readings

June 11.	M. Gospel Preached in Antioch (Acts 11: 19-26)
June 12.	T. A Ministry in Antioch (Acts 11: 27-30)
June 13. W.....	Prophets and Teachers at Antioch (Acts 13: 1-3)
June 14. T.....	Beginning of Paul's First Missionary Tour (Acts 13: 1-14)
June 15. F.....	An Open Door (Acts 14: 23-26)
June 16. S.....	Paul, Minister of Christ (2 Cor. 11: 23-31)
June 17.	S. Gospel to Be Preached to Every Creature (Mark 16: 14-20)

**Time.**—A.D. 43.

**Place.**—Antioch in Syria.

**PERSONS.**—Some missionaries, Barnabas, Saul, Agabus, and the church in Antioch.

## Introduction

The establishment of the work in Antioch was the beginning of a new era in the progress of the church. Heretofore the great, center of the work had been in Jerusalem which, of course, was thoroughly Jewish. Wherever the gospel was preached during the first eight or ten years, the message was addressed to Jews

or to Jewish proselytes. The only recorded departure from this policy was in the case of the Samaritans; and this required apostolic approval, as was pointed out in the preceding lesson. While the Jews as such had no dealings with Samaritans (John 4: 9), the fact remains that there was a blood relationship between the two



ances, if it is true that the Samaritans were a mixed race, partly of Israelish descent. While Josephus (Ant. 11: 8, 6) and other Jews deny this relationship, it appears to be strongly implied from 2 Kings 17: 24ff.

But whatever may be the truth regarding the origin of the Samaritans, it is quite evident that their reception into the church (Acts 8: 14-17) did not meet with the type of opposition which characterized the reception of Cornelius and his household. (Acts 11: 1-18.) The entire history of the attitude of the Jews toward the Samaritans during the time of Christ and the apostles, as well as the closing part of the Old Testament period (cf. Ezra and Nehemiah), shows that the Jews regarded the Samaritans almost as idolaters, on account of their semi-

heathen (if not outright, in the opinion of the Jews) origin.

But with the origin of the church in Antioch, the emphasis began to shift from the Jewish aspect to the cosmopolitan character of the Lord's people. The great center of activity moved to Antioch; and while Jerusalem still remained the so-called capital of the Jewish Christians (cf. Acts 15), Antioch became the radiating point for missionary activities. It was from that city that Paul made his three great missionary journeys. It was from Antioch that Paul and Barnabas, and Titus, went to Jerusalem for the conference regarding the circumcision of Gentile Christians: and it was there that Paul resisted Peter to the face, for his conduct toward the Gentile brethren. (Acts 15; Gal. 2.)

### The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is a part of the main text, and it will be considered in its proper place.

### The Text Explained

#### The Beginning of the Work in Antioch

(Acts 11: 19-21)

*They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews.* Beginning with chapter 8, Luke traced the work of Philip in Samaria and the activities of Peter in Samaria, before he and John returned to Jerusalem. He then gave the account of the conversion of the arch-persecutor of the church, Saul of Tarsus, and his movements until he went to Tarsus. This was followed by a statement regarding the general condition of the church, after Saul's conversion, and of Peter's activities which finally led to the conversion of the first from among the Gentiles, and his return to Jerusalem where he explained it to the satisfaction of the brethren there. These facts should all be kept in mind, as we begin the study of this lesson.

In saying that "they therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen," Luke was beginning another thread

of his history at the same point from which he traced the events of 8: 1-11: 18. He simply went back to Jerusalem, as it were, and started in another direction, this time as far as Phenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. But the preaching which these missionaries did was to Jews only. It is fair to assume that the preaching alluded to by the general statement of the verse now under consideration was done during the same over-all period which was covered in the preceding chapters.

The term "tribulation" fittingly describes the terrible suffering which the disciples endured during the persecution which arose about Stephen. From the Latin *tribulum*, the word "tribulation" signifies a threshing instrument or roller with which the Roman farmer separated the grain from the husks. It is difficult for us to conceive of the torture which the early disciples had to suffer. The expression "scattered abroad" is the translation of a Greek verb which means to sow throughout, or figuratively, to distribute in foreign lands (Strong); and that, indeed, is what happened when the terrible persecution in Jerusalem took on momentum. "They therefore

that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word." (Acts 8: 4.)

**Phoenicia** was the narrow coastal strip, northwest of Galilee, in which were located the famous cities of Tyre and Sidon. **Cyprus** was a larger island in the northeastern part of the Mediterranean Sea, the home of Barnabas. (Acts 4: 36.) **Antioch** was less than twenty miles inland from the Mediterranean at the point where the Orontes River turns abruptly to the west, as it enters the fertile plain which separates the Lebanon from the Taurus Mountains. It was about three hundred miles north of Jerusalem. Antioch ranked next to Rome and Alexandria in size, wealth, power, and vice. Its seaport city was Seleucia, from which Paul and Barnabas sailed on their first missionary journey. The metropolitan population of Antioch was probably more than a half million people, among whom were many Jews. (Acts 6: 5.) Next to Jerusalem, it was closer to the apostolic church than any other city.

*But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.* Cyrene was in the northern part of Africa, and was the home of Simon who carried the cross of Jesus. (Mark 15: 21.) It is, of course, possible that he was one of the preachers mentioned in this lesson. Whether the "Greeks" of the passage now before us were Grecian Jews (*Hellenistas*), or Greeks (*Hellenas*) as opposed to Jews, is not clear. Westcott and Hort's Greek New Testament has *Hellenistas* (Grecian Jews), while Robertson and Vincent are inclined to *Hellenas* (Greeks as opposed to Jews). Vincent says that "the express object of the narrative has been to describe the admission of *Gentiles* into the church. There would have been nothing remarkable in these men preaching to Hellenists who had long before been received into the church, and formed a large part of the church at Jerusalem."

There is a contrast between the preaching done in verses 19 and 20, and since there was no contrast between "Jews" and "Grecian Jews," so far as the church was concerned, it is very likely that the preaching

in verse 20 was done to Greeks as opposed to Jews. McGarvey points out that it appears that the men who came to Antioch reached there after the preaching was done which was to Jews only. He continues, "It is clearly implied that something had taken place in the interval to cause this change; and as the last preceding series of events mentioned by Luke is connected with the baptism of Gentiles by Peter, he seems to have desired his readers to infer that this latter event preceded the preaching to Greeks in Antioch. This probability is reduced almost to a certainty when we look at the chronology of these events." McGarvey then goes on to show that it is practically certain that Cornelius and those with him were baptized before the preaching was done to the Greeks in Antioch.

*And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord.* This shows that not only did the Lord protect and aid (Thayer; cf. Matt. 28: 20) these men in their work, but that he approved their preaching to the Greeks. It should be observed that "believers" turned unto the Lord. This clearly shows that one is not saved by faith only. It was necessary for them to turn unto the Lord after they became believers, that is, they had to obey that which the Lord commanded in order to become his children. (Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 18: 8.)

### Some Outstanding Achievements

(Acts 11: 22-26)

*And the report concerning them came to the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas as far as Antioch: who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord: for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.* Jerusalem was the headquarters of the apostles, and it was still the base of operations. Either the apostles themselves, or some others whom they had designated, kept in close touch with the preaching of the gospel wherever and by whomsoever it was done.

The fact that Barnabas, rather than Peter or one of the other apostles, was sent to investigate conditions in Antioch, was probably due to the fact that Peter had already explained the reception of the Gentiles (Cornelius and those with him) to the Jerusalem brethren. And, too, as Conybeare and Howson suggest, "The Jewish Christians in Antioch might be perplexed how to deal with their new Gentile converts; and it is not unnatural to suppose that the presence of Barnabas might be anxiously desired by the fellow-missionaries of his native island." Antioch, as one can see from the map, was not far from Cyprus, and Barnabas may have had a previous acquaintance with the conditions in the city, which made him a natural choice for the task in hand. At any rate, he was selected for the work and sent by the Jerusalem brethren to the scene.

"The grace of God" which Barnabas saw was the result of preaching the gospel to the Greeks in Antioch. This caused Barnabas to rejoice; and bringing into use the exceptional powers for which he was noted (Acts 4: 36), he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. In other words, he urged them to have a goal before them as an object of attainment. It often happens that the glow of one's first enthusiasm passes away, following a revival; but if a definite aim is before those who have given themselves to the Lord, it is much easier to make a success of the holy calling. Rev. 2: 4; Phil. 3: 12-14.)

Barnabas is specifically called a "good man," which is more than simply uprightness of character. Compare Rom. 5: 7 for the difference between a "righteous" man and a "good" man. This is one of the few times a writer of the New Testament pays such a tribute to another person. But the fact that someone is called a *good man* is not too impressive to the average person today. It appears that we are more interested in men of genius and courage, bad men, poor men, rich men, etc., without any special reference to their moral character, except, of course, in the case of bad men. This is due to the fact that the expression "good," when applied to people, has lost

much of its true significance. Most any negative person who doesn't engage in the common vices of the day is often called a good person. But that is not the sense in which Luke used the term with reference to Barnabas. Goodness is listed by Paul as a fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5: 22.) Barnabas was deeply spiritual (full of the Holy Spirit, Eph. 5: 18), and was characterized by an abiding faith. He had faith in God and his fellow men. (Acts 9: 26, 27; 15: 36-40.) It is not surprising therefore to read that many people were added to the Lord, as a result of the labors of Barnabas in Antioch.

*And he went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that even for a whole year they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people; and that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.* As has already been pointed out, Tarsus was the home of Saul (Acts 22: 3), and we learn from Acts 9: 30 that the Jerusalem brethren had sent him to Tarsus, when it was known that a threat was being made against his life by some Grecian Jews. Barnabas knew of the character and ability of Saul, and he felt that he was needed in the work in Antioch. The word for "seek" occurs in only one other connection in the New Testament, (Luke 2: 44, 45); and it means, according to Robertson, to seek up and down, back and forth to hunt up, to make a thorough search till success comes. It is evident from Gal. 1: 21 that Saul had not been idle since going to Tarsus.

There is a possibility that Barnabas knew that Paul had been called of the Lord for work among the Gentiles (Acts 9: 15), and realizing his own limitations in the face of the magnitude of the work to be done in Antioch, he resolved to find him and bring him there as soon as possible. And, as Robertson observes, the hour and the man met when Barnabas brought Saul to Antioch. From this time and onward, Saul's principal work was among the Gentiles. The "meeting" referred to by Luke—"even for a whole year"—was one of the longest ones in history. This probably throws some light on the question of the remarkable

growth and influence of the church in Antioch.

The question as to the origin of the name *Christian* has long been in dispute. The name itself occurs only three times in the entire New Testament—Acts 26: 28; 1 Pet. 4: 16, in the singular; Acts 11: 26, plural. It is clearly evident that the disciples themselves did not originate the name. They called themselves saints, believers, disciples, brethren, etc. It is equally evident from Acts 24: 5 that the Jews did not bestow the name upon the Lord's people. There are some who are of the opinion that the name was given in derision by their enemies; but there is no basis in fact for this view. Meyer says "There is nothing to support the view that the name was at first a title of ridicule."

Jehovah, some seven hundred years before the coming of Christ, promised that his people would be called by a new name, when the Gentiles should see his righteousness. "And the nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah shall name." (Isa. 62: 2.) It may well be that the calling of the disciples in Antioch *Christians* was the fulfillment of that prediction. In fact, it appears all but certain that Jehovah did give the name, when we look at the original.

The Greek word for "were called" is *chrematizo*, which is derived from the noun *chrematismos*. The latter term is found only one time in the New Testament—Rom. 11: 4, and means, according to Thayer, Arndt-Gingrich and others, a *divine* statement or response. The verb which occurs in Acts 11: 26 is also found in the following passages: Matt. 2: 12, 22 (warned); Luke 2: 26 (revealed); Acts 10: 22 (warned); Rom. 7: 3 (shall be called); Heb. 8: 5; 11: 7; 12: 25 (warned). If any one will read all of these passages, he can easily see that the subject of the verb in each instance is a divine being or agency; and there is no reason for thinking that it is any different in Acts 11: 26, especially in view of the meaning of the noun form and Isaiah's prophecy. The following summary therefore seems fully justified: 1. God promised that

a new name would be given, *when* the Gentiles saw his righteousness. 2. The name "Christian" is the only new name that was given when the Gentiles came into the church. 3. Antioch was an appropriate place for the name to be given, since it was the first to have a great church composed of both Jews and Greeks. 4. The original word for "called" implies a divine source or agency.

### Relief for the Needy Provided

(Acts 11: 27-30)

*Now in these days there came down prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius. And the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judaea: which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.*

While this is the first time the gift of prophecy is mentioned among the disciples of Christ, the manner in which Luke introduces it shows that the practice was both familiar and well-established. New Testament prophets played an important part in the early work of the church. The term "prophet" is a compound word—*pro*, before, and *phemi*, to speak. A prophet therefore was primarily one who spoke before another that is, standing before another, and thus forming a medium between him and the hearer. The term came to mean *instead of* or *for*. God's prophets spoke for him, both foretelling the future and making known present truth.

The predicted famine affected the people in Antioch, as well as those in Judaea, for it was world-wide; but the brethren in Antioch determined to help those who may have been less fortunate than they. *Claudius* was the fourth Roman Emperor (A.D. 41-54). He succeeded Caligula, and was followed by Nero. Smith's Bible Dictionary notes that "an opportunity soon occurred, of which Barnabas and Saul joyfully availed themselves, for proving the affections of these new disciples toward their brethren at Jerusalem, and for knitting the two communities

together in the bonds of practical fellowship." (Gal. 2: 9, 10.) There is no more reason for saying that the disciples in Antioch acted in-

dividually ("every man according to his ability"), than that the Corinthian and Galatian brethren did. (1 Cor. 16: 1, 2; 2 Cor. 9: 7.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is our subject for today?  
Repeat the golden text.  
Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Give something of the significance of the establishing of the work in Antioch.  
What relation did the preaching to the Samaritans have to this work?  
What emphasis was placed upon Antioch?

### The Beginning of the Work in Antioch

What was the plan of Luke's history of the early church?  
Trace his first series of events, following the dispersion.  
Where did he begin the second series?  
What was the relative time between the two series?  
What is the meaning and significance of the term "tribulation"?  
From what places did the missionaries of our lesson come?  
Give some of the principal facts regarding Antioch.  
Who were the "Greeks" to whom the preaching was done in Antioch? Give reasons for your answer.  
What shows that the Lord approved of their work?  
In what sense did "believers" turn unto the Lord?  
What important lesson is taught here?  
In what sense is the word "believed" used?

What is the Lord's plan of salvation for alien sinners?

### Some Outstanding Achievements

Why send Barnabas to Antioch?  
By whose authority was this done?  
Why not send an apostle?  
What was the "grace of God" which Barnabas saw?  
What exhortation did he give and why?  
Why is a goal in the Christian life so essential?  
What great compliment did Luke give Barnabas?  
What is the meaning of a "good" man?  
What results followed the work of Barnabas in Antioch?  
Why did he go to Tarsus to seek for Saul?  
What was the real significance of bringing Saul to Antioch?  
What does the Bible teach regarding the origin of the name "Christian"?  
What promise did the Lord make regarding a new name?  
What is the meaning and significance of the word for "were called"?  
Give a summary of the facts regarding the giving of the new name.

### Relief for the Needy Provided

What is the meaning of a "prophet"?  
What shows the true spirit of the brethren in Antioch?  
What lesson should we learn from their example?

## Lesson XIII—June 24, 1962

# PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

## Lesson Text

Acts 13: 1-12

1 Now there were at An'-ti-och, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers, Bar'-na-bas, and Sym'-e-on that was called Ni'-ger, and Lu'-cius of Cy-re'-ne, and Man'-a-en the foster-brother of Her'-od the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Bar'-na-bas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Se-leu'-ci-a; and from thence they sailed to Cy-prus.

5 And when they were at Sal'-amis, they proclaimed the word of God

in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John as their attendant.

6 And when they had gone through the whole island unto Pa'-phos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar'-je'-sus;

7 Who was with the proconsul, Ser'-gi-us Pau'-lus, a man of under standing. The same called unto him Bar'-na-bas and Saul, and sought to hear the word of God.

8 But El'-y-mas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn aside the proconsul from the faith.

9 But Saul, who is also *called* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fastened his eyes on him,

10 And said, O full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the devil, thou

enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell

on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And the word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region"* (Acts 13: 49.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 55: 1-7.

## Daily Bible Readings

June 18. M.....	Gospel for All (Col. 1: 19-23)
June 19. T.....	A Divine Command (Matt. 28: 18-20)
June 20. W.....	Field Is the World (Acts 1: 6-8)
June 21. T.....	No Distinctions in Christ (Gal. 3: 26-29)
June 22.....	F. Beginning of Paul's Journey (Acts 13: 1-3)
June 23. S.....	Events Occurring on the Tour (Acts 13: 4-14)
June 24. S.....	Paul and Barnabas in Iconium (Acts 14: 1-5)

TIME.—A.D. 47-49.

PLACES.—Antioch, Seleucia, and Cyprus.

PERSONS.—Barnabas, Saul, other teachers and prophets, Sergius Paulus, and Bar-Jesus.

## Introduction

It has been pointed out before that Christianity, at the time of Paul's conversion, was limited almost entirely to the Jewish race; but when the time came for him to go to be with Jesus it was a world-religion. There were others who helped to carry the gospel to the Gentile nations, but their work is almost lost sight of in the brighter glory of Paul's achievements. He was one of the greatest, if not indeed the greatest missionary who ever devoted his all to the cause of Christ; for it was through his powerful leadership that the early Christian movement developed into an international brotherhood.

There were two major factors which contributed to the great success which attended Paul's labors, namely, the universal message which he had to proclaim (Mark 16: 15; Rom. 1: 16), and the breadth and strength of personality with which he interpreted that message. He saw and served the needs of the Gentile mission more than any other man, so much so that he was known as the "apostle of Gentiles." (Rom. 11: 13; Gal. 2: 8.) It was primarily through his efforts that the gospel was carried to Cyprus, Galatia, Macedonia, Greece, Asia, and many other important centers of the Roman world. He was eloquent in his

preaching, heroic in facing dangers, strong in his faith, and he finally sealed his teaching with his own blood.

Always a student but never a recluse, he shared to the full the common life of the non-exclusive early church. He did not "dwell apart," but he was always conscious that his innermost life was "hid with Christ in God." And not only did his life move with the church's life, but it was also brought into close touch with almost every possible human experience, except that of the purely domestic, to a degree rarely equalled by any other man. Who else but a man with the spirit of Paul could say, "For though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some." (1 Cor. 9: 19-22.)

## The Golden Text

*"And the word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region."* This was typical of the efforts of Paul in practically every effort where he went. The reference in this text was to the region round about Antioch in Pisidia, which will be covered in our next lesson. The immediate occasion for the great success in spreading the gospel to all sections of the country was the opposition which the Jews registered to the preaching of Paul and Barnabas when they saw the favorable reaction of the multitudes who heard them. The occasion involved the same principle which resulted in the spread of the gospel during the dispersion, following the death of Stephen.

Something of the secret of Paul's great missionary enthusiasm may be learned from such passages as the following: "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel. For if I do this of mine own will, I have a reward: but if not of mine own will, I have a stewardship intrusted to me." (1 Cor. 9: 16, 17.) "I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, as much as

in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome." (Rom. 1: 14, 15.) An honest and dedicated man will make an effort to discharge his obligations; and since Paul felt himself a debtor to all men, he could do nothing short of making every effort possible to see that all men heard the gospel.

Paul's life was spent in endeavoring to discharge a debt so overwhelming and imperative that he could never hope to complete it. He was always conscious that the Lord himself had called him to this task, and this explains the tireless energy, the unbounded devotion, and the unquenchable ardor which drove him from one city to another, and from this country to that, as he sought to preach to all men the unsearchable riches of Christ. This is not only the key to Paul's immense accomplishments, it is also the master-motive of his and all true missionary efforts in every age and land. This is what the apostle meant when he said, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, *if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 3: 12; cf. Acts 26: 15-20.)

## The Text Explained

### The Missionaries Set Apart

(Acts 13: 1-3)

*Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers, Barnabas, and Symeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.* "The second part of the Acts of the Apostles is generally reckoned to begin with the thirteenth chapter. At this point St. Paul begins to appear as the principal character; and the narrative gradually widening and expanding with his travels, seems intended to describe to us, in minute detail, the communication of the gospel to the Gentiles. The thirteenth and fourteenth chapters embrace a definite and separate subject: and this subject is the first journey of the first Christian missionaries to the heathen." (Conybeare and Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul.*)

Antioch, as indicated in our last lesson, had now supplanted Jerusalem as the principal center of Christian activity. The church in the Syrian city had, within a relatively short time, grown into the first great cosmopolitan body of believers, and at the time of our lesson it was well supplied with gifted teachers and leaders. They are called "prophets and teachers" in the text. It has previously been pointed out that a "prophet" was one who spoke for God, and that means that he spoke by inspiration. This was not always true of "teachers." All prophets were teachers, but not all teachers were prophets. Conybeare and Howson note that "it is sufficient to remark that the 'prophecy' of the New Testament does not necessarily imply a knowledge of things to come, but rather a gift of exhorting with a peculiar force of inspiration."

*Barnabas* is already well known

to those who are familiar with the Book of Acts. *Symeon that was called Niger* may have been the Simon who bore the cross of Jesus. Symeon is the same as Simon. (Acts 15: 6-11, 13, 14.) "Niger" means *dark or black*, and probably referred to the complexion of Symeon. *Lucius* is a form of "Luke," but there is no indication that he was Luke the physician, the author of the Book of Acts. Lucius may have been one of the missionaries mentioned in Acts 11: 20. *Manaen's* mother probably nourished both him and Herod Antipas, and he is for that reason called his foster-brother. If they were not both nourished by Manaen's mother, then they were evidently intimate friends. The Herod mentioned here is the one who killed John the Baptist, and McGarvey suggests that Luke may have learned some of the facts regarding him from Manaen. *Saul*, of course, was Saul of Tarsus, who later became known as Paul. The sentence structure in the original has caused Ramsay, Robertson, and others to think that the five men who are named here were divided into two groups: the first three being *prophets*, and the last two, *teachers*.

*And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.* The original word for "ministered" indicated the type of work which was performed by the priests under the law of Moses. (Luke 1: 23.) The obvious meaning of the word here was the work which they performed as prophets and teachers in the worship and service of the church. There are no set times for fasting in the New Testament, but the following passages clearly indicate that the practice has a place in the lives of Christians. (Matt. 6: 16-18; 9: 14, 15.) The *Personality of the Holy Spirit* is clearly implied in verse 2, but there is no indication as to the specific time of the call. Saul, of course, was called by Jesus when he appeared to him on the Damascus road; but the call in the lesson now before us was probably to a more specific one.

The "fasts" in verses 2 and 3 were

not the same, as Hackett points out and which may be seen by reading the two statements. The first was in the usual procedure of their work and worship, while the last was a special fast in connection with the setting apart of Barnabas and Saul for the work to which the Spirit had called them. In speaking of the laying on of hands, Hackett says, "The act was a representative one, and though performed by a part involves the idea of a general participation." This means that Symeon, Lucius, and Manaen laid their hand on Barnabas and Saul on behalf of the whole church. Compare Acts 15: 40, where Paul and Silas were "commended by the brethren," that is, by the church. Prayer, fasting, and the laying on of hands was the ceremony which was employed in "separating" men for special service. (Acts 6: 6; 14: 23; 1 Tim. 4: 14.) Nothing is said as to whether or not any definite instruction was given regarding the course of the journey Barnabas and Saul were to take.

### The Tour through Cyprus

(Acts 13: 4-8)

*So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John as their attendant.* The Holy Spirit, rather than the church, is referred to as the source of authority for this missionary effort. His direction, however, was probably given through one or more of the prophets. Seleucia was the seaport city of Antioch, and was located about sixteen miles west of Antioch, and about five miles north of the mouth of the Orontes River. Seleucia was built on level ground at the foot of Mount Pieria, and was said to have been one of the most important commercial harbors in the eastern Mediterranean during New Testament times.

Cyprus is a large island in the eastern part of the Mediterranean, sixty miles from the Syrian coast and forty-five from that of Asia Minor. The fact that Cyprus was the native home of Barnabas, together with the large Jewish population which it had (cf. synagogues—plural—in Salamis), may have been a de-



ciding factor in its selection as the beginning point of this first missionary journey. Salamis was on the southeast coast of the island. Nothing is said regarding the success of their labors there. John's surname was Mark, and his home was in Jerusalem. When Barnabas and Saul returned from that city to Antioch, following the completion of their benevolent mission, they took John with them. (Acts 12: 12, 25.) Nothing is said about Mark's being set apart for the mission work, and it may be that he either volunteered to go as assistant, or was asked to do so by Barnabas and Saul. Mark was a relative of Barnabas. (Col. 4: 10.)

*And when they had gone through the whole island unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus; who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding. The same called unto him Barnabas and Saul, and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn aside the proconsul from the faith.*

Paphos was on the southwestern tip of the island of Cyprus. Nothing is said about whether or not the missionaries preached in that city, but we do have the interesting account of the incident regarding the false prophet and the proconsul. The marginal reading for "sorcerer" is *magus*, as in Matt. 2: 1, 7, 16 (Wisemen), but "Bar-Jesus" (the son of Jesus or Joshua) was branded by Luke as a false prophet, literally a *pseudo-prophet*, such as are described in Matt. 7: 15; 24: 11, 24; 2 Pet. 2: 1; 1 John 4: 1; cf. Acts 8: 9-11. Robertson says that "these Jewish mountebanks were numerous and had great influence with the uneducated. In Acts 19: 13 the seven sons of Sceva, Jewish exorcists, tried to imitate Paul. If one is surprised that a man like Sergius Paulus should fall under the influence of this fraud, he should recall what Juvenal says of the Emperor Tiberius 'sitting on the rock of Capri with his flock of Chaldeans around him.'" Ramsey does not think that Sergius Paulus was dominated by the false prophet.

The efforts of Elymas to withstand Barnabas and Saul, and to keep the

proconsul from learning the truth, reminds us of the conduct of the sorcerers (magicians) of Egypt who endeavored to keep Pharaoh from listening to Jehovah's message to him through Moses and Aaron. (Ex. 7: 8-13; 2 Tim. 3: 8.) Their modern counterparts (principally denominational preachers) are continuing the work today. The New Testament is very clear regarding the plan of salvation for alien sinners (Matt. 28: 19; Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 37, 38), but these men and their co-workers continue to do everything within their power to persuade people that water baptism is not a condition of pardon for alien sins. (Gal. 1: 6-9.)

### **"Saul, Otherwise Paul"** (Acts 13: 9-12)

*But Saul, who is also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fastened his eyes on him, and said, O full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.*

"Saul, otherwise Paul" is Ramsay's translation of "Saul, who is also called Paul." And he explains the custom of a person's having two names in a very interesting manner. According to Dr. Ramsay, the custom originated, or at least came into general use, about the time that Greece spread her culture over the world which Alexander the Great had conquered. "Then it was the fashion for every Syrian, or Cilician, or Cappadocian, who prided himself on his Greek education and his knowledge of the Greek language, to bear a Greek name; but at the same time he had his other name in the native language, by which he was known among his countrymen in general. His two names were the alternative, not the complement, of each other; and the situation and surroundings of the moment, the *role* which he was playing for the time being, deter-

mined which name he was called by. In a Greek house he played the Greek, and bore the Greek name: in a company of natives, he was the native, and bore the native name. He did not require both to complete his legal designation, as a Roman required both nomen and *praenomen*. His Greek name, taken alone, was full legal designation in a Greek court."

The history of Saul's work in the church up to this point had been almost entirely confined to Jewish surroundings, that is, so far as the record is concerned; and he had been from the first subordinate to Barnabas, who may have been some older than he. Barnabas had introduced him to the apostles in Jerusalem, when the disciples were afraid of him, and it was Barnabas who had brought him to Antioch. In short, wherever the two are mentioned together up to this point, it is Barnabas and Saul. But after this it is Paul and Barnabas, except in purely Jewish situations. (Acts 15: 12, 25.) But as the missionaries were about to go forth into other territories and preach to the Gentiles, Saul, who was probably better educated for that task, takes the lead. The incident involving Sergius Paulus was therefore the first time that Saul's Greek name is brought before Luke's readers. His Hebrew name had always been used up to this time.

In discussing the episode at Lystra, where Barnabas was called the

chief god, Ramsay notes that same qualities which mark out Paul to us as the leader, mark him out to the people of Lycaonia as the agent and subordinate. He continues, "The Western mind regards the leader as the active and energetic partner; but the Oriental mind considers the leader to be the person who sits still and does nothing, while his subordinates speak and work for him. Hence in the truly Oriental religions the chief god sits apart from the world, communicating with it through his messenger and subordinate. The more statuesque figure of Barnabas was therefore taken by the Orientals as the chief god, and the active orator, Paul, as his messenger, communicating his wishes to men." (Matt. 20: 24-28.)

The text now before us records the first instance of a direct appeal to the Graeco-Roman world, and Paul emerges as the dominant figure in the new undertaking. This probably accounts for the miraculous power which he, rather than Barnabas, was permitted to exercise. This was indeed a far-reaching conception in Luke's mind of historical development! There is no indication in the text as to whether or not the proconsul translated his faith into action, and it would be useless for us to speculate regarding the question. Luke's obvious purpose was to record the momentous step which was being taken in preaching the gospel to the Gentile world.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

Give some idea of the magnitude of Paul's work as a missionary.

What two major factors contributed to his great success?

Where was most of his preaching done?

What were some of the personal characteristics which he manifested?

What principle did he follow in trying to reach others?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?

What reason is given for the wide-spread success of the gospel message?

What was the secret of Paul's missionary enthusiasm?

What was the master-motive behind all the efforts he put forth?

### The Missionaries Set Apart

Discuss briefly the two major parts into which Luke divided his history known as Acts.

What can you say of the activity of the church in Antioch at the time of this lesson?

Who were "prophets and teachers," that is, what did they do?

Who were the five men listed?

In what did they "minister"?

What is the place of fasting in the Christian life?

In what sense is the Holy Spirit represented in this lesson?

In what way were Barnabas and Saul separated to the work to which they had been called?

What was the purpose of the laying on of hands?

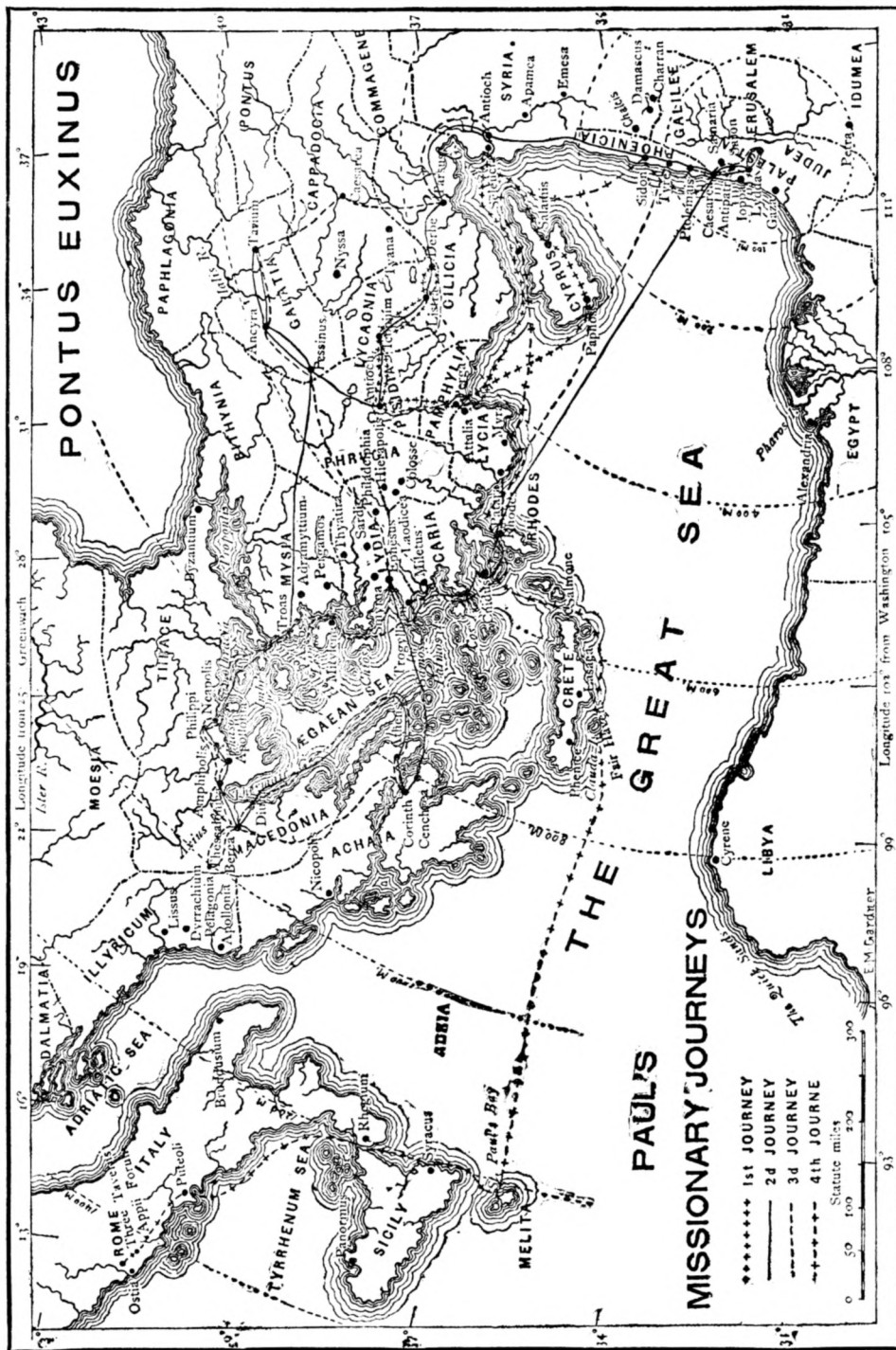
### The Tour through Cyprus

What and where was Seleucia?

Where was Cyprus and why go there first?

Where was the first preaching done?  
 Who was John and why was he with  
 Barnabas and Saul?  
 What unusual situation did they encounter  
 in Paphos?  
 What is the meaning of the term "sor-  
 cerer"?  
 In what way did Luke describe him?  
 Why would Elymas want to keep the pro-  
 consul from hearing the truth?  
 What other instances of such action do  
 we have in the Bible?  
 In what way is their work continued to-  
 day?  
 "Saul, Otherwise Paul"  
 Why was Saul called Paul?  
 Why not call him "Paul" before the time  
 of this lesson?

What had been his relation to Barnabas  
 before the time now under considera-  
 tion?  
 Under how many circumstances was he  
 called "Saul" after the time of this les-  
 son?  
 Was he ever listed after Barnabas again?  
 Give reasons for your answer.  
 Why was Barnabas referred to as the chief  
 god by the Lycaonians?  
 What lesson did Jesus teach regarding  
 true greatness?  
 What was the probable reason for Paul,  
 rather than Barnabas, exercising mirac-  
 ulous power?  
 What was Luke's obvious purpose in re-  
 cording the facts regarding the episode  
 in Paphos?



## THIRD QUARTER

### ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH AND ITS EARLY HISTORY

(Second Half of Six Months' Course)

*AIM.—To observe the spread of Christianity in the apostolic age, and to learn lessons of truth which will enable us to evangelize the world in our time.*

Lesson I—July 1, 1962

### DIFFICULTIES AT ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA

#### Lesson Text

Acts 13: 13-15, 42-52

13 Now Paul and his company set sail from Pa'-ph6s, and came to Per'-ga in Pam-phyl'-i-a: and John departed from them and returned to Je-ru'-sa-lem.

14 But they, passing through from Per'-ga, came to An'-ti-och of Pi-sid'-i-a; and they went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

42 And as they went out, they besought that these words might be spoken to them the next sabbath.

43 Now when the synagogue broke up, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Bar'-na-bas; who, speaking to them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.

44 And the next sabbath almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed.

46 And Paul and Bar'-na-bas spake out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gen'-tiles.

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*,

I have set thee for a light of the Gen'-tiles,

That thou shouldst be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth.

48 And as the Gen'-tiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews urged on the devout women of honorable estate, and the chief men of the city, and stirred up a persecution against Paul and Bar'-na-bas, and cast them out of their borders.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto I-co'-ni-um.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"* (2 Tim. 3: 12.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 9: 1-7.

#### Daily Bible Readings

June 25. M.....	Preaching to the Jews (Acts 13: 26-33)
June 26. T.....	Preaching to Gentiles (Acts 13: 44-52)
June 27. W.....	Work in Iconium (Acts 14: 1-5)
June 28. T.....	Activities in Lystra and Derbe (Acts 14: 5-17)
June 29. F.....	Opposition from Jews (Acts 14: 19-21)

June 30. S.....Strengthening the Disciples (Acts 14: 21-25)  
 July 1. S.....Return to Antioch in Syria (Acts 14: 26-28)

**Time.**—A.D. 47.

**PLACES.**—Paphos, Perga in Pamphylia, and Antioch of Pisidia.

**Persons.**—Paul, Barnabas, John, and the people of Pisidia.

## Introduction

After the incident in Paphos, involving the proconsul, the false prophet, and the change in the name by which Saul was to be known in the future, the missionaries left that city to enter new fields. The journey which they were then making proved to be one of the most significant missionary endeavors ever undertaken by any one. It was the first major effort to carry the gospel directly to the Gentile world, notwithstanding the fact that they still tried to preach to the Jews first, which, of course, was God's plan. But it was at the time of this lesson, as we shall see later, that Paul told the Jews that they were turning to the Gentiles.

We also learn from this lesson that, although Paul and Barnabas were actuated by the highest of motives, their work was not without many hindrances. This was demonstrated, first, by the opposition which was furnished by Elymas the sorcerer in Paphos. The proconsul had even sent for the missionaries, and apparently wanted to know the truth about their teaching, when the false prophet, a fellow Jew, undertook "to turn aside the proconsul from the faith." But all of the hindrances did

not come from the opposition. They had not gone very far before John decided to leave them, and return to his home in Jerusalem. And, furthermore, John's action was to furnish the occasion, at a later date, for the separation of the two missionaries themselves, as we shall see in a future lesson.

This lesson also introduces us to a set of circumstances which eventually involved Paul in one of the great controversies of his life—the one with the churches in Galatia. It was on this very missionary journey that Paul and Barnabas established the churches in Galatia, beginning in Antioch of Pisidia according to some scholars.

The later defection of the churches in Galatia called forth Paul famous letter to them, which was followed a few months later by his letter to the Romans on the same over-all subject, namely, the emancipation of the gospel from Jewish legalism. This first journey by Paul and Barnabas was indeed a momentous undertaking, and it is important that we consider well the facts which have been recorded regarding it; for they are necessary to the understanding of many things which will occur in future studies.

## The Golden Text

*"Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"* This statement is taken from Paul's final letter to his son in the gospel, which also proved to be the last letter which he ever wrote, so far as is known. The apostle was in his final Roman prison at the time he wrote to Timothy, and his message contained the last advice of a father to his beloved son in the faith, who was probably still in far away Ephesus. Paul urged in this letter that Timothy come to him, but he also wrote regarding other matters, in case the younger man did not reach Rome in time. In commenting on the letter as a whole, Cony-

beare and Howson observe that "no summary of its contents can give any notion of the pathetic tenderness and deep solemnity of this epistle."

It is thought by some that Timothy was naturally timid; and if so, we can imagine something of the feelings which surged in Paul's breast as he contemplated the hardships which his son would have to endure without the encouragement of his father, as he opposed the heresies which threatened to destroy the very essence of Christianity. The magnitude of the situation therefore was such as to cause the apostle to take his mind, for the time being, off of

his own approaching death, which after all was a blessing (cf. Phil. 1: 23; 2 Tim. 4: 6-8), and to warn Timothy of what was before him and encourage him to rely upon the word of God for all his needs.

We, of course, are not persecuted as the people in the early days of the church were, but that is not necessarily to our advantage. If we were as faithful to the Lord as we should be, and kept ourselves separated from the world and all religious error as the Lord expects us to do, we would feel more of the opposi-

tion from the evil one. Cf. John 15: 19. This does not mean, of course, that all worldly people, or even all wicked people, will oppose and persecute true Christians (cf.

2 Cor. 4: 2; 1 Pet. 2: 11, 12); but it does mean that the closer one walks with the Lord, and the more he does in his service, the greater will be the opposition which he will receive from some quarters. The golden text is a statement of fact, which an inspired apostle knew to be true.

## The Text Explained

### From Paphos to Antioch of Pisidia

(Acts 13: 13-15)

*Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem.* Nothing is said about the length of time which the missionaries spent in Paphos, nor anything definite as to the results which followed their labors there. It is fair to assume, as has already been indicated, that the work in Cyprus was undertaken at the suggestion of Barnabas; but now that it was accomplished, Paul no doubt takes the lead in suggesting that they go next to the mainland, to a section adjacent to his home district of Cilicia. It is fair to assume from Gal. 1: 21 that Paul had already evangelized Cilicia. When the missionaries left Antioch in Syria, it was Barnabas and Saul; but when they were ready to leave Cyprus, it was Paul and his company. It was about one-hundred and eighty miles from Paphos to Perga in Pamphylia.

Luke gives no hint as to the reason which prompted John Mark to leave the company of Paul and Barnabas, and return to his home in Jerusalem. Ramsay thinks that the change in the missionaries' plans, that is, not to preach in Perga but to go on to Antioch in Pisidia, caused John to abandon the expedition. Conybeare and Howson are of the opinion that he was drawn from the work of God by the attraction of an earthly home. Matthew Henry says that he either did not like the work, or he wanted to go and see his mother. Rand-McNally Bible Atlas

puts the matter this way. The narrator notes that John (Mark) quit the party to return to Jerusalem; and no wonder, the thought of climbing those Asia Minor mountains to get into the interior could make even a stout heart quail. But whatever the reason for his departure, it did not please Paul; but it is good to know that the two were completely reconciled before the end for either one of them came. Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 11.

Paul and Barnabas probably intended to preach the gospel in Pamphylia, beginning in Perga, but something caused them to change their plans. It is a noticeable fact, as Ramsay so often points out, that Luke seldom stops to explain the reason for the action which prompts the movements of the men about whom he writes, but Dr. Ramsay himself explains the change in the plans of the missionaries on the theory that Paul probably contracted malaria in the lowlands of the coastal region of Pamphylia, and decided to seek relief in the highlands of South Galatia. This conclusion is based on Paul's statement to the Galatians as to why he first preached the gospel to them. See Gal. 4: 12-14; cf. 2 Cor. 12: 7f. If Paul was thus stricken, it is easy to understand why they sought the mountainous regions; for the best possible antidote for a malarial attack would be the mountain air.

*But they, passing through from Perga, came to Antioch of Pisidia; and they went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Brethren, if*

*ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.* The first stop which Paul and Barnabas made in the Galatian highlands was in a city of Pisidia called Antioch, about one-hundred miles almost due north of Perga, which had an elevation of some 3,600 feet above sea level. And like other centers of Paul's activities, Antioch of Pisidia was a favored place. The emperor Augustus had made it a Roman colony, and that meant that its citizens enjoyed certain special rights, such as personal freedom and immunity from certain taxes. From its elevated location, the city overlooked the far-reaching plain to the southeast, where the great Roman highway which crossed the highlands of Asia Minor swung to the north to get around the large lakes on its way to the Greek cities on the Aegean Sea. Antioch was only a few miles from these mountain lakes, high in the Taurus range; and it was one of the thriving cities of the uplands of South Galatia.

The sabbath day found the missionaries in the Jewish synagogue, and they must have made a favorable impression on the rulers there; for they were invited to speak to the congregation that day. "And Paul stood up, and beckoning with the hand said," and then delivered his first record sermon, that is, his first recorded sermon which is found in the New Testament. Those who are acquainted with the life of Jesus are aware of the fact that he generally "sat" while speaking to the people, which apparently was the custom with Jewish teachers; but Paul who enjoyed Greek culture usually "stood" when he spoke to an audience. It must have been a wonderful experience to hear Paul preach! It will be helpful to all of us, if his sermon is read at this point—verses 16-41.

### **"When the Synagogue Broke Up"**

(Acts 13: 42, 43)

*Arid as they went out, they besought that these words might be spoken to them the next sabbath. Now when the synagogue broke up, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.* The remark about the breaking up of

the synagogue is significant; and in order to appreciate it we should try to visualize that which usually happens when one of our meetings is over. Ordinarily we begin to talk about other things, usually of a worldly nature, perhaps compliment the sermon or maybe criticize it to others, and then hurry away to a big dinner. But how different it was on the occasion we are now considering! Many of the worshippers followed Paul and Barnabas in their eager desire for more light on the great questions which had been discussed.

The attitude which the people manifested was remarkable, in view of the fact that the sermon which Paul had just delivered was full of condemnation for the action of the Jews, full of controversial arguments which collided with their habitual way of thinking, and full of warning. To use a modern-day expression, they had received a crack on the head; but instead of manifesting a feeling of anger and resentment, many of them eagerly followed Paul and Barnabas and sought after more information. (Cf. Acts 24: 25; Gal. 4: 14, 15.) Some of these very people were probably among those to whom Paul later wrote the letter to the Galatians. And to use another present-day expression, many of our people today just cannot take that which those people took. Instead, irate hearers whose pet prejudices have been jostled cry out, "This man is dangerous; he ought to be silenced."

What should happen after a gospel sermon has been preached? This should be a direct challenge to both preacher and hearer. A few questions may help us here. Every gospel preacher should ask himself whether or not he has a right to expect any response to his sermon. (1) Did he present definite truth? or was he just talking in generalities? (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 1-4.) (2) Does the hearer have an open mind and is he sincerely and eagerly seeking after the truth? (Cf. Acts 17: 11, 12.) It frequently happens that some hearers face the preacher, and in their self-confidence practically challenge him to interest them. Such an attitude frustrates even the grace of God.



### Ordained to Eternal Life

(Acts 13: 44-52)

*And the next sabbath almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed.*

Although the text does not say so, but it is implied that Paul preached another sermon the next sabbath; and these verses give the general attitude of those who were present. Those who were willing to hear manifested an attitude of interest; but the Jewish leaders began an open attack on the gospel which Paul presented. But God is not mocked; and he never gets in a blind alley. (Cf. Gal. 6: 7a; Isa. 55: 10, 11.) When the obvious and traditional instruments of his purposes reach the point where they no longer function according to his will, he has other plans which he can and does use. This is one of the most important and sobering lessons in history; and it ought to be an eternal warning to every individual, group, or institution which considers itself an agent or instrument of God's will.

*And Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying,*

*I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles,*

*That thou shouldest be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

The orthodox Jew of New Testament times could not even remotely imagine the possibility of God's carrying on his work without his chosen people, the Jews. But God showed them, and all others too, that when any individual or institution fails to accomplish his will, such will be rejected and the work will go on through other means. No man nor institution is indispensable to God's work. (Cf. Matt. 21: 43; Acts 10: 34, 35.) Paul's momentous announcement, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles," is a classic illustration of this truth. (Cf. Rev. 2: 5.)

Some people seem to think that they have a point when they assert that God is too good to condemn his people eternally. What they need to learn is that God does not condemn any one until he makes himself unworthy of that home which he is preparing for them who love and serve him. God did not turn away from the unbelieving Jews until they themselves thrust the word of God from them, and judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. The Bible plainly teaches that God has good things in mind for his people (cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9); but it is also true that he allows men the freedom to exercise their own will power (John 5: 40).

*And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.* The exact meaning of the expression "ordained to eternal life" has long been a matter of question among Bible students. When the question is considered in the light of the context and the general teaching of the Scriptures, the correct translation of the passage would probably be, "As many as were disposed to eternal life, or as many as were determined to secure eternal life, believed." The context implies that they were brought to this determination before they believed. Some experience or condition, either before or after they heard Paul preach, produced this mental state in them; and upon hearing him tell how eternal life can be secured, they readily believed.

The general attitude of those who were "ordained to eternal life" and those who rejected Paul's preaching stand in sharp contrast with each other. Three things are affirmed of those who rejected the gospel: (1) They were filled with jealousy; (2) they contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed; and (3) they judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. And in contrast with the attitude of the unbelieving Jews, three things are said of those who believed: (1) They were glad when they heard the things which Paul said; (2) they glorified the word of God; and (3) they were ordained, that is, disposed to or determined to secure, eternal life. Thus it can plainly be seen that the word

for "ordained" (*tetagemnoi*) stands in contrast with the mental state of the Jews who judged themselves unworthy of eternal life.

The one group (the believers) had an open mind on the question and a desire to gain the blessing of which Paul spoke, while the other group (the unbelievers), although professing to want eternal life, closed their minds to that which God said about securing it. (Cf. Acts 17: 11, 12.) Two men sit side by side under the sound of the same gospel sermon: one is awake to the importance of the life which is to come, while the other is absorbed in the life that now is. The latter will turn a deaf ear to the preaching, and thereby judge himself unworthy of eternal life, while the other will gladly consider the message; and if he find it to be true, he will believe it and cheerfully do that which it enjoins. (Cf. Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 41; 18: 8.)

*And the word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region. But the Jews urged upon the devout women of honorable estate,*

*and the chief men of the city, and stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and cast them out of their borders. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.* When those of the character of the unbelieving Jews are unable to meet the arguments of the gospel message, they usually turn to their most formidable weapon—that of stirring up prejudice and persecution. Paul and Barnabas, however, did not retaliate in like kind; they simply did that which the Lord told his disciples to do. (See Mark 6: 11; Luke 10: 16.) Although born into the family of God in the midst of persecution, and no doubt compelled to endure much suffering without the companionship and encouragement of their spiritual fathers, the newly made disciples were, nevertheless, "filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." (Cf. Horn. 5: 1-5.) Iconium was about ninety miles southeast of Antioch of Pisidia. (See map.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Where did Paul and his company go when they left Paphos?

What was significant about this move?  
What do we learn from this lesson regarding hindrances to a good work?  
What bearing does this lesson have on some of Paul's future activities?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of this text?  
Why did the apostle want Timothy to be aware of this fact?  
What application does the principle have for our day? Discuss fully.

### From Paphos to Antioch of Pisidia

What change is the relative positions of Paul and Barnabas is noted in this lesson?  
Give something of their experience at their first stop on the mainland?  
What was John's probable reason for leaving the company and returning to Jerusalem?

What effect did this have on Paul?  
What change is evidently noted in the plans of the missionaries in Perga?

What was the probable reason for it?  
Where was their first stop in the highlands of Galatia?  
What experience did they have on the sabbath day?  
Why did Paul, a Jew, habitually stand up to preach?

### "When the Synagogue Broke Up"

What is significant about the breaking up of the synagogue?

How does that compare to our usual practice?

What is commendable about the attitude of the people who followed after Paul and Barnabas?

What should happen after a gospel sermon is preached?

What are some good questions to ask in this connection?

### Ordained to Eternal Life

What is implied here regarding Paul's activities?

What was the general attitude of the people on the second sabbath?

Show that God is not mocked in such situations.

What lesson should we learn from this?

In what way did Paul reply to the unbelieving Jews? and why?

What was the general attitude of the orthodox Jew of that day?

What lesson in there in this incident for us?

What mistaken idea do some people have toward God's punishment of unbelievers?

When does the Lord do this?

In what sense were some of the people ordained to eternal life, and why before they believed?

Show how the same principle works today.

When the Jews could not answer Paul, what did they do?

Why do people act like that today?  
What response did Paul and Barnabas  
make and why?

How were the newly made disciples af-  
fected and why?  
Where was Iconium?

## Lesson II—July 8, 1962

### PAUL AT LYSTRA

#### Lesson Text

Acts 14: 8-22

8 And at Lys'-tra there sat a certain man, impotent in his feet, a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked.

9 The same heard Paul speaking; who, fastening his eyes upon him, and seeing that he had faith to be made whole,

10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped up and walked.

11 And when the multitude saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voice, saying in the speech of Lyc-a-o'-ni-a, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

12 And they called Bar'-na-bas, Ju'-pi-ter; and Paul, Mer'-cu-ry, because he was the chief speaker.

13 And the priest of Ju'-pi-ter whose *temple* was before the city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the multitudes.

14 But when the apostles, Bar'-na-bas and Paul, heard of it, they rent their garments, and sprang forth among the multitude, crying out

15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto a living God, who made the heaven and the

earth and the sea, and all that in them is:

16 Who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways.

17 And yet he left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness.

18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the multitudes from doing sacrifice unto them.

19 But there came Jews thither from An'-ti-och and I-co'-ni-um: and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.

20 But as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and entered into the city: and on the morrow he went forth with Bar'-na-bas to Der'-be.

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had made many disciples, they returned to Lys'-tra, and to I-co'-ni-um, and to An'-ti-och,

22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.

Golden Text.—*"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt. 5: 10.)

Devotional Reading.—Acts 14: 23-28.

#### Daily Bible Readings

July 2. M.	.....The Church in Iconium (Acts 14: 1-7)
July 3. T.	.....The Church in Lystra (Acts 14: 8-18)
July 4. W. . .	.....Opposition Expected (Matt. 5: 1-15)
July 5. T.	.....Power of the Gospel (Rom. 1: 13-17)
July 6. F.	.....Salvation for All (Psalm 67: 1-7)
July 7. S.	.....Missionary Vision (Isa. 55: 1-5)
July 8. S.	.....Marching Orders (Matt. 28: 18-20)

Time.—A.D. 48.

Place.—Lystra.

Persons.—Paul, Barnabas, the impotent man, and the people.

## Introduction

The first seven verses of Acts 14 tell of the experiences of the missionaries in Iconium, the place to which they went after leaving Antioch. "And it came to pass in Iconium that they entered together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake that a great multitude both of Jews and Greeks believed. But the Jews that were disobedient stirred up the souls of the Gentiles, and made them evil affected against the brethren. Long time therefore they tarried there speaking boldly in the Lord, who bare witness unto the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided; and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when there was made an onset both of the Gentiles and of the Jews with the rulers, to treat them shamefully and to stone them, they became aware of it, and fled unto the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the region round about: and there they preached the gospel."

Notwithstanding the fact that Paul and Barnabas remained in Iconium for a "long time" preaching the word, Luke saw fit to record only a very brief survey of their activities there; but what he did say is significant. For example, the missionaries "so spake that a great multitude both of Jews and Greeks believed." This shows the method of producing faith (cf. Rom. 10: 17; John 20: 30, 31), and it is very probable that Luke meant for his readers to understand the term "believed" in its comprehensive sense, that is, that they were *obedi-*

*ent believers*. This is all the more evident when we consider the fact that "believed" and "disobedient" in verses 1 and 2 are used as antonyms. (Cf. John 3: 36.) While we have no way of knowing just how long Paul and Barnabas remained in Iconium, Ramsay estimates the time to be some three or four months—from the summer of A.D. 48 till the autumn of that year. Iconium was about ninety miles from Antioch of Pisidia. McGarvey says that Iconium was "the largest and most important city in that part of Asia Minor, both then and now." Ramsay, on the other hand, says that "Iconium was a comparatively insignificant town in the *Region* around Antioch."

These different statements regarding Iconium are introduced here in order to emphasize another situation which is involved in the area now under consideration. Those who read various commentaries on Paul's first missionary journey are very likely to become confused regarding the geography of that part of Asia Minor, that is, the part in which the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe were located. Antioch is represented as being located in Pisidia, Iconium was in Phrygia, while Lystra and Derbe were in Lycaonia. But in Paul's day, all of this territory was a part of the Roman province of Galatia. This distinction is not always observed, either by Luke or many commentators. But when Paul later wrote to these churches, he addressed them, not as churches in Pisidia, Phrygia, and Lycaonia, but "unto the churches of Galatia."

## The Golden Text

*"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

No man knows how strong his faith is until it is tried; and since none but the faithful can please God it is to our advantage that our faith be subjected to an adequate test. James puts the matter in his way: "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold [that is, various kinds] temptations; knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience I stedfastness, margin]. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in

nothing." (James 1: 2-4.) One is "perfect" when he has reached his maturity, or has gained the end for which he has striven. (Cf. Phil. 3:

15, 16.) To be "entire" is to be intact, undamaged, or have all that which properly belongs to one. (Cf.

1 Thess. 5: 23.) "Lacking in nothing" is a negative corroboration of a positive statement.

The trial of faith to which Christ referred in the text now under consideration is expressed in these words: "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you

falsely, for my sake." (Matt. 5, 11.) To *reproach* means to revile or be abusive in speech; to *persecute* is to suffer ill-treatment; while to *say all manner of evil against you falsely* is to be the object of every conceivable calumny. Such statements are not only false, but are the most improbable lies which are invented for the express purpose of creating violent prejudice against their victims. The motive behind such talk is to the effect that nothing is too evil to believe and say against the objects of their malice. But Jesus wants his people to know that such treatment is indeed a blessing, and not a curse. (Cf. Heb. 4: 14-16; 1 Pet. 2: 21, 22.)

The attitude which the Lord wants his people to manifest when they are

persecuted is expressed in these words: "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you." (Matt. 5: 12.) The language found in Luke is even stronger: "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same manner did their fathers unto the prophets." (Luke 6: 22, 23.) Paul's reaction to persecution and evil speaking, like that of his Lord, is a splendid commentary on this statement.

## The Text Explained

### A Lame Man Cured at Lystra

(Acts 14: 8-10)

*And at Lystra there sat a certain man, impotent in his feet, a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked. The same heard Paul speaking: who, fastening his eyes upon him, and seeing that he had faith to be made whole, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped up and walked.* Although all the territory in which the four cities of this and the preceding lesson were located was the same province, it appears that the first two and the last two were in different districts. The districts apparently were subdivisions of the province, and evidently were of Roman origin. If this is true, then when Paul and Barnabas left Antioch and went to Iconium, they merely left one city which is described as being surrounded by a "region" (Acts 13: 49), and went "to an outlying city of the same district" (Ramsay); but when they left Iconium they "had to cross the frontier to a new *Region* of the same province, which began a few miles south and east from Iconium." (*Ibid.*) These geographical facts are essential to the overall view of the lesson now before us.

It is interesting to observe the manner in which Luke described the lame man whom Paul healed. The historian, as a rule, is very brief, but there are a few instances in his record where he is most specific. In the case now before us he gives a

three-fold description, as follows: (1) impotent in his feet; (2) a cripple from his mother's womb; and (3) who had never walked. Luke's obvious purpose in this multiple description is to call attention to the fact that this was no "make-believe" case of healing. (See Acts 13: 6; 16: 6, 7 for similar detailed descriptions.) Nothing is said regarding the place where the miracle was performed, but it was likely out in the open where the people of the city had gathered. A synagogue of the Jews was in each of the first two cities where the missionaries preached, but no mention of such a place is made with reference to either Lystra or Derbe, which suggests the absence of a Jewish population.

The crippled man heard Paul preach, and manifested much interest in what the apostle said. It was quite probable that mention was made of the miracles which were performed in Iconium, and this would be of special interest to the lame man. And as Paul looked at the crippled man, the latter in some way gave evidence that he believed that the speaker could heal him. (Cf. Acts 3: 1-10.) Paul then took advantage of the occasion, and, with a voice loud enough to be heard by the multitude who evidently knew the man, said, "Stand upright on thy feet," which the lame man did. The miracle which Paul performed was seen by all the multitude in Lystra that day, and is in bold contrast with the so-called miracles of modern-day healers.

## The Results Which Followed

(Acts 14: 11-18)

*And when the multitude saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.* The deed which Paul did in the midst of the people of Lystra made a profound impression on them. They could plainly see that there was no collusion between "the healer and the healed," and there was therefore only one conclusion for them to draw, namely, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." This, of course, was a heathen conception, but it was evidently sincere on their part. They had probably never heard of the true God. There is no indication that Paul and Barnabas understood the language of Lycaonia, but they plainly saw what the multitude was about to do.

*And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercury, because he was the chief speaker.* It was pointed out in an earlier lesson that the Oriental idea of the chief god was the one who stayed in the background, and did his work through his subordinates. This, of course, is the very opposite of the Western viewpoint. The impressive stature of Barnabas therefore was considered by the people of Lystra to be the chief god, while Paul as the active orator was taken to be his messenger. Goodspeed notes that the incident of this lesson gives one of the few hints we have as to Paul's appearance. "He was evidently much younger than Barnabas, and the comparison with Hermes suggests a graceful and attractive figure of young manhood. What the Corinthians a few years later said of his personal appearance as insignificant was spoken not judicially but in malice and anger, and probably meant no more than that Paul did not look like a Plato or Moses. Hermes was the symbol of gracious youth; the Hermes of Praxiteles at Olympia is the proof of that. And Luke evidently liked to remember Paul as such a figure." (*Paul*, p. 48.) All of this, of course, may be true, but it should be noted that Paul was called Mercury (*Hermes*, margin), not because of his "appearance," but rather because of his *relation* to Jupiter, as the chief speaker. *The In-*

*ternational Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* observes that Hermes was the god of eloquence (and also of theft), the attendant, messenger, and spokesman of the gods.

*And the priest of Jupiter whose temple was before the city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the multitudes.* Although the priest and the multitudes were heathen, they were, nevertheless, acting from a high motive from their point of view. They thought that the gods had come down to them in the likeness of men; and they proposed to show them the honor which was due them. This should be a tremendous lesson to us. We know that God did manifest himself to men in the person of his Son, but how often do we show, not honor, but indifference to this Divine Personage! (Cf. Rom. 2: 12-16.) Taylor points out that "that priest who 'would have done sacrifice with the people' is a 'swift witness' against such inconsistency."

*But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they rent their garments, and sprang forth among the multitude, crying out and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is: who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways. And ye he left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness. And with these sayings scarce restrained they the multitudes from doing sacrifice unto them.*

It should be observed just here that Barnabas, along with Paul, is called an apostle. Those who are familiar with the New Testament are aware of the fact that several others than the twelve are referred to as apostles. (Cf. Gal. 1: 19.) The twelve were apostles in a special relation to Christ which was enjoyed by no others; but so far as their authority was concerned, they had no advantage over Paul. (See Gal. 1: 11, 12; 2: 6-10.) So far as we know, only the twelve and Paul were plenipotentiary ministers of Christ. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18-20.) The literal meaning of the term

"apostle" is one sent, and in that sense anyone who was sent on a special mission was an apostle of the one or those who sent him. (See 2 Cor. 8: 23.) The word "messengers" is from the same original word as is the term "apostles." These messengers, then, were the *apostles* of the churches. (See marginal note.) Jesus himself is also called an apostle. (See Heb. 3: 1.)

When Paul and other New Testament preachers spoke to Jewish people, they relied on the prophets of the Old Testament to set forth the truth regarding the Messiahship of Jesus and God's will for his people concerning the claims of Christ; but when the preaching was done to those who were unacquainted with the Old Testament, the approach was different. There is no better illustration of this difference than in the address which has just been quoted. And when it is considered in the light of other speeches which Paul delivered to heathen audiences and those converted from heathenism, it will easily be seen that that was that apostle's usual plan. In commenting on the address now before us, J. S. Howson says:

"There is no doubt that St. Paul was the speaker, and, before we proceed further in the narrative, we cannot help pausing to observe the essentially Pauline character which this speech manifests, even in so condensed a summary of its contents. It is full of undesigned coincidences in argument, and even in the expressions employed, with St. Paul's language in other parts of the Acts, and in his own Epistles. Thus, as he here declares the object of his preaching to be that the idolatrous Lystrians should 'turn from these vain idols to the living God,' so he reminds the Thessalonians how they, at his preaching, had 'turned from idols to serve the living and true God.' (1 Thess. 1: 9.) Again, as he tells the Lystrians that 'God had in the generations that were passed, suffered the nations of the Gentiles to walk in their own ways,' so he tells the Romans that 'God in his forbearance had passed over the former sins of men, in the times that were gone by' (Rom. 3: 25); and so he tells the Athenians (Acts 17: 30), that 'the past times of ignorance God had

overlooked.' Lastly, how striking is the similarity between the natural theology with which the present speech concludes, and that in the Epistle to the Romans where, speaking of the Heathen, he says that atheists are without excuse; 'for that which can be known of God is manifested in their hearts, God himself having shown it to them. For his eternal power and Godhead, though they be invisible, yet are seen ever since the world was made, being understood by the works which he had wrought.'"

### More Persecution and the Return to Antioch

(Acts 14: 19-22)

*But there came Jews thither from Antioch and Iconium: and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.* It is difficult to understand how people who profess to be servants of God can manifest the spirit which characterized the Jews who came to Lystra from Antioch and Iconium for the purpose of destroying the work which Paul and Barnabas were doing in Lystra; but it is perhaps more unfortunate that the spirit did not die with those people. There is no persistency like bigotry, as someone has observed, and Paul was followed by it all the days of his Christian service. As in the case of Jesus, the Jews would go any lengths to vent their rage on anyone whom they did not consider orthodox. The Jews, in fact, stirred up every persecution which Paul suffered, except two. (See Acts 16: 16-40; 19: 23-41.)

Bible students have long wondered whether or not Paul was actually killed on the occasion of this stoning, or whether he was stunned into unconsciousness. There is no way to be absolutely certain about the matter, but it was probably the latter. Luke expressed no thought of his own regarding the matter, but leaves the readers to form their own opinion. Paul probably referred to the experience in 2 Cor. 11: 25.

*But as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and entered into the city: and on the morrow he went forth with Barnabas to Derbe.*

The mention of the disciples in this connection is the first intimation

of the success which attended the labors of the missionaries in Lystra. It is very probable that Timothy, his mother, and his grandmother were included in the number. (Cf. Acts 16: 1-3; 2 Tim. 3: 11.) Derbe was probably a few miles southeast of Lystra; and that was as far as Paul and Barnabas went in that direction.

*And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the*

*kingdom of God.* The success of the gospel in Derbe is indicated in the text, and since Paul makes no mention to Timothy of any persecutions suffered in Derbe, it is probable that they were not molested there. While the missionaries were in Derbe, they were not far from the well-known pass which leads down from the central table-land to Cilicia and Tarsus; but instead of taking that route, the apostles chose to return to the scenes of their former labors and strengthen the disciples which they had made. They needed, as we do, to understand the real significance of persecution. (Cf. 1 Pet. 5: 10.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Give a resume of the experiences of Paul and Barnabas in Iconium.

What indications do we have of their success in that city?

How long did they probably remain there?

Give reasons for your answer.

What are some of the historical and geographical facts which we should keep in mind in connection with this lesson?

### The Golden Text

What is the advantage of having one's faith tested?

What does James teach regarding this question?

What kind of persecution did Jesus have reference to in the golden text?

What attitude does he want his people to manifest with reference to such treatment?

### A Lame Man Cured at Lystra

Where was Lystra and what was its relationship to Antioch and Iconium?

How did Luke describe the lame man's condition and what was the significance of the description?

Under what conditions did Paul and Barnabas probably preach in Lystra?

What indicates that there were few, if any, Jews there?

How did Paul come to perform the miracle of healing in Lystra?

### The Results Which Followed

How did the multitude react to the miracle of healing?

Why did they think that the gods had come down to them in the likeness of men?

Why did they call the missionaries after the names of their gods?

Which missionary did they consider the greater, and why?

What did the priest of Jupiter plan to do, and why?

What important lesson is there in this incident for us?

How did Paul and Barnabas react to the proposed "honor"?

Why does Luke speak of Barnabas as an apostle?

Show something of the New Testament use of that term.

What difference is seen in Paul's "approach" in his preaching in Lystra?

Discuss the manner of Paul's preaching to the Gentiles, as revealed in Acts and his epistles.

### More Persecution and the Return to Antioch

Who instigated the persecution in Lystra, and why?

What lesson do we learn from this attitude?

What do we know about Paul's actual condition when he was stoned?

How do we know whether or not any were converted to the truth in Lystra?

Who were among the sympathizing disciples who were with Paul following his stoning? Give reasons for your answer.

What do we know about the success of the gospel in Derbe?

Where was Derbe, and where did the missionaries go from there?

Why did they return to the places where they had been persecuted, instead of going back to Antioch in Syria via Cilicia and Tarsus?

What is the Christian attitude toward persecutions?



## Lesson III—July 15, 1962

## CONFERENCE AT JERUSALEM

## Lesson Text

Acts 15: 1-10, 28-32

1 And certain men came down from Ju-dae'a and taught the brethren, *saying*, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Mo'-sés, ye cannot be saved.

2 And when Paul and Bar'-na-bas had no small dissension and questioning with them, *the brethren* appointed that Paul and Bar'-na-bas, and certain other of them, should go up to Je-ru'-sa-lem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

3 They therefore, being brought on their way by the church, passed through both Phoe-nl'-ci-á and Sama'-ri-a, declaring the conversion of the Gen'-tiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

4 And when they were come to Je-ru'-sa-16m, they were received of the church and the apostles and the elders, and they rehearsed all things that God had done with them.

5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Phar'-i-sees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Mo'-ses.

6 And the apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider of this matter.

7 And when there had been much questioning, Peter rose up, and said unto them,

Brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among

you, that by my mouth the Oen'-tiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

8 And God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us;

9 And he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

10 Now therefore why make ye trial of God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to hear?

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:

29 That ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you. Fare ye well.

30 So they, when they were dismissed, came down to An'-ti-och; and having gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle.

31 And when they had read it, they rejoiced for the consolation.

32 And Ju'-das and Si'-las, being themselves also prophets, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

Golden Text.—*"For freedom did Christ set us free"* (Gal. 5: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 15: 12-27.

## Daily Bible Readings

July 9.	M.....	Preaching to Gentiles (Acts 10: 1-47)
July 10.	T.....	Peter's Defense (Acts 11: 1-18)
July 11.	W.....	Difficulties at Antioch (Gal. 2: 11-21)
July 12.	T..	Occasion for the Visit to Jerusalem (Acts 15: 1-5)
July 13.	F.	A Plea for Understanding (Acts 15: 6-11)
July 14.	S.....	Working Together (Acts 15: 22-35)
July 15.	S.....	Freedom in Christ (Gal. 5: 1-15)

TIME.—Winter of A.D. 49-50.

PLACES.—Antioch and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Paul, Barnabas, and others; the apostles, elders, and others; Judas and Silas.

## Introduction

When Paul and Barnabas returned from Derbe to Lystra, Iconium, and

Antioch in Pisidia, they appointed elders for the churches which they

had established. This ought to be an impressive lesson to us today. It frequently happens that congregations go for years without such appointment, but the churches of Galatia were only two years old and less when their overseers were selected and placed in office. After completing the work mentioned in verses 22, 23, Luke says, "And they passed through Pisidia, and came to Pamphylia. And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia; and thence they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and that he had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles. And they tarried no little time with the disciples." (Acts 14: 24-28.)

In previous lessons in the Book of Acts, we have seen how the gospel was preached to the Jews at first, and then Luke, as it were, went back and traced the work among the Gentiles. It appears that at first practically all the Jews felt that the Gentiles were not entitled to gospel privileges; but with the unmistakable revelation of the will of God with reference to Cornelius and his household, the Jewish leaders in the church "held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life." (Acts 11: 18.) This settled the ques-

tion, so far as the reception of the Gentiles into the church was concerned. But there were some Jewish brethren, whom we refer to as Judaizers, who insisted that all Gentile converts be required to submit to circumcision and keep the law of Moses. This was the question which brought on the conference at Jerusalem.

It should be kept in mind that the Jews, or many of them at least, did not understand that the law ended at the cross. (Col. 2: 14.) And so when they accepted the gospel, they did not realize that the old covenant had passed away, in order to give place to the new. (Cf. Acts 21: 17-26; Heb. 8: 6-13.) These people simply regarded the gospel as an extension of the law of Moses. With them the disintegration of their God-given and time-honored religion was unthinkable, and, from their point of view, there was only one possible and sensible thing to do, namely, Let every Gentile Christian be circumcised and thereby identify himself with the law of Moses; and he would then be a member of the expanding Jewish-Christian movement which could easily and quickly spread throughout the Roman Empire. In this way both Jews and Gentiles could be included in God's order, and both the law and the gospel would be preserved. With this idea firmly fixed in the minds of zealous, if not altogether scrupulous, Judaizers, the internationalization of Christianity was by no means an easy or simple process.

### The Golden Text

*"For freedom did Christ set us free"* The over-all plan of the letter to the Galatians was the emancipation of the gospel from Jewish legalism. With the New Testament before us, we can easily see that Christianity was a new institution. But many of the Jews of Paul's day, as we have already observed, accepted Christianity as God's order, but they looked upon it as being simply a new chapter in the history of Judaism. This was especially true of the Jews in Palestine. Not possessing the broad outlook which Paul had, these Jews viewed with alarm the possible rapid growth of a church independent of Jewish restrictions. What would become of the synagogue and the sacred law of Moses? were

questions which were of grave concern to them. If this new religion should be allowed to go its way without any consideration for the law of Moses, they evidently reasoned, there was serious danger that the elaborate and splendid temple in Jerusalem would lose its hold on the imaginations of men, and the whole network of Judaism throughout the world would be in immediate jeopardy.

The Judaizing teachers, as a rule, did not regard Paul as being a genuine apostle of Christ, and they, of course, considered his preaching both spurious and dangerous. It is not difficult to imagine some of the arguments which they probably made in their efforts to set aside his work and preserve their national religion;

and it is not hard to understand how the uninformed converts from the Gentiles, and young Jewish Christians too, would be unable to meet these arguments. For instance, Christ himself was circumcised and kept the law of Moses; and anyone therefore who wished to follow him would have to do likewise, that is, he would have to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in all of its essentials. They could point forcefully to the fact that the twelve apostles were circumcised, and continued to live as the law required Jews to live. (Cf. Acts 21: 17ff.) They questioned Paul's apostleship. (1 Cor. 9: 1-3; 2 Cor. 12: 11, 12.)

It is easy to see from that which Paul wrote to the Galatians that the Judaizers had to a great extent suc-

ceeded, by means of misrepresentations, in alienating the churches in that region from their father in the gospel. Some of the brethren had already submitted to circumcision and embraced with zealous endeavor the party of their new leaders, when Paul wrote to them; and the rest were thrown into a state of agitation, confusion, and division. The Galatian Christians had been living the gospel of freedom as Paul and Barnabas had preached it to them (Gal. 5: 7), but in his absence his enemies had made the most of the situation and had almost succeeded in turning them against Paul. His enemies evidently saw what a success this new faith was, and they were determined to annex it to the Mosaic system for the glorification of Judaism.

## The Text Explained

### The Occasion for the Conference and Its Assembly (Acts 15: 1-5)

*And certain men came down from Judaea and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved. And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them, the brethren appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.*

Although Antioch was north of Jerusalem, it was literally "down" from the Jewish capital. It is interesting to observe that whenever Bible writers make a statement regarding geography, topography, science, or any other subject, the statement is always correct, notwithstanding the fact that the Scriptures are not primarily concerned with such questions.

The men who came down from Judaea were Judaizing teachers, and the fact that they came from the place of the headquarters of the apostles themselves would add weight to their teaching. This idea is fully confirmed by the opening statement which the apostles and elders, and the whole Jerusalem church, sent to the church in Antioch: "Forasmuch as we have heard that certain who went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; to whom we gave no commandment." (Acts 15: 24.) These unauthorized

teachers insisted on circumcision, not because it was connected with the covenant which God made with Abraham, which was the original ground of its obligation (see Gen. 17: 1-14), but because of its relation to the law of Moses, which made it essential that every such circumcised person keep the law. (Gal. 5: 3.)

There is a vital principle involved in this incident which is just as applicable to day as it was then, namely, anyone who proposes to teach others how to live the Christian life should make sure that they have apostolic approval for their teaching. This is possible, of course, only as such teachers conform their teaching to the revealed doctrine of the apostles, as it is found in the New Testament. There are altogether too many "unauthorized" teachers troubling the churches today. And it should not be forgotten that the church also has a responsibility in such matters. (Cf. 1 John 4: 1; Rev. 2: 2.)

The erroneous teaching which the Judaizers did in Antioch was in direct conflict with that which was done by Paul and Barnabas, and the result was that "no small dissension and questionings with them" took place. Paul had been divinely commissioned to teach as he had been doing (Gal. 1: 11, 12), and the same no doubt was true of Barnabas, since he was an inspired prophet. (Acts 13: 1.) At any rate the two men united in opposing the false teachers

from Judaea, and the church in Antioch took the necessary steps to ascertain the truth regarding the matter. We learn from Gal. 2: 2, 3 that the trip to Jerusalem was divinely authorized, and that Titus was among the "other of them" who also went along. Paul's word, of course, was just as authoritative as that of the other apostles, but a united decision would have a powerful effect on the whole church, especially since the original apostles were regarded as pro-Jewish, while Paul was looked upon as being pro-Gentile. (Cf. Gal. 2: 6-10.) (The first ten verses of Gal. 2 give Paul's account of the Jerusalem conference.)

*They therefore, being brought on their way by the church, passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church and the apostles, and the elders, and they rehearsed all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses.*

Phoenicia and Samaria were between Antioch and Jerusalem, and the company of brethren from Antioch took advantage of the opportunity of meeting with various groups of Christians in those regions, and enjoyed their hospitality, along the way. Their reports of their work among the Gentiles brought great joy to all those churches. And when Paul, Barnabas, and their party reached Jerusalem, they were cordially received by the apostles, and elders, and the church in that city, to whom they also rehearsed all things which God had accomplished through their ministry among the Gentiles. This appears to have been an open meeting consisting of the apostles, and the elders, and the church. Note the article before church, apostles, and elders.

Although the Pharisees are referred to as believers, it appears from Gal. 2: 4 that Paul regarded them as "false brethren." They were probably the same ones who had stirred up the trouble in Antioch, which preceded the conference. They

had no doubt found it impossible to oppose the claims of Christ any longer, but, as Hort observes, they did not follow the example of Paul when they became Christians in surrendering their Jewish bigotry. If they were the false brethren to whom Paul referred, then it appears that they were prompted by the motive, as expressed by the people of our day, If you can't defeat them, join them. Something of the character of the battle which Paul fought for Christian freedom may be learned from his own words: "But not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of the false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour: that the truth of the gospel might continued with you." (Gal. 2: 2-5.)

#### **The Method by Which the Controversy Was Resolved**

(Acts 15: 6-10)

*And the apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider of this matter.* We gather from Gal. 2: 2 that Paul had a private conference with three of the apostles, and it probably was held between the first public meeting (verses 4, 5) and the one of this section. "And I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain. . . . But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth not man's person)—they, I say, who were of repute imparted nothing to me: but contrariwise, when they saw that I had been intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision (for he that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles); and when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellow-

ship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision." (Gal. 2: 2, 6-9.) The "James" mentioned here was the Lord's brother. (Gal. 1: 19.) James the brother of John had already been killed by Herod (Acts 12: 1, 2).

Paul's private meeting was not the result of any doubt which he entertained. Instead, it was a wise move on his part to consult with the other apostles before entering the meeting where the merits of the case would be argued. If he had not done so, and it had turned out that they opposed his work among the Gentiles, the result would have been a disastrous blow to his cause. But as it was, he secured their endorsement before the next public meeting, and therefore had the weight of their influence in his favor.

*And when there had been much questioning, Peter rose up, and said unto them,*

*Brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us; and he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why make ye trial of God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?*

The purpose of the second public meeting was not to get the apostles into agreement, but to bring the whole church into agreement with the apostles, including Paul. See verses 22, 23. It appears from verse 7 that the Judaizing teachers were allowed to exhaust themselves before any of the apostles spoke. Peter, who had been the first to preach to the Gentiles, was chosen to reply to them, and his speech contains three points of argument, namely, (1) God made no distinction between Jew and Gentile, as illustrated by the events at the home of Cornelius. (2) In the light of that act, to require the Gentiles to keep the law, which no Jew had ever been able to do, would be to tempt God. (3) It was the settled belief among the apostles that both Jew and Gentile would be saved through the grace of the

Lord Jesus. (Verse 11.) Peter's speech was followed by addresses by Paul and Barnabas, and then the meeting was climaxed by a speech by James, who was probably the most pro-Jewish of any of the apostles. See Acts 21: 17-26; Gal. 2: 11ff. McGarvey notes that the speech of James brought the meeting to a close, and that the combined force of the four speeches made the will of God so clear that the opposition was totally silenced; and the only remaining question was how best to carry out the proposal submitted by James.

### The Report to the Church in Antioch

(Acts 15: 28-32)

*For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you. Fare ye well.* These are the closing words of an epistle which contained a report of the results of the conference, and which was sent to Antioch by Paul and Barnabas, and by Judas and Silas, who were chose to accompany Paul and Barnabas, and to confirm the message by word of mouth. (See verses 22-27.)

McGarvey points out that "this is the earliest document, so far as we know, that issued from the pen of any apostle. It antedated all of the Gospels, and all of Paul's epistles. It circulated as a separate document among the churches until it was incorporated into Acts, when previously existing copies of it were naturally allowed to perish. It is called an epistle (30), and the decrees [ta *dogmata*] to keep which had been ordained by the apostles and elders that were at Jerusalem." (16: 4.) It makes a formal claim of inspiration by the words, "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us. No uninspired men could dare to use such language; and this circumstance differentiates it from all the decrees and deliverances of all the ecclesiastical courts from that day to this, not excepting those of the Roman Catholic Church, which makes blasphemous pretences of infallibility."

In commenting on the expression that it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things, Robertson notes that the restrictions which are named did constitute a burden (cf. Matt. 20: 12); for the old word *baros* means weight of heaviness. Morality itself is a restraint upon one's impulses, as is all law a prohibition against license. The meat sacrificed to idols was afterwards sold in the public markets. God has always forbidden the eating of blood. (Gen 9: 4.) Things strangled were animals deprived of life without shedding their blood (Thayer). Fornication is unlawful sexual intercourse.

*So they, when they were dismissed, came down to Antioch; and having gathered the multitude together, they*

*delivered the epistle. And when they had read it, they rejoiced for the consolation. And Judas and Silas, being themselves also prophets, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.* The four men in question, Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas, were dismissed by the apostles and elders, after they had given them the letter and commissioned them to go to Antioch. The multitude which they called together in Antioch was the church. The brethren there were pleased with the message the letter contained, and they rejoiced for the comfort which is afforded. They were happy that the dispute had been so agreeably terminated. Judas and Silas did that for which they were sent to Antioch: they exhorted the brethren and confirmed them by giving oral testimony to the written message.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

What did Paul and Barnabas do when they revisited the churches they had established?

What important lesson is there in their example for us?

Why do many congregations wait so long to appoint elders? Discuss fully.

Tell of the rest of their journey back to Antioch in Syria.

Discuss the general background which led up to the Jerusalem conference.

What was the basic question before this particular assembly?

### The Golden Text

Give the setting of the golden text.

What was Paul's over-all purpose in writing Galatians?

Discuss the apparent thinking of the Judaizers as they went about their work.

### The Occasion for the Conference and Its Assembly

What suggestion do we have here regarding the accuracy of Bible writers?

Who were the men who went down from Judaea and taught in Antioch?

Why did they teach that the Gentile brethren must be circumcised?

Aside from their erroneous teaching, what mistake did these brethren make?

What important lesson should we learn from their example?

Discuss the responsibility of churches regarding sound doctrine.

What happened as a result of the false teaching in Antioch?

How did Paul regard the course which he and Barnabas had been pursuing with reference to the Gentiles? Give reasons for your answer.

Why was it necessary for the apostle Paul to consult with the other apostles about the matter?

In what way are Acts 15 and Gal. 2 related?

Who went with Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem on this occasion?

What is said regarding the journey?

How were they received in Jerusalem?

What is said regarding the believing Pharisees?

What basic difference is seen between them and Paul?

What was Paul's attitude toward them?

What does Paul say regarding his great fight for Christian liberty?

In what way are the principles involved in this applicable to us?

### The Method by Which the Controversy Was Resolved

When and why did Paul have a private conference with three of the other apostles?

Who were the other three and what did Paul say regarding them?

What was the purpose of the second public meeting?

What did the apostles allow the opposition to do before they spoke?

What lesson should we learn from this?

Discuss Peter's address?

Who were the other apostolic speakers and the purpose of their addresses?

### The Report to the Church in Antioch

What plan did the apostles and elders make for relaying the decision of the conference to the brethren in Antioch?

What can you say regarding the epistle which they sent to Antioch?

In what way was this message a "burden" to the brethren there?

What were the "necessary things"?

How did the brethren in Antioch receive the apostolic decision?

What did Judas and Silas do?

## Lesson IV—July 22, 1962

## PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

## Lesson Text

Acts 15: 36-41; 16: 1-5

36 And after some days Paul said unto Bar-na-bas, Let us return now and visit the brethren in every city wherein we proclaimed the word of the Lord, *and see* how they fare.

37 And Bar-na-bas was minded to take with them John also, who was called Mark.

38 But Paul thought not good to take with them him who withdrew from them from Pa -phyl'-i-a, and went not with them to the work.

39 And there arose a sharp contention, so that they parted asunder one from the other, and Bar-na-bas took Mark with him, and sailed away unto Cy'-prus:

40 But Paul chose Si'-las, and went forth, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.

41 And he went through Syr'-i-a and Ci-li'-ci-a, c o n f i r m i n g the churches.

1 And he came also to Der'-be and to Lys'-tra: and behold, a certain disciple was there, named Tim'-o-thy, the son of a Jewess that believed; but his father was a Greek.

2 The same was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lys'-tra and I-co'-ni-um.

3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and he took and circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those parts: for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

4 And as they went on their way through the cities, t h e y delivered them the decrees to keep which had been ordained of the apostles and elders that were at Je-ru'-sa-lem.

5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Come *over into Macedonia, and help us.*” (Acts 16: 9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalms 67.

## Daily Bible Readings

July 16. M.....	Occasion for the Trip (Acts 15: 30-36)
July 17. T.....	Difficulty Over John Mark (Acts 15: 37-41)
July 18. W.....	Activities at Derbe and Lystra (Acts 16: 1-5)
July 19. T.....	Work in the Region of Phrygia and Galatia (Acts 16: 6-8)
July 20. F.....	The Macedonian Call (Acts 16: 9, 10)
July 21. S.....	Work in Philippi (Acts 16: 11-40)
July 22. S.....	Paul in Europe (Acts 17: 1-9)

TIME.—Second missionary journey, A.D. 50-53.

PLACES.—Antioch, Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, and Lystra.

PERSONS.—Paul, Barnabas, Mark, Silas, and Timothy.

## Introduction

We are not told how long Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch after they returned from the Jerusalem conference; but “after some days” Paul suggested to Barnabas that they revisit the places wherein they had proclaimed the gospel, and see how the churches which they had founded were faring. Nothing is said about any specific reason, other than to see how the churches were getting along, but it is fair to assume that Paul had become anxious about them after the stormy events at An-

ti-och and Jerusalem. He had seen how the Judaizing teachers had worked in those two cities, and it would be reasonable to suppose that they would go wherever the Gentiles had been converted to Christ. At any rate, Paul wanted to go back to see about the young churches.

Both Paul and Barnabas had seen the value of revisiting the newly established churches, when they had retraced their steps from Derbe back through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia; and their experience

on that occasion had convinced them, if indeed they needed to be convinced, that the newly converted disciples needed further teaching and encouragement. Those were days of bitter persecution, and these men knew that the better the Lord's people are taught the truth, the stronger they will be to resist the temptation to turn away from Christ. We can be sure that both Paul and Barnabas were duly concerned for the welfare of the churches which had been established on their first missionary journey.

But there had also been some strains made on their personal relationships since the day that they first left Antioch in Syria, when the Holy Spirit said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." (Acts 13: 2.) For one thing, the action of

Mark in leaving them in Perga in Pamphylia. There is no reason for thinking that Barnabas did not disapprove of his cousin's action, as much as Paul did; but the fleshly relationship would cause Barnabas to overlook the defection quicker than Paul would. And, too, the incident in Antioch when Peter visited there after the Jerusalem conference probably did not strengthen the ties between Paul and Barnabas. (See Gal. 2: 11-13.) To say the least of it, Barnabas did not show the strength of character which measured up to Paul's high standard. It is not surprising therefore, in the light of these facts, to see them choose other companions and different fields of labor. This, however, does not suggest personal animosity, as we shall see later.

### The Golden Text

*"Come over into Macedonia, and help us"* This text is taken from a paragraph which is, as Ramsay notes, in many respects the most remarkable paragraph in Acts. It reads as follows: "And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not; and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel unto them."

There were three manifestations of Divine guidance in the passage just quoted, all of which was intended to direct Paul and his company in the new and great step which they took at this point. The narrative which records this experience is so simple and commonplace that the average reader little suspects that Luke was dealing with one of the most significant events in history, namely, the passing of Christianity from Asia to Europe. But great as the results

were which followed this momentous decision, Paul had not planned to go to Europe—that was his second choice, a choice which he made after his first choice was denied him. Or, to express the same thing in other words, Paul reached the point in his career when his plans had to be changed.

While we do not receive direct manifestations of Divine guidance today, we are subject to God's providential direction. And when we take into consideration the fact that the Lord still moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform, we should always be willing to take hold of any unmistakable opportunities for doing his will which are presented to us. When we think of Sir Walter Scott, we think of him as a novelist; but that was not his first choice in life. He planned to be a poet, but Lord Byron's sun rose high in the literary heaven and dimmed Scott's lesser light. "Byron," said Scott, "hits the mark where I don't even pretend to fledge my arrow." Scott then turned to writing novels, and it is said that he was so ashamed that he published the first of them anonymously. He did not want any one to know that he was writing novels. He wanted "Bithynia," but got "Troas" and through *Troas* an open door to the best work he ever did.



Thus, when one's plans must be changed, it may be that he is simply

being providentially guided into the greatest opportunities of his life.

## The Text Explained

### The Separation of Paul and Barnabas

(Acts 15: 36-40)

*And after some days Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us return now and visit the brethren in every city wherein we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they fare.* The implication here is that a church was established in every place the missionaries visited on their first journey. This, of course, included Cyprus, the Roman province of Galatia, and Perga in Pamphylia. (Acts 14: 25.)

*And Barnabas was minded to take with them John also, who was called Mark. But Paul thought not good to take with them him who withdrew from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And there arose a sharp contention, so that they parted asunder one from the other, and Barnabas took Mark with him, and sailed away unto Cyprus: but Paul chose Silas, and went forth, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.*

Some of the possible reasons for John's defection were mentioned in a previous lesson; but whatever may have been his real reason for turning back, it was certainly not satisfactory to Paul, and he thereby lost his opportunity for further service with him for the time being. In commenting in John's action, Clovis G. Chappell observes that "he became John Mark the Quitter. But he is not the only quitter. Their name is legion to this hour. Some of them are in the church. When you became a member of the church years ago you were full of enthusiasm. You were ready for any good work. For a while you made a business of your religion. You considered the services of the church not as the responsibility of the preacher alone, but as a responsibility of yourself also. But little by little the fires died upon the altar of your soul. Today, though you are still in the church, you do not count. If everybody treated the prayer meeting as you treat it, there would not be another held to the end of time. If everybody treated the night service as you treat

it, there would not be another church lighted for services until the old world becomes a cinder." To say the least of it, this is something that every member of the church ought to consider carefully and prayerfully.

But Mark did not remain away from the Lord's work, and he was eventually restored to Paul's confidence. In his final letter to Timothy, which also was probably the last letter he ever wrote, the aged apostle said, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is useful to me for ministering." (2 Tim. 4: 11.) So the young man who turned back from the work in Pamphylia stands before us as an example of the recovery of character, and of the way in which one who has lost his self-respect may regain it. That his position was a difficult one may be seen when we observe that the influence of the great apostle Paul was against him. How, then, do we account for his recovery? There may have been many factors, such as the influence of Barnabas his kinsman, and Peter his teacher; but it is probable that the most effective agency was Paul himself. When Paul refused to endanger his enterprise by taking such a man with him, and when he frankly said so, Mark began to come to himself. He began to see himself as he really was, and was made to realize what a mistake he had made. There are times when the greatest disservice we can do our friends is to be too gentle and kind to tell them the truth. Many a man has been saved by having some sincere Paul or brave Nathan look him squarely in the eyes, and tell him exactly what is wrong.

There is no indication that the clash between Paul and Barnabas over Mark was characterized by any hard feeling for each other. The original word is used in both a favorable and an unfavorable sense in the New Testament. In fact, the word occurs only twice—here and in Heb. 10: 24, where it means to encourage some one in love (provoke). In Acts 15: 39 the word means a sharp disagreement, according to Arndt and Gingrich. Phillips renders the term

"a sharp clash of opinion." Christian people can disagree without being disagreeable. Dr. Howson thinks that it is very likely that Paul and Barnabas made a deliberate and amicable arrangement to divide the region of their first mission between them, Paul taking the continental, and Barnabas the insular, part of the proposed visitation. (Cf. 1 Cor. 9: 6; Col. 4: 10.)

After Paul and Barnabas separated, the latter took Mark and sailed away unto Cyprus. This left Paul alone, and, not wishing to work by himself, he chose Silas to be his next traveling companion, and received the endorsement of the brethren for their proposed mission. David Smith thinks that the fact that Paul "chose" Silas indicates that there were others whom he might have selected. He also calls attention to the pre-eminent fitness which Silas possessed for the work Paul had in mind. This is seen by the esteem in which he was held in Jerusalem, and the service which he performed in Antioch. Silas was also a Jew and at the same time in full sympathy with Gentile liberties; and he was a Homan citizen with the wide outlook which the relationship implied, along with the prestige and immunity which it insured wherever Roman law was in force. Silas therefore was in a position to disarm Jewish prejudice and to win Gentile confidence, as he and Paul went forth to the work before them.

#### **From Antioch to Lystra and the Call of Timothy (Acts 15: 41-16: 3)**

Although it appears on the surface that the disagreement which brought about the separation of Paul and Barnabas was unfortunate, a further look at the question seems to reveal a double advantage in the change of the program for revisiting the churches which had been established on their first journey. It gave Paul the opportunity of a quicker visit to the Galatian churches, without taking the extra time which would have been required to go through Cyprus; and he would also have the advantage of the testimony of Silas who had been selected by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem to reassure the Gentile brethren in An-

tioch. Judging from what happened in Antioch, it is quite possible that the Judaizers had also already begun their work in Galatia. And, judging from what was said about their plans in the paragraph from which the golden text is taken, it is very probable that Paul and Silas had thought that after traversing Southern Galatia from east to west, they would continue their westward journey from Antioch of Pisidia along the great route through the populous valley of the Lycus and Meander rivers, where they could evangelize such centers as Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis, and then on to Ephesus, the brilliant capital of the province of Asia.

#### ***And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.***

Syria was the region in which Antioch was located, while Cilicia was a province to the north and west, of which Tarsus was the capital. Both provinces were on the Mediterranean Sea. See map. Benjamin Willard Robinson, in describing the beginning of Paul's second journey, in company with Silas, says, "Setting out from Antioch by the land route, Paul and Silas on their first day's journey traveled along the picturesque road up through the Syrian Gates in the little range of hills which every tourist must cross today in riding from Antioch to the northern port at Alexandretta. As the path then led them out of sight of the city of Antioch, Paul and Silas would be talking together, not only of revisiting churches already founded, but of carrying the news to far more distant countries. After following the shore for a few miles they came to Issus. Probably they slept there the first night, within sound of the waves of the Mediterranean. Paul would remember the history of the city as clearly as any American remembers the story of Bunker Hill or Lexington. He knew that the battle which Alexander had here fought decided that the culture of Macedonia should penetrate Syria and Palestine. Perhaps he resolved that night in some dim way that the new religion of Palestine, going in the reverse direction, should penetrate if possible even to Macedonia. We have already noted the interesting coincidence that Paul journeyed

with the power of the gospel through Asia Minor and over into Macedonia by practically the same route which Alexander had traversed with his phalanxes on his eastward march."

It probably took another day or two for the missionaries to reach Tarsus, and it is reasonable to suppose that Paul was glad to see his home again; although there is nothing said about their remaining there any length of time. Paul had doubtless preached in Tarsus and others points in Cilicia, when the Jerusalem brethren sent him to Tarsus. See Acts 9: 30. We do know that they confirmed the churches in Cilicia, as well as in Syria.

*And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra.* When Paul and Silas left Tarsus, their journey took them across the Taurus Mountains by the Cilician Gates through which Alexander had come. It probably took them four or five days to go from there to Derbe, the farthestmost point of the first journey. Nothing is said by Luke regarding their stay in Derbe, before going on to Lystra, the place where Paul was stoned on the first journey.

*And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of Jewess that believed; but his father was a Greek. The same was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and he took and circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those parts: for they all knew that his father was a Greek.* At Lystra Paul found a young man whom he desired to have with him in the work, possibly to take the place which John Mark formerly filled. It appears that Timothy, along with his mother, and possibly his grandmother, accepted Christianity when Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel in Lystra on their first missionary journey. He was evidently converted by Paul, since the apostle frequently referred to him as his son in the gospel. (Cf. 1 Cor. 4: 17; 1 Tim. 1: 2; 2 Tim. 1: 2.) Timothy had been thoroughly trained in the Old Testament Scriptures (2 Tim. 3: 15), but for some reason he had not been circumcised. This failure may have been due to the influence of his father.

It was pointed out in a previous lesson that Timothy very probably was a witness of the terrible sufferings which Paul endured while in Lystra the first time (Acts 14: 19, 20), and he evidently knew about the apostle's other sufferings which came upon him while he was in that section of the country. See 2 Tim. 3: 10, 11; Acts 14: 21, 22. All of this must have made a profound impression upon Timothy's tender heart. If 1 Tim. 1: 18 refers to the time of our lesson today, it is possible that Paul was aided in the decision to have Timothy accompany him by prophetic utterances, probably those of Silas, who was himself a prophet. (See Acts 15: 32.) At any rate, it is certain that no mistake was made; for it appears that Timothy was always faithful to the work which was given him to do.

Since Paul's plan was to preach to the Jews first, it seems that he fully realized that the presence of Timothy, a half-Jew by birth and uncircumcised, would constitute an insurmountable obstacle to success in reaching any of them with the gospel, unless Timothy should be circumcised. Paul, accordingly, "took and circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those parts: for they all knew that his father was a Greek." (See 1 Tim. 4: 14; 2 Tim. 1: 6, 14; cf. Acts 13: 1-3.) From this time onward he was probably known as an evangelist. (See 2 Tim. 4: 5.) Thus Timothy became a loyal companion as he served with Paul in the furtherance of the gospel. He was active in preaching, represented Paul in some special assignments, and joined with him in sending several of the epistles which have come down to us. The great apostle to the Gentiles never paid a greater tribute to any of his fellow-workers than the one he penned regarding Timothy. (See Phil. 2: 19-22.)

### **The Jerusalem Decrees Delivered to the Churches**

(Acts 16: 4, 5)

*And as they went on their way through the cities, they delivered them the decrees to keep which had been ordained of the apostles and elders that were at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in*

*the faith, and increased in number daily.* The term "decrees" refers to the decisions which were embodied in the letter which the apostles and elders sent to Antioch by Paul and Barnabas, and which was confirmed by the words of Judas and Silas. As was stated at the beginning of this lesson, Paul's purpose in revisiting these churches was to "see how they fare," and we can see from that

which he and Silas did that the result was twofold, namely, (1) the churches were strengthened in the faith, and (2) *t h e y* increased in number daily. This is what the Lord ordained in the commission which he gave to his disciples, as reported by Matthew. (See Matt. 28: 19, 20.) And this is the plan which should be followed today by the Lord's people everywhere.

### Questions for Discussion

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

#### Introduction

What was the occasion for Paul's second missionary journey?  
What particular reason did he have for being anxious about the churches?  
What previous experience did he and Barnabas have in this respect?  
What lesson should we learn from this?  
What were some of the events which had affected the relationship between Paul and Barnabas?

#### The Golden Text

Give the setting of this text.  
Why is the paragraph from which it is taken so remarkable?  
What lesson does this teach us regarding our plans and opportunities?

#### The Separation of Paul and Barnabas

What indication do we have regarding the success of the first missionary journey?  
Where had churches apparently been established?  
What was the occasion for the break between Paul and Barnabas?  
Discuss the action of Mark and the effect it had on his character.  
Show how the same principle works in our day.  
What were the possible influences which led to Mark's restoration to Paul's favor?  
What lesson should we learn from this experience?  
Give reasons for thinking, or not thinking, that hard feelings arose between Paul and Barnabas as the result of their sharp contention.

What did each of the men do when they separated?  
What particular fitness did Silas have for the work with Paul?

#### From Antioch to Lystra and the Call of Timothy

What advantages seemed to have resulted in the separation of Paul and Barnabas, so far as the work they proposed to do was concerned?  
What further pioneer work did Paul and Silas propose to do?  
What was their principal work in Syria and Cilicia?

Discuss their probable route through these two provinces. Consult map.  
About how long did it taken them to get from Antioch to Lystra?  
What unusual person did Paul find in Lystra?

Discuss his family relationship and the probable time of his conversion.  
What qualification did Timothy have for the work with Paul?  
What aid did Paul apparently have in selecting Timothy to accompany him?  
Why did Paul have him circumcised?  
What was the difference between his case and that of Titus. (Gal. 2: 3-5.)  
What is known regarding his future work with Paul?  
What great tribute did Paul pay him?

#### The Jerusalem Decrees Delivered to the Churches

What were these decrees?  
How well did Paul carry out his original purpose for his second journey?  
What important lesson should we learn from the work which he and Silas did?

## Lesson V—July 29, 1962

### PAUL AT PHILIPPI

#### Lesson Text

Acts 16: 10-15, 28-34

10 And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Mac-e-do-ni-a, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel unto them.

11 Setting sail therefore from Tro'-as, we made a straight course to

Sam'-o-thrace, and the day following to Ne-ap'-o-lis;

12 And from thence to Phi-lip'-pi, which is a city of Mac-e-do-ni-a, the first of the district, a Roman colony; and we were in this city carrying certain days.

13 And on the sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down, and spake unto the women that were come together.

14 And a certain woman named Lyd'-i-a, a seller of purple, of the city of Thy-a-ti'-ra, one that worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

28 But Paul cried with a loud

voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

29 And he called for lights and sprang in, and, trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Si'-las,

30 And brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Je'-sus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house.

32 And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately.

34 And he brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening*” (Acts 16: 25.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 16: 16-27.

Daily Bible Readings

July 23. M.....	The Call to Europe (Acts 16: 6-15)
July 24. T. ....	The Call of Abraham (Gen. 12: 1-9)
July 25. W.....	The Call of Jonah (Jonah 3: 1-4: 3)
July 26. T.....	The Call of Moses (Ex. 3: 9-17)
July 27. F.....	The Light of Nations (Isa. 60: 1-6)
July 28. S.....	The Gospel for All (Isa. 2: 1-4)
July 29. S.....	The Gospel of Peace (Rom. 10: 1-15)

TIME.—A.D. 50.

PLACES.—Troas, Samothrace, Neapolis, and Philippi.

PERSONS.—Paul and his company; Lydia and her household; the jailor and his household.

Introduction

The city of Philippi was originally called *Crenides*, because of the numerous springs or fountains which were found there. “Crenidus” means *little fountain*. The city was within the limits of ancient Thrace until about the middle of the fourth century, B. C., when it was captured by Philip, the father of Alexander the Great. The chief importance of the city to Philip was due to the fact that there were rich gold mines in its vicinity; and he, of course, felt that the produce from them would greatly aid him in carrying out his ambitious program. The town, accordingly, was enlarged and strengthened, and called Philippi after the name of its captor. The city passed to the Romans through a military victory in 168 B.C.

The value of the city as a com-

mercial center was no less evident. It was situated upon the great Roman Egnatian Road, the thoroughfare which joined the east and the west, and was itself the emporium of a large industry which circled about the rich gold mines which dotted the surrounding territory. Such a place would easily attract foreign business capital; and this may easily account for Lydia's having gone there as “a seller of purple.” The city of Philippi was about ten miles inland from its seaport town Neapolis. The two places were separated by a mountain range, the pass over which was about sixteen hundred feet above sea level. A part of the Egnatian Road connected the two cities. Philippi passed from a comparative state of oblivion in 42 B.C., when the great battle between Octavius and

Antony, on the one side, and Brutus and Cassius, on the other, was fought in its vicinity. Brutus and Cassius were two of Julius Caesar's leading assassins, while Octavius and Antony were two of his leading avengers. The battle resulted in a decisive victory for the avengers.

Later, when Octavius became Augustus Caesar, the Greek city of Philippi attracted his attention; and, "having to find places of settlement for Italian soldiers who had served their time and could not be maintained in Italy, he established at Philippi, among other towns, a Roman colony, to which he granted the *jus Italicum* as an attraction to

settlers. This privilege included (a) exemption from the oversight of the provincial governor, (b) exemption from the poll and property taxes, (c) rights to property in the soil regulated by Roman law." (The Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. III, p. 399f.) The deterioration of the city, since the days of Paul, has been so complete as to leave no knowledge of its ultimate destruction. There are many ruins, but no systematic excavations have been carried out; and there are few, if indeed any, inhabitants there now. The sun has long since set for that ancient, but well known and highly interesting city.

### The Golden Text

*"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening."*

Following the conversion of Lydia and her household, Paul and his company continued to frequent the place where they first met the woman in Philippi or some other place of prayer, and on one occasion as they were going there, a certain maid having a spirit of divination met them, who brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. She continued to follow the missionaries for many days, and cried out, saying, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim unto you the way of salvation."

But such testimony from a demon did not appeal to Paul, notwithstanding its truthfulness. He simply did not want the impression left on the people of Philippi that there was an alliance between the missionaries of Christ and demons. He, accordingly, commanded the demon, *in the name of Jesus Christ*, to come out of the maid. And it came out that very hour. This resulted in arousing the masters of the maid into open and violent opposition to Paul and his company, which ultimately led to

their being unjustly punished and imprisoned. Although suffering unjustly, they did not complain; for the things which happened unto them fell out rather unto the progress of the gospel.

During the night of their imprisonment, instead of feeling sorry for themselves and pronouncing anathemas upon their persecutors, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them. This was about the hour of midnight, and such conduct must have had a strange, if not a favorable effect upon the listening inmates of that prison-house. Then suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison-house were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened; and everyone's bands were loosed. The jailor woke up about this time, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to take his own life, since he supposed all the prisoners had escaped and that he would be executed for allowing that to happen. The result, however, was very different, as we shall see further on in this study.

### The Text Explained

#### From Troas to Philippi

(Acts 16: 10-12)

*And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel unto them.* Paul and his companions

had gone through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in the province of Asia. And when they were come over against Mysia, they made an effort to go into Bithynia; but again the Spirit of Jesus would not permit

that. They then passed by Mysia, and came down to the seacoast town of Troas. It was there that Paul had his vision of a man of Macedonia, standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. When Paul made known the vision, he and those with him immediately concluded that God was calling them to preach the gospel in Macedonia.

The famous "we" passages of the Book of Acts indicate that Luke, the author of it, joined the missionaries at Troas and accompanied them to Philippi. Smith's Bible Dictionary thinks that it is perhaps not too arbitrary to conjecture that the apostle, having recently suffered in health (Gal. 4: 13), derived benefit from the medical skill and attendance of "the beloved physician." Some Bible students also are of the opinion that Luke lived in Philippi, since he apparently remained there when Paul and Silas left, as may be seen by the substitution of "they" for "we." (See Acts 16: 40-17: 1ff.) As soon as their duty was clear to the missionary party, they immediately sought to go forth into Macedonia, probably by making inquiry for a ship going that way and preparing to sail at once.

*Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a straight course to Samothrace, and the day following to Neapolis; and from thence to Philippi, which is a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a Roman colony: and we were in the city tarrying certain days.* To make "a straight course" is "a nautical term for sailing before the wind." Samothrace was an island in the Aegean Sea, almost half way between Troas and Neapolis. Later on (Acts 20: 6) it took five days to make this distance in the opposite direction; but that might have been due to a delay along the way, probably in Samothrace, for loading or unloading freight, or it could have been due to contrary winds. It is interesting to note the lesson which Paul later drew from the idea of the "Roman colony," when he wrote his letter to the Philippians. (See Phil. 3: 17-21.) In saying that they were "tarrying certain days" in the city, might suggest that Luke, like the others, was only there temporarily.

## A Heart the Lord Opened

(Acts 16: 13-15)

*And on the sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down, and spake unto the women that were come together.* Paul and his company evidently spent the first few days they were in Philippi surveying the possible opportunities they might have in preaching the gospel there. God had called them to the work, but it was necessary for them to determine which would be the best place to begin. In some way they got the idea that some Jews had a place of prayer outside the city gates, and they evidently waited until the sabbath day arrived, in the hope that they might have the opportunity of meeting with and speaking to those who gathered there. The fact that the place was outside the city, and attended only by women, suggests that there were not enough Jews in Philippi to maintain a synagogue. This should be a lesson to the "few" in any location.

*And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul.* Although Luke says that "we" spake unto the women, it appears from this verse that Paul was the principal speaker. Lydia was a merchant-woman from Asia, the seat of one of the seven churches of Rev. 2, 3. The fact that she was a dealer in purple, which was evidently a costly fabric, indicates that, while not above the necessity of working, she was, nevertheless, in comparatively easy circumstances. She also was the head of a household, with a house large enough to entertain Paul and his three companions.

Something of her character may be learned from the statement of the text, "one that worshipped God," and from the further consideration that in this heathen city, where the sabbath of the Jewish Scriptures was unknown to its inhabitants, she was faithful in observing it. Thus, while other dealers in purple goods were, in all probability, busy on that day, she closed her shop, regardless of

the demands of competition; and while there was no synagogue in which she might worship, and no male Jews to conduct the accustomed service, she and those associated with her habitually left the noisy city, and spent the holy day in prayer on the bank of the river. Such fidelity to God, under circumstances so unfavorable, is not often seen in our own land of opportunity. There are many professed Christians today who will let business, pleasure, company, and almost anything else, keep them from observing the Lord's day as the New Testament directs. (Cf. Luke 8: 14; Rev. 1: 10; Acts 2: 42; 20: 7; Heb. 10: 25ff.)

Those who read this passage now under consideration sometimes wonder why the heart of a woman like Lydia needed to be opened. That her heart was closed in some sense admits of no doubt; but it is equally certain that it was not due to inherited depravity, nor to the hardness of a sinful life; her character, as we have just seen, was wholly against such an idea. Her heart was closed in the same sense in which the hearts of other pious and earnest Jews and Jewish proselytes were closed, that is, by their misconception, and consequent attitude, regarding Christ. Because they thought that the Messiah was coming to establish an earthly kingdom, their hearts were stedfastly closed against him as the crucified Redeemer. (Cf. 1 Cor. 1: 23.) This condition in Lydia's heart had to be corrected before she would give heed to the things that were spoken by Paul. The opening was done by testimony, and when she learned the truth about Jesus, she was willing to do that which he commands. Many people today who reject the gospel are in need of the very same help which was given to Lydia; and if they will only listen to the gospel message, they too will give heed to the things the New Testament teaches.

*And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.* The term "constrained" means to urge strongly or use moral persuasion. The original word is found in the New Testament

only twice—here and in Luke 24: 29. (Cf. 1 Sam. 28: 23.) The reason for Lydia's being baptized, together with those of her household, was because she gave heed to the preaching of Paul; and Paul, of course, preached that which Jesus authorized. (See Mark 16: 15, 16; Gal. 1: 11, 12 (1: 6-9); 3: 26, 27.) Furneaux notes that "this statement cannot be claimed as any argument for infant baptism, since the Greek word [household] may mean her servants or her work-people." Meyer observes that "if, in the Jewish and Gentile families which were converted to Christ, there were children, their baptism is to be assumed in *those* cases, when they were so far advanced that they could and did confess their faith in Jesus as the Messiah; for this was the universal, absolutely necessary qualification for the reception of baptism." The four so-called household conversions of the Book of Acts are Cornelius, Lydia, the Philippian jailor, and Crispus. (Acts 10; 16; 18.)

#### The Conversion of the Jailor and His Household (Acts 16: 28-34)

*But Paul cried with a loud voice, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.* It sometimes happens that a prisoner confers a great favor upon his jailor; and this was certainly true in the case now before us. Neither the magistrates nor the jailor had shown any mercy on Paul and Silas, but there was no resentment in the hearts of these godly men for their persecutors. Indeed, there could be no room for such a feeling, as long as their hearts were filled with prayer and praise unto God. And there was nothing about their attitude and conduct which cannot be imitated by the Lord's people today. If Christians, instead of so much complaining and criticizing, would spend more of their time praying and singing praises unto God, they, too, would make a profound impression on those about them. Paul not only was able to save the jailor from a violent physical death; he made an opportunity for preaching the gospel unto him.

*And he called for lights and sprang in, and, trembling for fear, fell*



*down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* The proponents of sprinkling for baptism sometimes try to leave the impression that the conversion of the jailor took place in the prison cell; the text plainly says that he brought them out of their prison before he asked what he should do. And, too, the question is often asked, What salvation was he seeking? (1) It was not salvation from the earthquake; for its terrors had passed and he was free from them. (2) He was not seeking salvation from the wrath of the Roman government; for his prisoners were all in their places. The context, as we shall see, plainly shows that he was seeking the salvation which involved his relation with God—salvation from sin; for that is what Paul and Silas proclaimed unto him, and that is what he accepted and rejoiced in.

*And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house.* Although his resolution to seek salvation was made in the midst of events which were both sudden and dramatic, it is interesting to observe that the jailor's conversion was carefully directed by the word of the Lord. Sudden and terrifying events often start men in the direction of better things, but they alone are not sufficient to bring them to them. We have seen this illustrated in the case of Saul of Tarsus; but we know that there was something for him to do. The sudden death of a friend, which was followed shortly afterward by a narrow escape from death by lightning in a forest between Erfurt and Eisleben, Germany, caused Martin Luther to obey what he then regarded as the commands of a higher law. Terrified by the violence of the storm that was raging around him, and especially by the bolts of lightning which were crashing through the trees, he addressed one of the patron saints of his childhood in these words, "Help me, dear Saint Anna, I will be a monk." Those who know something of the life of Luther understand that it was this terrifying experience that caused him to resolve upon the course which led to

his great influence in the Protestant Reformation.

No one can read Paul's reply to the jailor in the light of the full context and get the idea that the apostle meant that salvation is by faith only. It is certain that Paul, in speaking the word of the Lord unto him, explained just how a person is saved from sin. No one can believe on the Lord Jesus who does not know he is, what he did to bring about the salvation of the lost, and that which he said about the method of obtaining it. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 1-4; Mark 16: 15, 16.) Inasmuch as the jailor and his house are presented to us by the inspired historian as an example of how people are saved by faith, it is in order to ask, (1) how strong must faith be before it will save? and (2) what did the jailor and his house do to prove that they had faith? The answers to these two questions will be seen in the remainder of the text.

*And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately. And he brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God.* It should be noted that the members of his house did that which the jailor did. They heard the word of the Lord, obeyed the word of the Lord, and rejoiced in their salvation, all of which shows that they were old enough to be responsible before God.

When the jailor washed the stripes of Paul and Silas he gave evidence of a change in his attitude toward them on his part. The night before he had thrust them into prison, with no thought for their comfort, but now, although he cannot undo that which was done to them, he can do what he is able in the way of relieving their pain. And after having done that, he was baptized, he and his house, immediately. The fact that he *took* them implies that they went to a place where sufficient water was available for the purposes stated—washing their stripes and baptism. After that he *brought* them up into his house, set food before them, and rejoiced in their newly found salvation. The expression "having believed in God" shows that their

faith was made perfect when they titude and had been baptized. (Cf. had demonstrated their penitent at- James 2: 14-26; Heb. 11: 7.)

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

#### Introduction

Give some of the historical facts regarding Philippi.

What of its value as a commercial center?

Where was the city located?

What was its status when Paul and his company went there?

#### The Golden Text

Why did Paul reject the true testimony of the maid who was possessed of the demon?

Under what conditions were Paul and Silas put into the prison?

How do you explain their ability to pray and sing hymns unto God?

#### From Troas to Philippi

What vision had Paul seen?

Give the facts leading up to it.

What do we learn from the "we" passages of the Book of Acts?

What conclusion did the company draw from the vision?

What is implied in the expression 'straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia'?

What was the direction of their voyage and how long were they en route?

What did the party do after arriving in Philippi?

#### A Heart the Lord Opened

How did Paul and his company come to go out to the place of prayer?

What is suggested in all this regarding the Jewish population in the city?

Who was Lydia and what was she doing there, that is, in Philippi?

What do we learn from the narrative regarding her character?

What lesson is there in this for us?

Why did her heart need opening?

What application does this principle have today?

Why was she baptized?

Why did she "constrain" them to come into her house?

Who was included in her household?

How do we know that there were no infants in it?

#### The Conversion of the Jailor and His Household

In what way may a prisoner be a blessing to his jailor?

Why didn't Paul and Silas have a feeling of resentment toward their jailor?

What lesson is there in this for us?

What blessings did Paul confer upon the Philippian jailor?

How did the jailor respond to Paul's warning?

For what salvation was he seeking?

How did Paul answer his question?

Distinguish between the circumstances surrounding his conversion and the conversion itself.

How do you know that Paul was not teaching salvation by faith only?

How strong must faith be before it will save?

How does one demonstrate that he has faith?

Show how these questions are answered in the text now before us.

When did the jailor believe in God?

## Lesson VI—August 5, 1962

### PAUL PREACHES IN ATHENS

#### Lesson Text

Acts 17: 22-34

22 And Paul stood in the midst of the Ar-e-op'-a-gus, and said,

Ye men of Ath'-ens, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious.

23 For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you.

24 The God that made the world and all things therein, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

25 Neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

26 And he made of one every na-

tion of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation;

27 That they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us:

28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said,

For we are also his offspring.

29 Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the God-head is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man.

30 The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he

commandeth men that they should  
all everywhere repent:

31 Inasmuch as he hath appointed  
a day in which he will judge the  
world in righteousness by the man  
whom he hath ordained; whereof he  
hath given assurance unto all men,  
in that he hath raised him from the  
dead.

32 Now when they heard of the

resurrection of the dead, some  
mocked; but others said, We will  
hear thee concerning this yet again.

33 Thus Paul went out from  
among them.

34 But certain men clave unto him,  
and believed: among whom also was  
Di-o-nys-i-us the Ar-e-op'a-gite,  
and a woman named Dam'a-ris, and  
others with them.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship  
in spirit and truth" (John 4: 24.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—Acts 17: 16-21.

## Daily Bible Readings

July 30. M.....	Paul in Thessalonica (Acts 17: 1-9)
July 31. T.....	Paul in Berea (Acts 17: 10-13)
August 1. W.....	Paul Goes to Athens (Acts 17: 14-34)
August 2. T.....	Witnessing for Christ (John 5: 30-38)
August 3. F.....	Scriptures Testify of Christ (John 5: 39-47)
August 4. S.....	Witnessing for God (1 Thess. 2: 1-16)
August 5. S.....	Worldly Wisdom Rejected (1 Cor. 1: 18-31)

**TIME.**—A.D. 51.

**PLACE.**—Athens, in the Areopagus.

**PERSONS.**—Paul and the Athenian philosophers.

## Introduction

It appears that Paul and Silas returned to their prison cell following the conversion of the jailor and his household. The next morning the magistrates sent to let them go, and this was reported to the missionaries by the jailor. But Paul demanded and secured a public acknowledgement that they had been mistreated before he would accept the offer of liberty. After leaving Philippi, their next preaching was done in Thessalonica, where a church was established; but the missionaries were compelled to flee the city because of persecution. It is well to observe that Luke did not accompany the missionaries from Philippi, as may be seen by the absence of "we" and the substitution of "they." Berea was next entered, and there Paul and Silas found the people to be 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." But they were not permitted to remain there very long, due to the persecution which was stirred up by the Jews of Thessalonica. "And then immediately the brethren sent forth

Paul to go as far as to the sea: and Silas and Timothy abode there still. But they that conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timothy that they should come to him with all speed, they departed." (Acts 17: 14, 15.)

It is not known just how long Paul waited in Athens for Silas and Timothy to come to him, but from 1 Thess. 3: Iff, it appears that Timothy did reach Paul but was sent back to Thessalonica to see about the young church there. If Silas went to Athens, he also was sent away, possibly to Philippi; for that church was deeply interested in Paul and his work. At any rate, both Timothy and Silas came from Macedonia to Paul in Corinth with messages of relief for him. (See Acts 18: 6; 2 Cor. 11: 8ff.) But while Paul waited for them after he reached Athens, his spirit was aroused or irritated within him as he saw the city full of idols. It was satirically said by one of the ancient writers that it was easier to find a god than a man in Athens. Another one said that it was almost impossible for one to make his way

through the idols, while Xenophon called the city "one great altar, one great offering to the gods."

But Paul, as usual, began his testimony for Christ in the synagogue of the Jews, but extended his efforts "in the marketplace every day with them that met him." Among the latter were some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who encountered him. The Epicureans held that the happiness of mankind was most effectively promoted by striving for pleasure, that is, bodily and mental states free from pain and care; while the Stoics believed that human happiness was best attained by the practice of virtue as indicated by the law of nature. This led them to strive to be indifferent to both sor-

row and pleasure. Both groups, however, were united in their opposition to the idea of life after death. They referred to Paul as a "babbler" (*spermologos*) literally, a picker up of seed, as birds. The term was also used to describe a man who hung around the marketplace and picked up scraps of food which fell from the carts; and was extended to rhetoricians and plagiarists who pick up scraps of wisdom from others. The term, as used by Luke expressed the fine scorn which the Athenian philosophers and men of the world felt for any outsider who dared to come into their marketplace and talk philosophy. But notwithstanding this attitude, there was some who wanted to hear Paul.

### The Golden Text

**"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth"** The very presence of the idols in Athens shows that the people there were worshippers, as Paul later told them; and their effort to worship the "UNKNOWN GOD" demonstrated that they did not want to leave any deity without due consideration. The lesson, however, is profitable to us, only as we endeavor to learn the meaning of true and acceptable worship. Man is by nature a creature of worship, and it is as natural for him to worship as it is for him to eat. In fact, it is impossible for him to live and not worship. He may not always worship the right object, or in the right way; but he will worship, nevertheless.

Worship is not simply the performance of certain acts; rather, it is something which takes place in the heart—"the adoring reverence of the human spirit for the Divine." It is the paying of divine honors to the God of the Bible. But before there can be any true worship, the emotions must be aroused; and that

is done by the knowledge of who and what God is, and what he has done for us.

The essential conditions of true worship are set forth in the text now under consideration, namely, (1) *the right object*—God. The conditions of worship are such that the worshipper becomes like the object he worships. Therefore, the idea which man forms of God will have much to do with the manner of his worship and the development of his own character. (2) *The right motive—in spirit*. That is, sincere, not informal nor indifferent. True worship includes a spiritual sense of the object worshipped, and a spiritual communion with him. (3) *The right way—in truth*. This means that one is guided by the truth, and is therefore free from false conceptions which result from imperfect knowledge. Acceptable worship includes a truthful conception of the object worshipped; and this kind of conception can be gained only by learning the truth.

### The Text Explained

#### The Unknown God Proclaimed

(Acts 17: 22-29)

*And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus, and said,*

*Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found*

*also an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you.* The Areopagus or "Hill of Ares" was the meeting place of the council or court of Athens. It was located on a hill to the west of the Acropolis, that is, the upper fortified part of the city.

*Ares* was the Greek god of war, and corresponded to "Mars," the Roman god of war; and hence, *Mars hill* in the King James Version. Paul was taken from the "down town" area (the marketplace) to the quieter Areopagus, where he would have a better chance to speak, and where the philosophers would have a better opportunity to listen, to this "new teaching." Luke added parenthetically, "Now all the Athenians and the strangers sojourning there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing."

There is no reason to suppose that Paul's opening words to that select group were an accommodation to the practice of Athenian orators to begin an address with a mere compliment. But at the same time it is possible that the apostle made use of words of doubtful meaning, which could not possibly provoke hostility at the outset, while leaving unexpressed his own judgment as to the nature of this reverence for the divine "with kindly ambiguity."

The expression "very religious," marginal, *somewhat superstitious*, is rendered "very demon-fearing" by McGarvey. The original word *deisidaimon* is a compound of *deido*, to fear, and *daimon*, demon. See Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*. McGarvey notes that "the comparative degree of the adjective [used in the text does not institute an explicit comparison between the Athenians and others in this respect; for the context furnishes no basis for such a comparison; and therefore, according to a common rule of Greek grammar, it is to be construed as indicating an unusual degree of the quality referred to, and should be preceded by the adverb *very* in the English rendering of it. 'Very demon-fearing,' then, is the exact meaning of the word."

It should be kept in mind that "demons" and "devils" were not the same. There were many demons (Luke 8: 26-30), but only one devil (Rev. 12: 9). Both Jews and Gentiles of Bible times believed that demons were the spirits of dead men, with this difference: the Jews believed that they were the spirits of the wicked dead, while the Gentiles thought that they were the spirits of both the good and the bad. Josephus

says that demons are no other than the spirits of the wicked, that enter into men that are alive and kill them, unless they can obtain some help against them. (See Wars, 7: 6, 3.) Neither Jesus nor the apostles tried to correct the view of demons held by the Jews, so far as the record is concerned. Plato, on the other hand, says, "The poets speak excellently who affirm that when good men die they obtain great honor and dignity, and become demons." He also shows the basis for their worship when he notes that "demons are reporters and carriers from men to the gods, and again from the gods to men, of the supplications and prayers of the one, and of the injunctions and rewards of devotion from the other." Paul, of course, did not subscribe to the Greek view of demons; he simply used the fact that they were "very demon-fearing" to introduce them to the true God. It was a master stroke on his part when he showed them that they were already ignorantly worshipping the God whom he was proclaiming unto them. This at once brushed aside any notion they might entertain that he was either violating Roman law, or was guilty of heresy in proclaiming his new message.

*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.* It is said that the Athenians recognized about thirty thousand gods. They had one god for this and another for that, as, for example, Jupiter, the god of the sky, and Neptune, the god of the sea. But these were regarded as supervisors, rather than creators. In contrast to this idea, Paul proclaimed God as the Lord, that is, the absolute possessor of both heaven and earth, and not simply parts of them. It is possible that Paul pointed to the Parthenon, the temple of the goddess Athena, whom the Romans called Minerva, when he told his hearers that God does not dwell in temples made with hands. And then, as a further mark of contrast between their deities and the God whom he proclaimed, Paul noted that his God

is independent of all his creatures, and is himself the source of their very existence.

*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; as certain even of your own poets have said,*

*For we are also his offspring.*

*Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man.*

Thus, instead of being the ruler of a single nation, which he defends against other nations, God controls all men of every nation, since they are his by right of creation. God also determined their "appointed seasons," that is, the periods of human history, which he controls; and the "bounds of their habitation," which is to say that he determined the dwelling of the nations, both as to duration in time, and extension in space. The over-all Divine purpose in all this, the creation and the controlling of all man, was that they should seek God. Meyer notes that "the great thought of the passage is simply: God the Author, the Governor, and the End of the world's history: *from God, through God, to God.* Paul keeps consistently to his figure. The seeker who comes on his object *touches* and grasps it, and has now in reality *found* it. Hence the meaning without the figure is. *if perchance they might become conscious of God and of their relation to him, and might appropriate this consciousness as a spiritual possession.* Thus they would have understood the guidance of the nations as a revelation of God, and have complied with its holy design in their own case."

To say that in God we live, and move, and have our being, is to say that we are dependent on him for our very existence. The poetical words which Paul quoted are found in the works of Aratus of Cilicia, a poet of Paul's own province, and in Cleanthes' Hymn to Jupiter. The latter was a Stoic philosopher, and

it is very likely that Paul had him in mind—"your own poets." Paul knew, of course, that the words were written of Jupiter, also known as Zeus, his Greek name, but he applied the idea to the point he had just made regarding the relation of men to God. This was his way of showing the absurdity of idolatry. The people who were listening to Paul knew that men are not made of gold, or silver, or stone; and it was therefore absurd to think that the Being from whom they had issued was composed of such materials, having been graven by art and device of man. The term "Godhead" is used here in the sense of that which is Divine.

### **This Divine Relationship Imposes Human Responsibility**

(Acts 17: 30, 31)

*The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* "The times of ignorance" evidently refers to the times before the coming of Christ when, as Paul told the people at Lystra, God "suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways." (See Acts 14: 16.) Their sinful past was not "overlooked" in the sense that God was indifferent to or excused their wrongdoing. It apparently was a part of the over-all plan of God in preparing the world for the coming and reception of Christianity. During the last fifteen hundred years before the coming of Christ, the human race, generally speaking, was divided into two major groups, namely, (1) the Israelites, or the Jews, as they later came to be called; and (2) the Gentiles. Each of these two divisions was divinely used to demonstrate some essential truths which had to be realized before men were ready to accept salvation through Christ.

The Jews, for example, were used to demonstrate that no one can be saved merely by keeping a law. (Cf. Rom. 3: 19, 20.) And at the same time God was allowing the Gentiles to demonstrate that natural religion

is wholly inadequate for the needs of our fallen race. (Cf. Rom. 2: 12-16.) And so, after sufficient time had elapsed for these two demonstrations to be completed, God sent forth his Son to be the Saviour of all men. (Cf. Gal. 4: 4; 1 John 4: 14.) When the plan of salvation had been perfected, the gospel message was sent forth into all the world. (See Mark 16: 15, 16; Col. 1: 23.)

Paul's point in discussing the issue before the Athenian philosophers was this: There was a time when God made no effort to compel obedience on the part of a large portion of the human race, such as you; but now things have changed, and he commands that all men everywhere repent, that is, change their attitude toward sin or recognize it for what it is, and get rid of it; and as a motive for this action, the apostle told them that a judgment day is coming, at which time the world will be judged in righteousness, or according to the standard of righteousness, by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he has given assurance of this to all men, in that he has raised him from the dead.

This was as near as Paul had come to mentioning Jesus during his discourse; but since his preaching of "Jesus and the resurrection" (verse 18) was the occasion for their taking him to the Areopagus, that they might know what "this new teaching is," it was evident that they understood what he meant. Jesus had said before his death on the cross that the world was to be judged by him (cf. John 5: 22-29), and his resurrection from the dead fully confirmed this; but Paul's auditors did not know about it; and the evident sudden manner in which they interrupted his address prevented their being taught it.

### The Results Which Followed

(Acts 17: 32-34)

*Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked;*

*but others said, We will hear thee concerning this yet again. Thus Paul went out from among them. But certain men clave unto him, and believed: among whom also was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.* There is no article before either resurrection or dead, and so the literal reading would be "a resurrection of dead men." The Greeks believed that the spirits of men would live on, as has already been implied; but they had no conception of a resurrection of the body. The people before Paul had listened to his message with apparent respect until he spoke of the resurrection; and it was then that three different attitudes came to light, namely, (1) the mockers, or those who showed contempt; (2) the more polite ones who, while unconvinced and probably favored an adjournment, did say that they would hear him again; and (3) the believers. But Paul went out from among them, and, so far as is known, he never returned to Athens again. Robertson says that Dionysius the Areopagite was one of the college of twelve judges who had helped to make Athens famous. We would call him a member of the supreme court of Athens. Nothing is known of Damaris or of the "others" who believed.

Some people have spoken of Paul's efforts in Athens as a failure, or a semi-failure, but no sermon is a failure which leads souls to Christ. However, it is possible that the apostle's experience there, in trying to reach the philosophers with a somewhat "philosophic approach," led to his statement to the Corinthians concerning his feeling when he reached their city a short time after his Athenian address: "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2: 1, 2.)

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today?  
Repeat the golden text.  
Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

What did Paul and Silas apparently do following the conversion of the jailor?

Give the circumstances relating to their leaving Philippi.  
Tell something of their experience in Thessalonica.  
How were the missionaries received in Berea?  
How did Paul come to go to Athens?

What was his reaction to the conditions there?  
 Where and under what circumstances did he begin his teaching there?  
 How was he regarded by the philosophers?

#### The Golden Text

How did the subject of worship come up in Athens?  
 What is the principal value of the lesson to us?  
 What is worship?  
 What are the essential conditions of acceptable worship?

#### The Unknown God Proclaimed

Where and what was the Aeropagus?  
 Why is it called "Mars hill" in the King James Version?  
 Why did the philosophers take Paul to the Aeropagus?  
 How did Paul begin his address to them?  
 Why did he probably choose this method?  
 In what sense were they "very religious"?  
 What were demons and what was demon-worship?  
 What was the principal difference between the belief of the Jews and Gentiles in respect to demons?  
 What must have been the effect of Paul's opening words on his hearers?  
 What was his first argument to them?  
 Discuss this contrast.  
 What was his second argument?  
 What was meant by determining their

appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation?

What was the real lesson in all this?

What does it mean to live, and move, and have our being in God?

What use did Paul make of some poetical words?

#### This Divine Relationship Imposes Human Responsibility

What were the "times of ignorance"?

In what sense did God "overlook" the sins of men then?

What demonstrations were made by the Jews and Gentiles in preparation for the coming of Christ?

What was Paul's purpose in discussing this point?

What is repentance?

What motive is given to bring men to repentance?

Why did Paul probably omit the name of Jesus in addressing the philosophers?

#### The Results Which Followed

What effect did the mention of the resurrection have on the audience?

What three different attitudes came to light then?

What was an Areopagite?

What can you say of the results of Paul's address?

What probable effect did his experience with the pagan philosophers have on his future preaching?

### Lesson VII—August 12, 1962

## PAUL AT CORINTH

### Lesson Text

Acts 18: 1-11

1 After these things he departed from Ath'-ens, and came to Cor'-inth.

2 And he found a certain Jew named Aq'-ui-la, a man of Pon'-tus by race, lately come from It'-a-ly, with his wife Pris'-cil'-la, because Clau'-di-us had commanded all the Jews to depart from Home: and he came unto them;

3 And because he was of the same trade, he abode with them, and they wrought; for by their trade they were tentmakers.

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks.

5 But when Si'-las and Tim'-o-thy came down from Mac-e-do'-ni-a, Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Je'-sus was the Christ.

6 And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook out

his raiment and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gen'-tiles.

7 And he departed thence, and went into the house of a certain man named Ti'-tus Jus'-tus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

8 And Cris'-pus, the ruler of synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house; and many of the C6-rin'-thi-Sns hearing believed, and were baptized.

9 And the Lord said unto Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace:

10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have much people in this city.

11 And he dwelt *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Golden Text.—*"I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling"* (1 Cor. 2: 3.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 18: 12-17.



## Daily Bible Readings

August 6. M.....	Man's Wisdom versus God's (1 Cor. 2: 1-14)
August 7. T.....	Truth Makes Free (John 8: 31, 32)
August 8. W.....	Sin of Idolatry (Isa. 44: 9-20)
August 9. T.....	God Revealed through Christ (Heb. 1: 1-9)
August 10. F.....	Gospel Simple (Matt. 11: 25-30)
August 11. S.....	Warning Regarding Philosophy of Men (Col. 2: 8-15)
August 12. S.....	The Excellency of Love (1 Cor. 13: 1-13)

TIME.—A.D. 51-53.

PLACE.—Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul, Aquila, Priscilla, Silas, Timothy, and the Corinthians.

## Introduction

The old city of Corinth, said to have been founded in 1350 B.C., was destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. After lying in ruins for exactly one hundred years, it was rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. He made it a Roman colony, and later on Augustus made it the capital of Greece (Achaia). The city was built on the narrow isthmus which connected the Peloponnesus with the mainland. This isthmus was between the Aegean and the Ionian Seas, and, as would be expected, the city had two harbors—Cenchreae, on the east, for ships to and from Asia, and Lechaëum, on the west, for ships to and from Italy. In Paul's day the city was making the most of its strategic commercial position, and was well on its way to becoming the metropolis of Greece and its richest city.

In addition to its commercial prosperity, and architectural splendor Corinth with also noted for its interest in literature and the arts, especially the study of rhetoric and philosophy; but it was notorious for its luxury and moral corruption, particularly for its voluptuous and vicious worship of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty, also identified by the Romans as Venus. Corinth, therefore, became a notorious seat of immorality. The chastity of our time does not permit us to speak of the profligacy and licentiousness which characterized that hot-bed of vice, along with its richly endowed temple of Venus which, according to Strabo, supported a thousand priestesses dedicated to immorality, so that even in that dark age, Corinth had a bad name. It has been called the Vanity Fair of the

Roman Empire. It is said that the thousand harlots of the temple would, in honor to their goddess, prostrate themselves to all comers for hire, with the result that the city was crowded and became immensely wealthy.

When Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans, in which he recounted the appalling list of vices in the latter part of the first chapter (verses 21-32), he had never seen the city of Rome, but he had lived approximately a year and a half in Corinth. Paganism was a hideous reality there; for, as already observed, Greek religion implemented and channelized sensual vices, commercializing them under the guise of worship. So vicious were their practices that it was said, "To live like a Corinthian" was a synonym for abandonment to immorality.

The population of Corinth, at the time of Paul's stay there, was about 400,000 and was made up chiefly of Romans, Greeks, Jews, and Orientals. From 1 Cor. 12: 2 it appears that the church was composed largely of Gentiles probably Greeks. All in all, Corinth was a stirring center of contemporary life, the meeting place of the east and the west, where Greeks and Romans, along with some Jews, Orientals, and possibly others were deeply absorbed in the business and pleasures of the world. So far as we know, Paul went there alone; and when we think of how little he impressed his hearers in the marketplace and the Areopagus in Athens, only about forty miles away, there is little reason to wonder that he went to Corinth "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."

## The Golden Text

*"I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling"* It was suggested in the previous lesson that Paul must have been somewhat depressed as he left Athens, following his failure to reach more of the philosophers whom he addressed. His efforts there had not failed to bring some to Christ; but the over-all results were doubtless disappointing when the full picture is brought into focus. And as the apostle left Athens and travelled to Corinth, only about forty miles away, he was faced with pretty much the same situation there. Paul knew, of course, that the gospel was God's only means of reaching the hearts of men with the message of salvation; but how to break through the veneer of culture, philosophy, and sudden wealth, was a matter of great concern to him.

It has already been pointed out that the people in Corinth were interested in thought provoking themes, and James Macknight observes that the Greeks could endure no scheme of doctrine which was not conformable to their philosophy; and that they valued teachers in proportion to the skill which they showed, in presenting their opinions by the beauty and harmony of their language. It is no wonder, therefore,

that Paul, who knew the Greek mind, continues Dr. Macknight, "explained the doctrines of the gospel to the Corinthian philosophers, rhetoricians, and people, with fear and much trembling."

This attitude on the part of Paul was not due to any want of natural strength of will and determination, so far as he was concerned. He knew his message, and was not ashamed to declare it; but his concern was with reference to its reception on the part of the people of that wicked city. A humble gospel preacher with a message of love was no match, from the human point of view, for the worldly wise. One has only to read the first four chapters of First Corinthians in order to see that Paul himself emphasized this contrast. Some of the Corinthians, even after they became members of the church, did not hesitate to belittle the apostle, both in appearance and as a speaker. "For, His letters, they say, are weighty and strong; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account." (2 Cor. 10:

10.) It was in the face of such unfavorable conditions that Paul felt helpless. Even Christ himself was crucified by the very people he came to save.

## The Text Explained

Paul's Arrival in Corinth and the  
Beginning of His Work  
(Acts 18: 1-4)

*After these things he departed from Athens, and came to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by race, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome: and he came unto them; and because he was of the same trade, he abode with them, and they wrought; for by their trade they were tent-makers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks.*

When Paul reached Corinth he was apparently alone, and, as has already been suggested, probably depressed. His inability to impress the majority of the intellectuals of Athens was not the only discouraging situation which was before him. His heart was al-

ready heavy with anxiety regarding his recent Macedonian converts, and especially those in Thessalonica. His experience in Athens, his anxiety for his persecuted brethren, his lack of human companionship, and the magnitude of the task which was before him in Corinth, all combined to emphasize his own sense of weakness and fear, and the trembling which comes naturally from such a state.

But whatever Paul's thoughts regarding Athens may have been as he entered Corinth, there were some results which have continued until this very day, and which shall prove a blessing to the world as long as time continues and the word of God remains. This should bring encouragement to everyone who has done his best under trying circumstances; for in the providence of God, a good work is never lost. (Cf. Heb. 6: 10.) Discouraging moments may come as

one enters new and strange fields of labor, but the feeling which accompanies such a state of mind is only temporary. In commenting on the enduring nature of Paul's work in Athens, aside from the converts he made, Howson says,

"That speech on the Areopagus is an imperishable monument of the first victory of Christianity over Paganism. To make a sacred application of the words used by the Athenian historian, it was 'no mere effort for the moment,' but it is a 'perpetual possession,' wherein the church finds ever fresh supplies of wisdom and guidance. It is in Athens we learn what is the highest point to which unassisted human nature can attain; and here we learn also the language which the Gospel addresses to a man on his proudest eminence of unaided strength. God, in his providence, has preserved to us, in fullest profusion, the literature which unfolds to us all the life of the Athenian people, in its glory and its shame; and he has ordained that one conspicuous passage in the Holy Volume should be the speech, in which his servant addressed that people as ignorant idolaters, called them to repentance, and warned them of judgment. And it can hardly be deemed profane, if we trace to the same Divine Providence the preservation of the very imagery which surrounded the speaker—not only the sea, and the mountains, and the sky, which change not with the decay of nations—but even the very temples, which remain, after wars and revolutions, on their ancient pedestals in astonishing perfection. We are thus provided with a poetic and yet a truthful commentary on the words that were spoken once for all at Athens; and Art and Nature have been commissioned from above to enframe the portrait of that Apostle, who stands for ever on the Areopagus as the teacher of the Gentiles."

It seems that the first thing which Paul did after reaching Corinth was to find some friendly Jews with whom he might live and work for his livelihood. This quest led him to the home of Aquila and Priscilla, who had themselves been forced to leave their home in Rome, and go elsewhere. The emperor Claudius

had ordered all Jews to leave the Imperial City, and Taylor quotes the Roman historian Suetonius as saying that the Jews, being in constant tumult at the instigation of one Chrestus, were ordered to leave the city. Although Aquila was originally from Pontus, which was represented in Jerusalem on the Pentecost of Acts 2, nothing is said about whether or not he was a Christian at the time Paul met him.

If Edersheim (*Jewish Social Life*) is correct in saying that "a Jewish guild always keeps together, whether in street or synagogue," it was not difficult for Paul to locate him; for they both belonged to the same trade. It was customary among the Jews that all boys should learn a trade, and one Talmudic writer is reported to have asked, What is commanded a father toward his son? and the answer was, To circumcise him, to teach him the law, and to teach him a trade. According to Rabbi Judah, "He that teacheth not his son a trade, doth the same as if he taught him to be a thief," while another Jewish teacher likened a man with a trade in hand to a vineyard that is fenced.

It is fair to assume from verse 4 that Paul's public preaching during his first days in Corinth was largely, if not altogether, limited to the synagogue on the sabbath. But it would be entirely unreasonable to suppose that he was not busy every day in trying to turn his fellow-craftsmen to Jesus. It is quite within the realm of possibility, or even probability, that he converted both Aquila and Priscilla to the truth. At any rate, a fellowship grew out of their association which continued unabated throughout their lives. We do not know just how long Paul continued to work at his trade, but we do know that other churches came to his assistance that he might minister unto the Corinthian brethren. (See 2 Cor. 11: 7-9.)

#### **Encouragement from Silas and Timothy and a Break with the Jews** (Acts 18: 5-8)

*But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.* It seems quite clear from this statement that the coming of Silas and

Timothy had a direct bearing on the manner of Paul's public preaching. Hitherto, as has already been noted, he took advantage of the opportunities on the weekly sabbaths, while continuing his work as a tentmaker; but with the arrival of his two co-workers, probably with gifts from Macedonia (cf. 2 Cor. 11: 9), the apostle was "constrained by the word," that is, urged or impelled (cf. Jer. 20: 9), and began a more aggressive ministry.

David Smith thinks that Paul had neither time nor the strength necessary for the prosecution of an active ministry before the coming of Silas and Timothy; but simply did what he could, as has already been indicated, with this added thought: "he studiously refrained from opening a serious discussion. That, as it seemed to him, would have been futile, since he was expecting the arrival of Silas and Timothy with tidings that the way was open for his return to Macedonia. He was only a temporary sojourner at Corinth, and he would not engage there in an enterprise which he must presently abandon. He contented himself therefore with seeking quietly to influence all whom he encountered, Jews and Gentiles alike, as opportunity presented itself." But with the coming of Silas and Timothy, as Dr. Smith goes on to say, the situation changed.

But something else happened at this time in the life of Paul which must not be overlooked: he wrote his first epistle which has come down to us. The occasion for its writing is stated by Paul in the epistle itself. "Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left behind at Athens alone; and sent Timothy, our brother, and God's minister in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith; that no man be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that hereunto we are appointed. For verily, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we are to suffer affliction; even as it came to pass, and ye know. For this cause I also, when I could no longer forbear, sent that I might know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor should be in vain. But

when Timothy came even now unto you, and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us, even as we also to see you; for this cause, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our distress and affliction through your faith: for now we live, if we stand fast in the Lord." (1 Thess. 3: 1-8.) The expression "But when Timothy came even now unto us from you" implies that Paul wrote his first letter to them immediately after hearing from them. Second Thessalonians probably followed a few months later, and was also written from Corinth.

*And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook out his raiment and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. And he departed thence, and went into the house of a certain man name Titus Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.*

This was the beginning of "the church of God which is at Corinth." (See 1 Cor. 1: 2.) It is clear from Acts 16: 6ff. and 1 Thess. 2: 17ff. that Paul had not originally planned to go to Corinth at this time; but this is another example of the results of the overruling providence of God. Titus Justus was apparently a proselyte to the Jewish faith, and his hospitality gave Paul the opportunity to reach other Gentiles in that city, when the Jews rejected his plea. Paul personally baptized Crispus, while some one else baptized most of the others. (See 1 Cor. 1: 14-16.) Judging from the information we have, the church in Corinth must have been full of strenuous personalities—decided people, eager for all that which the gospel had to give them in the way of gifts and endowments, rights and hopes. All of this has been a blessing to us too; for it called forth all of Paul's resources of intuition and explanation, supervised by the Holy Spirit, and in the end immensely enriched the literature of the Christian religion.

## Assurance from the Lord and the Length of Paul's Stay in Corinth

(Acts 18: 9-11)

*And the Lord said unto Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have much people in this city. And he dwelt there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.*

Paul's attitude toward the blaspheming Jews probably increased their hatred for him, and the fact that he continued his preaching and "proselyting" the Jews in a house next door to the synagogue, was probably more than they felt like they could take. Even the ruler of the synagogue deserted them for the gospel of Christ, and that, along with the conversion of others, must have caused the Jews to intensify their opposition, with the result that, humanly speaking, Paul felt that his life was greatly endangered. At any

rate, the situation was serious enough for the Lord to grant Paul a vision of encouragement; and, as McGarvey notes, "the Lord never broke his accustomed silence to comfort a servant except when comfort was needed." In saying that he had much people in that city, the Lord was evidently speaking by way of anticipation—he knew that many would obey the gospel when they heard it.

It is thought that Paul went to Corinth in September of A.D. 51, and that he remained there until March of A.D. 53, which was the longest time he had spent anywhere in the work up to that time. He later spent about three years in Ephesus, which was the longest single ministry of his career, so far as the record goes. (See Acts 20: 31.) Paul's work in Corinth is described as "teaching the word of God among them," which, of course, was in keeping with the commission authorized by Jesus. (See Matt. 28: 19, 20.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What is known of the early history of Corinth?  
Give some facts concerning the city when Paul went there.  
What kind of opportunity did it offer for evangelism?  
How did Paul feel when he entered the city?

### The Golden Text

Why did Paul feel as he did when he went to Corinth?  
What was the general attitude of the people there toward a new doctrine?  
What was Paul's primary concern with reference to his work in Corinth?  
In what way did some of the brethren there later demonstrate that Paul was right in his feeling about the matter?

### Paul's Arrival in Corinth and the Beginning of His Work

What were the principal causes of Paul's depressed feeling when he entered Corinth?  
Show some of the ways in which his work in Athens was a blessing to the ages.  
What was one of the first things that Paul did after reaching Corinth?  
Why was this necessary?  
Tell something about Aquila and Priscilla.  
How was Paul probably able to get in touch with them?  
How did Paul come to be trained as a tentmaker

What was the Jewish attitude toward such matters?  
Why aren't people more concerned with such training today?  
What was the probable extent of Paul's preaching during his first weeks in Corinth?

### Encouragement from Silas and Timothy and a Break with the Jews

What bearing did the coming of Paul's two companions have on his preaching?  
What was the probable reason for this?  
What is meant by being "constrained by the word"?  
Why didn't Paul feel that it was wise to plan a vigorous campaign when he first went to Corinth?  
What other notable event took place in Paul's experience about this time?  
Under what circumstances did Paul write his first epistle?  
What other letter did he write from Corinth?  
Describe Paul's break with the Jews in that city.  
Give the facts regarding the beginning of the church of God in Corinth.  
Tell something of the membership of that church.

### Assurance from the Lord and the Length of Paul's Stay in Corinth

Why were the Jews so bitter in their opposition to Paul?  
What appears to be the reason for the Lord's vision to him at that time?  
In what sense did the Lord have much people in that city?  
How long did Paul remain in Corinth?  
What was the general pattern of his work there?

## Lesson VIII—August 19, 1962

## PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

## Lesson Text

## Acts 19: 1-12

1 And it came to pass, that while A-pol'-lōs was at Cor'-inth, Paul having passed through the upper country came to Eph'-e-sus, and found certain disciples:

2 And he said unto them, Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed? And they *said* unto him, Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was *given*.

3 And he said, Into what then were ye baptized? And they said, Into John's baptism.

4 And Paul said, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him that should come after him, that is, on Je'-sus.

5 And when they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Je'-sus.

6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

7 And they were in all about twelve men.

8 And he entered into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading *as to* the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9 But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Ty-ran'-nus.

10 And this continued for the space of two years; so that all they that dwelt in A'-si-a heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

12 Insomuch that unto the sick were carried away from his body handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out.

**Golden Text.**—*"The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified."* (Acts 19: 17.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Acts 18: 17-28.

## Daily Bible Readings

August 13. M. .... Paul Returns to Antioch (Acts 18: 18-22)  
 August 14. T. .... A Third Tour Among the Churches (Acts 18: 23-28)  
 August 15. W. .... Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19: 1-9)  
 August 16. T. .... Activities in Ephesus (Acts 19: 10-20)  
 August 17. F. .... Paul Goes through Macedonia (Acts 20: 1-4)  
 August 18. S. .... Paul and Company at Troas (Acts 20: 6-12)  
 August 19. S. .... Paul's Message to Ephesian Elders (Acts 20: 17-35)

**Time.**—Paul's third journey began in A.D. 53.

**Place.**—Ephesus.

**Persons.**—Paul and the Ephesian disciples.

## Introduction

It was probably some three or four months between the time that Paul left Corinth, and his arrival in Ephesus at the time of this lesson. He left Corinth in company with Aquila and Priscilla, and sailed for Syria. Their place of embarkation was Cencreae, the eastern seaport of Corinth. As one can see from the map, the first leg of their journey was almost due east, since the rec-

ord says that they came to Ephesus. This was on their way to Syria. Paul left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus: "but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. And when they asked him to abide a longer time, he consented not; but taking his leave of them, and saying, I will return unto you if God will, he *set* sail from Ephesus." It is possible that Paul left Aquila

and Priscilla in Ephesus to make what preparation they could for the work, while he hurried on to Antioch to the church from which he had been sent on his two previous journeys.

The next place where Paul landed, so far as the record goes, was at Caesarea. "And when he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and saluted the church, and went down to Antioch." Many Bible students are of the opinion that the expression "he went up and saluted the church" has reference to the church in Jerusalem, rather than the church in Caesarea. It may be that the principal reason for the idea was an interpolated statement found in the *Textus Receptus*, or the Received Text, which was the basis of the King James Version, in which Paul was represented as saying, "I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem." This statement is found in some of the English versions, especially the older ones, but it is omitted from many others, including the American Standard and the present-day King James Versions. Perhaps the strongest argument that is made for saying that Paul went to Jerusalem before going to Antioch,

is based on the expression "he *went up* and saluted the church," since that is the usual way of speaking of the approach to Jerusalem; but even that is not certain in this case. Paul could have gone *up from the shore* and saluted the church in Caesarea, before going on to Antioch.

After spending some time in Antioch, Paul began his third missionary journey from that city, and it appears that the first part of the route of the third journey was practically the same as that of the second journey, as may be seen by consulting the map. But during the time that Paul was absent from Ephesus, an Alexandrian Jew by the name of Apollos arrived in the city. He is described as an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures; but knowing only the baptism of John. And being fervent in spirit, he began to speak boldly of Jesus in the synagogue. But when Aquila and Priscilla heard him and recognized his lack of information regarding John's baptism, "they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more accurately." This action on their part evidently had a direct bearing on Paul's activity when he later reached Ephesus, as will be seen further on in the study.

## The Golden Text

"The *name of the Lord Jesus was magnified*." This statement can best be understood in the light of the full context. "But certain also of the strolling Jews, exorcists, took upon them to name over them that had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, a chief priest, who did this. And the evil spirit answered and said unto them, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and mastered both of them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, that dwelt at Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Many also of them that had believed came, confessing, and declaring their deeds. And not a few of

them that practised magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed." (Acts 19: 13-20.)

The original word for "magnified" means to exalt, glorify, praise, extol; and that is what the people did regarding the name of Jesus, when they saw the notable victory which was gained over the powers of evil. As David Thomas observes, the discomfiture of those impostors, and the violence which the demons inflicted on them, struck a general feeling of awe and solemnity, with the result that the name of Jesus was held in high esteem among the people of Ephesus. The "fight" was between the demons and the impostors, but it concerned the name of Jesus, which both had spoken; and that name was exalted throughout the

city, which evidently had a profound effect on Paul's preaching.

It should be observed that many of those who were affected by the magnifying of the name of the Lord Jesus did something about it. They were led to see the wickedness of their deceptive practices. This apparently included both those in and out of the church. We are not to understand that those who had accepted the gospel continued to practice magic after they became believers; but rather

that they made public the processes by which they deceived the people. Others who had not as yet yielded themselves to Christ and who apparently still practiced magical arts "brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all"—some eight or ten thousand dollars worth. This should be an impressive lesson to those people, especially Christians, who regard "fortune-tellers" with favor, and who even patronize them!

## The Text Explained

### Paul's Return to Ephesus and an Apostolic Decree

(Acts 19: 1-7)

*And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples: and he said unto them, Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed? And they said unto him, Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given? And he said, Into what then were ye baptized? And they said, Into John's baptism. And Paul said, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him that should come after him, that is, on Jesus. And when they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And they were in all about twelve men.*

The paragraph which has just been quoted is the last of four instances in which the Holy Spirit was given to a group of people, either directly or through the medium of apostolic hands. The other three are (1) the apostles on the day of Pentecost, (Acts 2: 1-4;) the Samaritan Christians, (Acts 8: 14-17;) and (3) Cornelius and his kinsmen and near friends, (Acts 10: 44-48; 11: 15-18). In each of the four instances the will of God was made known or that which had been done received apostolic approval. Jesus had previously told his apostles that they would exercise plenipotentiary authority during his Messianic reign (cf. Matt. 19: 28; John 20: 21-23); and in each of the four cases just referred to, the

miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit gave undeniable evidence that God approved that which the apostles said and did. (Cf. Acts 5: 32.) In the case of the apostles on the day of Pentecost, the miraculous manifestations of the hour showed that God approved the gospel message which was spoken; in the case of the Samaritans, the miraculous manifestations gave apostolic approval to the reception of people into the church with whom the Jews had no dealings (John 4: 9). This was the first step in the process of bringing the great outside world of the Gentiles into the fold of Christ. (Cf. John 10: 16.) In the case of Cornelius and those with him, the miraculous manifestations gave approval to that which Peter was saying and doing. (Cf. Matt. 16: 19.) In the case of the twelve men in Ephesus, the miraculous manifestations gave approval to Paul's pronouncement that John's baptism would no longer suffice as an act of obedience.

The "miraculous manifestations of the Spirit" were not the only proof that people in New Testament times had the Holy Spirit, for not every one who was approved of God had such gifts; but when the time came for the gospel to be known in fact and when momentous decisions were made regarding the Divine economy, it was necessary that something out of the ordinary be done, so that all the people would know that the apostles were exercising their God-given authority in such matters.

There is no reason for concluding that the twelve men whom Paul found in Ephesus were the only disciples in the city. Aquila and Priscilla had been in Ephesus for some time (Acts 18: 18, 19), and



from 1 Cor. 16: 19 it is fair to conclude that they were still there when Paul wrote first Corinthians, near the close of his three-year stay in Ephesus. It is not reasonable to think that there were no fruits of their labors and of Paul's previous preaching there, and especially in the light of their success in teaching Apollos the way of the Lord more accurately. We have no way of knowing how the twelve men came to be "believers," but it is reasonable to suppose that Aquila and Priscilla told Paul of their experience with Apollos. At any rate, Paul "found" these twelve men, and there was something about them which caused him to question their baptism.

But when Paul came to find out the truth regarding their baptism, he asked them, not about their baptism, but whether or not they received the Holy Spirit when they believed. He knew that if they had been properly taught regarding the gospel of Christ (Matt. 28: 19) they would know something of the truth which had been proclaimed by Peter and the other apostles (cf. Gal. 3: 14—through *the* faith, that is, the gospel, in the original—; 1 Cor. 4: 17). And when Paul learned the facts regarding the baptism of the twelve, he explained the purpose of John's baptism to them, and then baptized them into the name of the Lord Jesus; all of which plainly shows that their previous baptism was neither acceptable to God nor that which would result in their receiving the Holy Spirit, as promised in (Acts 2: 38, 39). As long as John's baptism was authorized by God it was acceptable, and there is no indication that any one who received it and remained faithful to the Lord had to be rebaptized; but after John's baptism was replaced by the baptism authorized by Christ (Matt. 28: 19), it no longer sufficed as an act of obedience. The case now before us is a record of this truth as it was made known by apostolic authority or decree. This is the last mention of John the Baptist in the New Testament: and, as Bengel notes, he at last *wholly* gave place to Christ. (See John 3: 26-30).

### From the Synagogue of the Jews to the School of Tyrannus

(Acts 19: 8, 9)

*And he entered in the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.*

Before going further into Paul's ministry in Ephesus, it might be well to take a glimpse into his new field of evangelism. The province of Asia was in the western part of Asia Minor, on the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas. The term "Asia," as used in the New Testament, refers to the province known by that term. Vincent says that "Asia Minor" did not come into use until the fourth century of our era. The International Standard Encyclopedia says that the province of Asia, as ruled by the Romans, included such older countries as Mysia, Lydia, Caria, and a part of Phrygia, as well as several independent coastal cities and islands. It was formed by the Romans about 130 B.C. Its first capital was Pergamum, but by the time of Augustus, when it had become the richest province of the empire, the seat of government was transferred to Ephesus. All the cities of the seven churches of Rev. 2, 3 were in Asia, as well as Colassae and Hierapolis (Col. 4: 13), and others. Robertson says that Ephesus was both larger and richer than Corinth, and in it was found the power of Rome, the splendor of Greek culture, and the full tide of Oriental superstition and magic. The temple of Diana (Artemis, margin) was there, as we learn from the latter part of the nineteenth chapter of Acts. This temple was one of the Seven Wonders of the world.

We have seen before in Luke's history of Christianity that Paul usually made an effort to teach in the Jewish synagogue: and it is probable that the synagogue mentioned here was the same one which he visited when he stopped off in Ephesus on his trip from Corinth to Antioch in Syria. (See Acts 18: 19, 20.) And it

should be noted that however cordial the Jews were to begin with, they were not long in turning against Paul. (Cf. Acts 13: 14, 15, 42-46; 18: 4-6.) His preaching in the synagogue in Ephesus continued for the space of three months, perhaps the longest time he was ever permitted to teach in a Jewish synagogue. The nature of Paul's preaching is described as "reasoning and persuading," that is, teaching or presenting arguments and exhorting his hearers to accept "the things concerning the kingdom of God," which is the church.

But Paul's preaching did not always have the desired effect upon those who heard him. Some of those who listened to Paul were hardened and disobedient, which means that they became obstinate or stubborn and would not allow themselves to be persuaded (see Thayer); or, as Robertson observes, they first refused to believe and then refused to obey. But they did not stop there: they also spoke evil of the Way, that is, of Christianity as a way of life. Their evident purpose in such speaking was to weaken Paul's influence with the people. If they could discredit that which he espoused, they would by the same token discredit him. This attitude displayed by the unbelieving Jews caused Paul to leave the synagogue, separate the disciples from them, thus drawing a line, so to speak, between the synagogue and the church, and found a place to continue his daily teaching in the school of Tyrannus. Nothing further is known of Tyrannus, who was probably a teacher of rhetoric or philosophy. Nothing is said about the arrangements which led to Paul's use of the school's facilities, whether he rented them or was simply given permission to use them as an act of kindness.

### **Paul's Two-Year Ministry and Its Results**

(Acts 19: 10-12)

*And this continued for the space of two years: so that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.* So far as we know, Paul actually stayed in Ephesus two years and three months; yet, when speaking to the elders at a later date, he said that his time there was three years. (Acts 20: 31.) This

either means that he followed the usual Jewish custom of referring to a part of a year as a whole year, or that he continued his work for another nine months, possibly in the house of Aquila and Priscilla. (See 1 Cor. 16: 19.) Verses 21-23; 20: 1 seem to indicate that he only stayed the two years and three months.

It appears that practically all of Paul's personal teaching was done in Ephesus, but the results of his work were known throughout the entire province of Asia; and it is very likely that he was directly or indirectly responsible for the establishing of the "seven churches in Asia," along with those in Colossae, Hierapolis, and other places. It seems quite certain from Col. 1: 6, 7; 4: 12, 13 that Paul worked through others, in this case Epaphras. It is also possible that Lydia (Acts 16: 14) may have had something to do with getting the work started in Thyatira. But whoever actually did the work in any given place, Paul's seems to have been the moving influence. Robertson notes that forty years later, Pliny in his famous letter to Trajan said of Christianity, "For the contagion of this superstition has not only spread through cities, but also through villages and country places."

It was also during this stay in Ephesus that Paul, greatly concerned regarding the church in Corinth, wrote them a letter, probably two. The one which we know as First Corinthians was written near the end of his three-year stay there, as may be seen from the epistle itself. (1 Cor. 16: 7-9.) We know from 1 Cor. 5: 9 that Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians which antedated our First Corinthians, and it is very probable that it also was written from Ephesus. This letter is popularly referred to as Paul's lost letter to the Corinthians, but it is possible that at least a part of it has been preserved in our Second Corinthians. (See 6: 14-7: 1.)

*And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: insomuch that unto the sick were carried away from his body handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirit went out.* All miracles were supernatural and out of the ordinary; but the ones mentioned here were even beyond those

which were familiar to the disciples, and completely different from and superior to the work of Jewish exorcists. McGarvey observes that such miracles as those wrought through Paul are no more incredible than others which are mentioned in the New Testament. They were brought on by the increasing zeal of the people who sought the benefits of the healing power; and it is no wonder that all the people in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord,

"both Jew's and Greeks." All who could would naturally go to Ephesus to hear and receive the blessing which Paul had to offer in person, and they would tell those who could not go; and then it was that arrangements were made for them also to receive the benefits of the miracles. Clarks notes that a most evident distinction is made between *diseases* and *evil spirits*, which plainly shows that they were not one and the same thing.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Tell of the movements of Paul between the time he left Corinth and his return to Ephesus at the time of this lesson.  
What was his probable reason for leaving Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus, as he went on his way to Antioch in Syria?  
Where did Paul go after leaving Ephesus?  
Why do some people think that he also visited Jerusalem at this time?  
Under what circumstances did Paul begin his third missionary journey?  
What was the general direction of this trip?  
What is said of Apollos in Ephesus and what probable bearing did it have on Paul's later work there?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?  
What is the meaning of the term "magnify"?  
How was the name of the Lord Jesus magnified?  
What demonstrations did people both in and out of the church give regarding their faith?  
What lesson is there in this for those who regard with favor and even patronize so-called fortune-tellers?

### Paul's Return to Ephesus and an Apostolic Decree

What is remarkable about the paragraph which makes up this section of our lesson?  
What are the other three similar instances?  
What was the purpose of these miraculous demonstrations?  
Why was it necessary for one or more of the apostles to be present each time

the Holy Spirit was given in the manners just indicated?

Why is it reasonable to conclude that there were other disciples in Ephesus, that is, others in addition to the twelve mentioned here?

What plan did Paul employ is seeking to learn the truth regarding their baptism?

Why wasn't John's baptism sufficient as an act of acceptable obedience?

Discuss the significance of John and his baptism thus fading from inspired history.

### From the Synagogue of the Jews to the School of Tyrannus

Give some facts regarding Ephesus as the scene of Paul's ministry.

Where and under what circumstances did he begin his teaching there?

Why begin in the synagogue?

Discuss Paul's experience in preaching in the synagogues.

What was the result of his preaching in the synagogue in Ephesus?

What disposition did the unbelieving Jews manifest?

Why did they speak evil of the Way and what Way?

What did Paul then do?

Why did he separate the disciples?

Where did Paul next go?

### Paul's Two-Year Ministry and its Results

How long did Paul remain in Ephesus?

Give reasons for your answer.

How far-reaching was his preaching and miraculous ministry?

What churches did he probably have a part in establishing?

What other important work did he do while in Ephesus?

How many letters did he probably write to Corinth from there?

What is said regarding the unusual nature of the miracles which were wrought through Paul's hands?

How were the people affected by them?

How do we know diseases and evil spirits were not the same?

## Lesson IX—August 26, 1962

## PAUL'S CHARGE TO THE ELDERS OF EPHESUS

## Lesson Text

Acts 20: 28-38

28 Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood.

29 I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock;

30 And from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

31 Wherefore watch ye, remembering that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears.

32 And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build *you* up, and to give *you* the inheritance among all them that are sanctified.

33 I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

34 Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

35 In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Je'-sus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all.

37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him,

38 Sorrowing most of all for the word which he had spoken, that they should behold his face no more. And they brought him on his way unto the ship.

**Golden Text.**—"*Tend the flock of God which is among you, exorcising the oversight.*" (1 Pet. 5: 2.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Acts 20: 17-27.

## Daily Bible Readings

August 20.	M. Paul's Authority (Gal. 1: 5-17)
August 21. T.....	Paul's Commission (Acts 26: 15-23)
August 22.	W. Paul's First Visit to Ephesus (Acts 18: 18-21)
August 23. T.....	Paul Preaches in Ephesus (Acts 19: 8-20)
August 24.	F. Fighting with Wild Beasts in Ephesus (1 Cor. 15: 29-34)
August 25.	S. Christ Writes to the Church in Ephesus (Rev. 2: 1-7)
August 26.	S. The Good Shepherd Cares for His Sheep (John 10: 7-17)

**Time.**—A.D. 57.

**Place.**—Miletus.

**Persons.**—Paul and the Ephesian elders.

## Introduction

We have reached the period in Paul's life and labors where his epistles and Luke's record greatly supplement each other. This was referred to in our lesson on Paul at Corinth, where he wrote the Thessalonians; and in our last lesson when it was pointed out that he wrote First Corinthians from Ephesus. His statement in 1 Cor. 16: 8, 9 tells something of the great opportunities which were his for preaching the gospel, and also gives some indication of the formidable opposition. "But I will

tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost; for a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." The book-burning by the magicians is an example of the former, while the riot stirred up by Demetrius and the silversmiths gives some idea of the latter. (See Acts 19: 13-20, 23-41.)

We learn from Acts 19: 21, 22 that Paul purposed in the Spirit, that is, subject to the will of the Spirit (cf. Acts 16: 6, 7), to go through Macedonia and Achaia to Jerusalem, and

on to Rome. These plans, however, were temporarily upset by the riot which was instigated by Demetrius and his self-interested fellow-workmen. After the town clerk had succeeded in quieting the mob, Paul sent for the disciples, and, exhorting them, he took his leave to go into Macedonia. (Cf. 2 Cor. 2: 12, 13; 7: 5ff.) It was during this stay in Macedonia that he wrote Second Corinthians. He next entered Greece (Achaia), and remained there three months. It was probably during this time that he wrote the letter to the Galatians, finished the work on the collection for the poor saints in Judaea, and wrote Romans. (Rom. 15: 25, 26.) Just as he was about to sail for Syria, a plot was laid against him by the Jews, which made it advisable for him to return through Macedonia, on his way to Jerusalem. From Acts 20: 6, we learn that Luke rejoined the apostle's party, having probably remained in Philippi since Paul and Silas left there, following their imprisonment. From Philippi they passed over to Troas, joined the other members of the party, and spent one week there. They went on to Miletus; and since Paul did not have time to tarry in Ephesus, he asked the elders of the church there to meet him in Miletus. His address to them is one of the most touching of his recorded speeches. He opened his heart to them, and told them that they would never see his face again; but 1 Tim. 1: 3 makes it almost certain that he did get to revisit them, following his first

Roman imprisonment. (Read Acts 20: 1-16.)

Inasmuch as the lesson text begins in the middle of Paul's address to the Ephesian elders, the first part should be read just here. "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called to him the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, after what manner

I was with you all the time, serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews; how I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God."

### The Golden Text

*"Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight*

The context of this statement is as follows: "The elders therefore among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according to the will of God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock." (1 Pet. 5: 1-3.)

When Peter wrote these words, he was urging the elders "among" the

brethren to tend the flock of God which is "among" them. This is enough to show that the elders in the New Testament congregations did not stand aloof from the people to whom they ministered. There are too many men today who endeavor to do the work of elders in so-called "elders' meetings," rather than **among** the people who need their help. Such men are little more than "business managers" of the congregations; and any one who stops to think will readily see that that can be done without making themselves "ensamples to the flock." The New Testament conception of the elder-

ship involves one of the tenderest, most beautiful, and most intimate relationship between the elders and the people whom they serve. If one will read such passages as (2 Sam. 17: 34-36; Psalm 23; Jer. 23: 1-4; Ezek. 34; Luke 2: 8; 15: 3-7; John 10; and Rev. 7: 17), he will begin to see and appreciate that which is involved in this relationship.

If elders "exercise the oversight" as they should, they will *tend the flock of God which is among them*. The words "tend" and "feed," used by Peter and Paul, respectively, are from the same original Greek word; and a careful study of it will show

that it embraces more than simply feeding. It includes all that is involved in the work of a shepherd, such as guiding, guarding, folding, and feeding. (Cf. John 21: 15-17.) Several of the duties of shepherds of the flock are referred to in the New Testament: (1) watch, Acts 20: 31; cf. Gen 31: 39, 40; (2) discipline, 1 Thess. 5: 12-15; cf. Tim. 3: 5; (3) ensamples, 1 Pet. 5: 3; (4) help the weak, Acts 20: 35. When elders exercise the oversight and tend the flock of God which is among them, they are discharging one of the greatest responsibilities known to man. (Cf. Heb. 13: 17.)

## The Text Explained

### The Responsibility of Elders Made Plain

(Acts 20: 28-31)

*Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood.* The men who are called "bishops" in this verse are also called "elders" in verse 17. And when one looks at the marginal notes of these two verses, he will see two more words which are applied to these same men, namely, "presbyters" and "overseers." Furthermore, these men were told "to feed" the church of the Lord, which is the Greek term for "be shepherds to" the Lord's people. And when we turn to Eph. 4: 11 we find that they are also called "pastors." (Cf. Tit. 1: 5, 7; 1 Tim. 4: 14; 5: 17.) Thus, those who read the New Testament carefully will readily see that these six terms, elders, bishops, presbyters, overseers, pastors, and shepherds are used interchangeably with reference to the same group of "church officials."

The word "elder" is from the Anglo-Saxon and is the exact equivalent of "presbyter," which is an anglicized Greek word; and the idea suggested is that of *experience*. "Bishop" is from the Greek, while "overseer," its equivalent, is from the Anglo-Saxon; and the idea is that of position. "Pastor" is from the Latin, and its equivalent, "shepherd," is from the Anglo-Saxon; and the idea expressed is that of *work*. And inasmuch as the members of each pair

are exact equivalents, that is elders = presbyters, bishops = overseers, and pastors = shepherds, the average reader would be better served if the number of words were reduced to three, namely, elders, overseers, shepherds, since the modern usage which characterizes presbyters, bishops, and pastors makes these words more likely to be misunderstood when applied to church leaders, than the other three.

The word "elder," as it is ordinarily used, is an adjective in the comparative degree, and its meaning is older; and when it is used as a substantive, it means an older person. An elder in this sense becomes such as the result of the passing of the years; but an elder in the church becomes such as the result of an appointment. (Cf. Acts 14: 23.) This is enough to show that the term "elder" in the New Testament is used in two different senses. McGarvey, in this book *The Eldership*, points out that many words have, in addition to their primary meaning, a technical or official meaning. Cf. the words "general," "major," and "corporal." Therefore, when the word "elder" is used to indicate a comparison as to age, it must be understood in its primary sense; but when used in the sense of a servant in the church it must be understood in its official sense. The age of an elder in the church is nowhere defined in the New Testament; but since, as Milligan points out, those who serve in this capacity must have wisdom, prudence, and moderation, without

which age is really of no value, that man is old enough to serve as an elder who has the wisdom and the ability which are necessary to meet the requirements in all things which the Lord has ordained for elders.

Paul declares that the church was purchased with the blood of Christ, and that implies, of course, that the responsibility of those who are accountable for its welfare take heed to themselves, as well as to the church. (Cf. Heb. 13: 17.) There is no responsibility, let it be repeated, which is greater than that which attaches itself to the elders in the Lord's church. In saying that they were made elders by the Holy Spirit, Paul did not mean to imply that it was miraculously done. Elders then, and now, were and are made by the Holy Spirit when they are made according to the Holy Spirit's direction, which is now available in the New Testament.

*I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Wherefore watch ye, remembering that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears.* The "grievous wolves" referred to false teachers from without (cf. Matt. 7: 15f), while those "from among your own selves" were false teachers within the church. These things were literally fulfilled during Paul's lifetime. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 3. 4. 18-20; 2 Tim. 2: 14-18.) Years later, when the letters were written to the seven churches in Asia, the Lord had this to say to the church in Ephesus: "I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false." (Rev. 2: 2; cf. verse 6.) But even with all their watchfulness, the Lord added, "But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love. Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." (Verses 4, 5.) Dangerous situations can be averted only by careful and

prayerful watching; and thoughtful Christians will never take the warnings of godly teachers lightly.

### Sources of Never-Failing Strength

. (Acts 20: 32-35)

*And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified.* Paul knew that the weight of responsibility of which he had just spoken would bear heavily upon the Ephesian elders; and it was for that reason that he pointed out to them the only source of strength which was adequate for their needs, namely, God and the word of his grace. And that is still the Christian's greatest need. (Cf. 1 Pet. 4: 19.) "And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4: 19.) There is no substitute for God and his word. It should be observed that we all need to be built up, that is, grow and become stronger in the Lord's service, if we would have the inheritance among the sanctified. (Cf. Heb. 12: 14.)

*I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said. It is more blessed to give than to receive.* Not only did Paul not covet the things of others, it appears that he rarely ever accepted support from others when he could supply his own needs. (Cf. Phil. 4: 15, 16.) But Paul did not do this because he thought it was wrong for gospel preachers to be supported (cf. 1 Cor. 9: 3-18, 2 Cor. 11: 7-12; Gal. 6: 6). Those who are acquainted with the life and labors of this apostle know that his preaching was usually done either among the Gentiles who had not been taught to support the gospel, or in new places where he wanted the people to understand that he wanted them, rather than that which they had. (See 2 Cor. 12: 14, 15.) And Paul wanted the elders at Ephesus to follow his example in helping the weak. There are some brethren, it seems, who

appear to think that preachers are the only ones who should make such sacrifices. When Jesus sent his apostles on their limited commission, he told them not to provide for their own needs; because they would be among their own brethren who had been taught to support such ministers. (Matt. 10: 5-10.) But when they were sent on the world-wide mission, they were told to do the very opposite. (See Luke 22: 35ff.)

In all of the writings of the apostles to the church, Paul is the only one who made direct quotations from Jesus—here and in 1 Cor. 11: 23-25. The words of the text now before us were rescued from oblivion, and have been preserved for the Lord's people in every succeeding age. (Cf. John 20: 30, 31; 21: 25.) His purpose in quoting them to the Ephesian elders was to inspire them to follow his example of service. That, as already pointed out, had always been Paul's rule as a Christian; and in following that rule, he was but imitating the example and teaching of Jesus. (See Matt. 20: 28; 1 Thess. 2: 7-9.) When the words of Jesus now under consideration are read as a basis for a sermon, many people expect a discourse on giving; but when their real significance is understood, it is clearly seen that they were spoken to encourage helpfulness. Perhaps no violence is done to the Scriptures, if the words are used as a basis for preaching on giving; but it is obvious that Paul had something else in mind when he spoke them.

#### A Parting Prayer and a Sad Farewell

(Acts 20: 36-38)

*And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he had spoken, that they should behold his face no more. And they brought him on his way unto the ship.* It is a noticeable fact that Luke does not record a single word of the prayer which was offered on this occasion. This may have been due to the fact, as McGarvey points out, that some prayers are so broken with emotion, so interrupted by weeping, that, although they leave

a holy benediction on the soul, no connected words in them are remembered. It is always sad to behold emotionally-fraught women and children weep; but when matured men with gray hairs, who have been hardened by the experiences of life because they have had to endure so much, are seen to weep like children and to fall upon each other's necks and demonstrate their love for each other; the scene is one which will not soon be forgotten.

It should be noted that Paul kneeled down and prayed with them all. This bodily posture was evidently in keeping with the mental attitude which characterized him at that time. And any one who studies the Bible knows that kneeling was the posture most frequently assumed by devout people when they prayed during Bible times; and since that is unquestionably true, it will be both interesting and profitable to ask, Why is there so much indifference toward that subject now? It is safe to say that a majority of professing Christians remain seated, that is, they do not change their bodily posture, with the possible exception of bowing their heads, when they engage in prayer: they seldom, if ever, kneel.

No one who is acquainted with the teaching of the New Testament would contend that kneeling is the only bodily posture which is pleasing to the Lord when his people pray; but it certainly is pleasing to him. The statement by Jesus in Mark 11: 25 seems to indicate that standing is also acceptable. "And whosoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one; that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." McGarvey, in commenting on this passage, says, "This expression shows that it was usual for the disciples to pray standing. Kneeling and prostration were and are more devout postures, and should be preferred when circumstances do not forbid; but standing is here recognized by Jesus as a suitable posture, and it is therefore not to be despised. Whether a worshipping assembly should habitually stand or kneel must be determined by each for itself in the light of surrounding circumstances; but it should be remembered, that while



standing and kneeling are both marks of respect in the presence of a superior, sitting is not; and consequently, sitting in prayer betrays a want of reverence." (The New Testament Commentary, Vol. I—Matthew and Mark, p. 338.)

If the seating arrangement of the meetinghouse is such as to prohibit kneeling on the part of many of the worshippers (which, of course, ought not to be), then it appears that it would be much more appropriate to request the congregation to stand for prayer, than to encourage them to remain seated. But, as McGarvey notes, kneeling should be preferred when

circumstances permit. Few devout Christians would question that statement.

It was natural for Paul to conclude from such circumstances as those described in verses 22-25 that the Ephesian elders would not be permitted to see his face again; but, as has already been noted, it appears from 1 Tim. 1: 3 that he did have the opportunity of visiting Ephesus again. This last named visit was after his two years imprisonment in Caesarea and the same length of time spent in the Roman prison, probably about five years after the events of the present lesson.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

In what way do the Book of Acts and Paul's epistles supplement each other?  
Cite some examples of this.

Tell of his great opportunities in Ephesus and the forces of evil which opposed him.

Describe the circumstances which affected his plans for leaving the city.

Trace his journey from Ephesus through Macedonia, Achaia, back through Macedonia, and on to Miletus.

Why did Paul ask the Ephesian elders to meet him in Miletus?

Discuss the part of the address which precedes the lesson text.

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Peter write these words?

What is the proper relationship between the elders and the flock?

How does this compare with the practice of many elders today?

What does it mean to "tend the flock of God which is among you"?

What are some of the specific duties of elders?

### The Responsibility of Elders Made Plain

What are the different titles which are applied to these leaders in the New Testament?

How are these terms related to each other?

What ideas do they suggest regarding the men in question?

Can you arrange these titles in "pairs" and give their significance? Then do it.

What would be the advantage of reducing the number of titles to three, since each pair have the exact meaning so far as their application is concerned?

What do we know regarding the age-requirement for elders? Give reasons for your answer.

Why is the responsibility of elders so great?

To what does Paul tell them to take heed?

In what sense did the Holy Spirit make them elders?

Are elders made by the Holy Spirit today? Give reasons for your answer.

What warning did Paul give the Ephesian elders?

What two types of false teachers did he mention?

What do we know regarding the fulfillment of the dangers which Paul pointed out?

What is the proper way to avoid such dangerous situations?

How should we feel about the warnings of godly men?

Why do so many take these warnings so lightly?

### Sources of Never-Failing Strength

Why did Paul think it necessary to strengthen the Ephesian elders?

To what did he commend them?

Show how God and his word supply all the needs we can have for such matters.

What does it mean to be sanctified?

How important is sanctification?

How did Paul feel about his personal support in his work?

Does he imply that it is not proper to support preachers who give their time to the work of the gospel? Give reasons for your answer.

Why did Paul choose to support himself and others who were with him?

What distinction does Paul have regarding direct quotations from Jesus?

What was his purpose in quoting the words to the Ephesian elders?

How did Paul's rule of living fit in with the teaching and example of Jesus?

### A Parting Prayer and a Sad Farewell

What probable reason did Luke have for not recording Paul's prayer on this occasion?

Why is a scene like the one described here so impressive?

What effect did it probably have on all who were there?

Why did Paul kneel on this occasion?

What does the New Testament teach regarding the bodily posture in prayer?

Why is it improper to "sit" during prayer, that is, when it is possible for the worshipper to do otherwise?

Why did Paul think that the elders at Ephesus would not see his face again?

What evidence do we have that he did get to visit that city again?

## Lesson X—September 2, 1962

## TRIAL IN JERUSALEM

## Lesson Text

Acts 21: 27-40

27 And when the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from A'-si-a, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the multitude and laid hands on him,

28 Crying out, Men of Is'-ra-el, help: This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place; and moreover he brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath defiled this holy place.

29 For they had before seen with him in the city Troph'-i-mus the £-phe'-sian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together; and they laid hold on Paul, and dragged him out of the temple: and straightway the doors were shut.

31 And as they were seeking to kill him, tidings came up to the chief captain of the band, that all Je-ru'-sa-lem was in confusion.

32 And forthwith he took soldiers and centurions, and ran down upon them: and they, when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, left off beating Paul.

33 Then the chief captain came near, and laid hold on him, and commanded him to be bound with two

chains: and inquired who he was, and what he had done.

34 And some shouted one thing, some another, among the crowd: and when he could not know the certainty for the uproar, he commanded him to be brought into the castle.

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the crowd;

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, Away with him.

37 And as Paul was about to be brought into the castle, he saith unto the chief captain, May I say something unto thee? And he said, Dost thou know Greek?

38 Art thou not then the E-gyp'-tian, who before these days stirred up to sedition and led out into the wilderness the four thousand men of the Assassins?

39 But Paul said, I am a Jew, of Tar'-sus in Ci-li'-ci-a, a citizen of no mean city: and I beseech thee, give me leave to speak unto the people.

40 And when he had given him leave, Paul, standing on the stairs, beckoned with the hand unto the people; and when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew language, saying,

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—*"If a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed: but let him glorify God in this name."* (1 Pet. 4: 16.)

**DEVOTIONAL HEADING.**—Acts 21: 19-26.

## Daily Bible Readings

August	27. M.....	Paul Arrives in Jerusalem (Acts 21: 15-19)
August	28. T.....	Advice oi Brethren (Acts 21: 20)
August	29. W.....	Paul Arrested (Acts 21: 27-36)
August	30. T.....	Paul Tells of His Conversion (Acts 22: 3-16)
August	31. F.....	Bitterness of the Mob (Acts 22: 17-23)
September	1. S.....	Blessing of Roman Citizenship (Acts 22: 24-40)
September	2. S.....	Paul before the Council (Acts 23: 1-10)

**TIME.**—A.D. 57.

**PLACE.**—Jerusalem.

**PERSONS.**—Paul, some Jews from Asia, the chief captain, and some soldiers.

## Introduction

After Paul and his company left Miletus, they sailed around the west-

ern seacoast of Asia to Patara, where they found a ship bound for Phoeni-

cia; and they went aboard, and set sail. Their voyage took them in sight of Cyprus, but "leaving it on the left hand, we sailed unto Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unlade her burden." When the brethren had gone into the city, they found the disciples, and remained with them seven days: "And these said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not set foot in Jerusalem." But when Paul and his party had accomplished the days there, they departed and went on their journey, being accompanied out of the city by the Tyrian brethren, along with their wives and children. "And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed, and bade each other farewell; and we went on board the ship, but they returned home again." (See Acts 21: 1-6.)

From Tyre, Paul and his companions sailed along the Syrian coast to Ptolemais, where they saluted the brethren and stayed with them one day. Their next stop was at Caesarea, where they were guests in the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the seven who were appointed to serve tables in the Jerusalem church. Luke tells us that Philip had four unmarried daughters who prophesied. During the time they were tarrying with Philip, Agabus, a prophet from Jerusalem, came in to them, "and taking Paul's girdle, he bound his own feet and hands, and said. Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." This caused all of Paul's friends to beg him not to continue on to Jerusalem: but he answered, "What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the

name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done." (Acts 21: 7-14.) It should be kept in mind that Paul had promised the brethren who had contributed the money for the relief of the poor saints in Judaea that he would accompany them that took it, if it was "meet" for him to do so. (1 Cor. 16: 1-4); and that was probably the reason why he was so determined to go on. No one could interpret that gift as well as he. (Cf. Acts 24: 17ff.)

Paul was favorably received by the brethren in Jerusalem, and the next day he went in with his companions unto James, all the elders being present. And when he had saluted them, he gave a detailed report of his ministry among the Gentiles. This caused much rejoicing, and they immediately proposed to him a method whereby they thought that he could conciliate the brethren who still clung to their Jewish tendencies. Some Bible students have questioned the wisdom of Paul's agreeing to the suggestion of James and the elders. Robertson holds that it was in keeping with Paul's philosophy, expressed in 1 Cor. 9: 20-22, while McGarvey is of the opinion that it was inconsistent with some things which he had written prior to this, but that the issues involved were not perfectly clear to his own mind, since it took time for him, and others as well, to grasp the full meaning of the change from Moses to Christ. McGarvey further thinks that subsequent to the writing of Ephesians and Hebrews, Paul would not have participated in the ceremonies. That, of course, may have been true, but in the light of Gal. 1: 11, 12 it seems reasonable to conclude that the burden of proof rests upon those who think that Paul erred.

### The Golden Text

*"If a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name"* The New Testament makes it very clear that suffering as a Christian is inevitable in this world. (See John 15: 18, 19; 2 Tim. 3: 12.) Peter also make mention of this in the paragraph from which the golden text is taken.

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you,

which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you: but inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy. If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye; because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you. For let none of you suffer as a mur-

derer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in others men's matters: but if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed: but let him glorify God in this name." (1 Pet. 4: 12-16.)

The name *Christian* is the God-given title which designates the people of Christ (cf. Isa. 62: 2; Acts 11: 26); and to the extent that they are true to that name (which means of or belonging to Christ—the followers of Christ: *Christ—ians*), they will partake of his sufferings. It is doubtful if any follower of Christ ever demonstrated this truth more than the apostle Paul. (Cf. 2 Cor. 11:

23-28.) But this great man also learned how to bear his trials gracefully. (See 2 Cor. 12: 7-10.) Peter also exhorted the brethren to whom he wrote to follow the same course. "For the time is come for judgment [the providentially permitted trials of God's people] to begin at the house of God: and if it begin first at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator." (1 Pet. 4: 17-19.)

### The Text Explained

The Uproar Excited against Paul

(Acts 21: 27-30)

*And when the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the multitude and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place; and moreover he brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath defiled this holy place. For they had before seen with him in the city Trophimus the Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple. And all the city was moved, and the people ran together; and they laid hold on Paul, and dragged him out of the temple: and straightway the doors were shut.*

The "seven days" probably had reference to the ceremonies regarding the Nazirite vow which James and the elders were using to try to conciliate the believing Jews in Jerusalem who still held on to the law of Moses. Their proposal to Paul was this: "We have four men that have a vow on them; these take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges for them, that they may shave their heads: and all shall know that there is no truth in the things whereof they have been informed concerning thee; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, keeping the law." The Old Testament law of the Nazirite is found in Num. 6: 1-21. Milligan says that when poor people took the vow of a Nazirite, a devout Jew would

sometimes bear the expenses of their release; and that appears to have been what Paul was doing for the four men in question. (Read Acts 24: 17-19.)

The Jews from Asia saw Paul in the temple, probably with the four men; and if they had only observed closely, they would have seen that no Gentiles was with him. But their purpose was not to ascertain the truth, but rather to destroy Paul. And inasmuch as they had seen Trophimus the Ephesian, a Gentile, with Paul in Jerusalem, they immediately jumped to the conclusion that he had been taken into the part of the temple—the Jewish court—where Gentiles were not allowed to enter. That gave them their chance to stir up the people against Paul, and that is exactly what they did. It is extremely unfortunate that the spirit which they manifested did not die with them. But stirring up prejudice against those whom one does not like, or whose teaching he cannot gainsay, is still very much in evidence.

This was not the first time that Paul tried to conciliate his Jewish brethren. He had Timothy circumcised for that very purpose (Acts 16: 1-3), and he was, at the very time of this lesson on a mission to Jerusalem with an offering which he hoped would result in a better feeling on the part of the Jewish brethren in Judaea toward the Gentile Christians who had not received circumcision. Many of the early Jewish brethren in Jerusalem had never been entirely

satisfied with the manner in which Paul and his co-laborers had offered the gospel to the Gentiles; and the growing strength of the Gentile churches seemed only to increase their suspicion. But it had long been Paul's conviction that this feeling of resentment on the part of the Jewish brethren could, in a large degree at least, be allayed by getting the Gentile brethren to supply funds to relieve the needs of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and that immediate area. (Read Rom. 15: 25-27) and Paul's request that the Roman brethren "strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judaea, and that my ministration which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints; that I may come unto you in joy through the will of God, and together with you find rest." (See Rom. 15: 30-33.)

There is no reason for thinking that Paul was not successful, in a large measure at least, in his attempts at conciliation, especially where Jewish Christians were concerned; but there were people then, just like there are people today, who are not interested in a more amicable relationship. Their aim, then and now, was and is destruction; and such people do not hesitate to make use of any circumstances which they can make to serve their cause, regardless of whether or not they are justified in their employment of such situations. This kind of attitude cannot be pleasing to God.

### His Rescue by the Chief Captain

(Acts 21: 31-36)

*And as they were seeking to kill him, tidings came up to the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in confusion. And forthwith he took soldiers and centurions, and ran down upon them: and they, when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, left off beating Paul. Then the chief captain came near, and laid hold on him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and inquired who he was, and what he had done. And some shouted one thing, some another, among the crowd: and when he could not know the certainty for the up-*

*roar, he commanded him to be brought into the castle. And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the crowd; for the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, Away with him.*

We learn from Acts 23: 26 that the name of the chief captain who rescued Paul from the Jewish mob was Claudius Lysias. The marginal reading has *military tribune* for "chief captain," or *chiliarch*, which is the transliterated Greek word. The literal meaning of "chiliarch," according to the lexicon is the leader of a thousand soldiers; but Luke says that the chief captain of the text now before us was the captain of the "band," or, as the margin has it, *cohort*. A "cohort," in the Roman military system was one of the ten divisions of a legion, but it consisted, not of a thousand men, but about six hundred. See any standard dictionary or encyclopedia. This situation can become confusing as one reads the various commentaries, hence this detailed explanation. The terms must be understood, not according to their literal Greek meaning, but according to Roman usage. This is the way in which Arndt-Gingrich's Greek-English Lexicon states the matter: *Chiliarch*—the leader of a thousand soldiers, then also=the Roman military tribune, the commander of a cohort—about 600 men. The cohort had been stationed in Jerusalem, near the temple, to see that order among the Jews was maintained.

Taylor points out that in order to understand this case thoroughly, we must know something of the political condition of the Jews at this time. Felix the Roman governor had, by his cruel and determined conduct, driven the Jews to the brink of insurrection. In the year before the time of this lesson, the high priest, who had earnestly contended with Felix on the nation's behalf, was slain in the temple with, as was supposed, the governor's connivance. And about that time an Egyptian impostor had led a large number of fanatics out into the wilderness and threatened to attack the Roman garrison in Jerusalem. The majority of this band was either killed or captured by the troops of Felix, but the

leader escaped, as may be seen further on in this study. The possibility that he might return for another effort against the Romans caused the governor to order a closer watch than usual over the activities of the Jews. This will help us to understand the rapid movements of Lysias when he heard that all Jerusalem was in confusion. See Conybeare and Howson, *in loco*.

Luke does not tell us how many soldiers came upon the scene; but since centurions (plural) are mentioned (a centurion was the commander of a hundred men) there must have been at least two hundred soldiers, maybe more. And inasmuch as Paul was being beaten and was the center of such an uproar, the chief captain naturally felt that he was in some way in the wrong. He, accordingly, had him chained to two soldiers, and tried to find out who he was and what he had done. But when he could not get that information, he commanded him to be brought into the castle, or, as we would say, into the barracks, or fortress. Paul was actually carried up the steps by the soldiers, because of the pressure of the howling crowd below. This was the same kind of unholy behavior which was seen around the praetorium of Pilate nearly thirty years before, when the mob cried, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" (See John 19: 15.)

#### Permission to Speak to the People Requested and Obtained

(Acts 21: 37-40)

*And as Paul was about to be brought into the castle, he saith unto the chief captain, May I say something unto thee? And he said, Dost thou know Greek? Art thou not then the Egyptian, who before these days stirred up to sedition and led out into the wilderness the four thousand men of the Assassins? But Paul said, I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and I beseech thee, give me leave to speak unto the people. And when he had given him leave, Paul, standing on the stairs, beckoned with the hand unto the people; and when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew language, saying,*

It is quite evident from the general

bearing of Lysias that his chief interest was in maintaining order in Jerusalem. He appeared to have little, if indeed any, interest in the Jews' religion or Christianity. (It is hardly probable that he could remain in Jerusalem any length of time, without some knowledge of both systems.) His purpose in taking Paul into the castle was for his own protection, and, no doubt, to further his efforts to find out who he was and what he had done. And so, when Paul requested permission to speak to him, the chief captain was both surprised to learn something of his identity, and glad for the opportunity of getting some information regarding him. The fact that Lysias thought that Paul was the seditious Egyptian who had headed the band of Assassians implies that the Romans still regarded him as a threat to the peace and security of Jerusalem.

The intelligent, self-controlled, and respectful manner in which Paul addressed the chief captain no doubt caused the latter to regard him with unusual favor; and when he learned more of his origin and identity, he treated him with the respect which was in keeping with his character. And the fact that Paul was able to beckon with the hand, as he began his address to the people, implies that at least one of the chains had been removed from his hand.

In reply to his question, Paul told Lysias that, instead of being the Egyptian, he was a Jew; and, in addition to that, he was citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia. This, of course, made the chief captain realize that he was no ordinary man. In referring to Tarsus as "no mean city," Paul was not exaggerating. Hastings says that its population was largely cosmopolitan, and that it was one of the great trading centers of the world. But it was not as a wealthy city that Tarsus was best known; it had a more honorable claim as being the home of the chief university of Asia. Although under the Romans, it was in reality a Greek city, with the thought, learning, and culture which naturally became the hallmark of its leading citizens. The historian Strabo says that in all that relates to philosophy and general education, Tarsus was more illustrious than Athens

or Alexandria. Paul therefore could speak with pride as he made himself known to the chief captain; and the chief captain, in turn, would have no fear in granting Paul his request to speak to the people.

The address which Paul delivered on this occasion, but which was interrupted the crowd when he mentioned the fact that the Lord told him that he would send him to the Gentiles, is found in Acts 22: 1-21. Robinson thinks that his words ought to have impressed the Jews by their evident sincerity, if for no other reason. But the conversion experience which he related, and which meant so much to him, did not have much

appeal to the excited and noisy antagonists. But that was to be expected, inasmuch as they represented, not the true spirit of Judaism, which found such noble expression in the psalmists and prophets of the Old Testament, but the perverted legalism of later times, such as characterized those who in the days of the prophets resisted and rejected their message; and as such they failed to see that Paul was simply preaching that which the prophets said would come to pass. (Cf. Acts 26: 22, 23.) Paul was indeed a true successor of the prophets and conservator of the best traditions of the nation of Israel.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Trace the journey of Paul from Miletus to Jerusalem.

What message was conveyed to him through the Holy Spirit?

Where did Paul and his company lodge while in Caesarea?

What prophecy did Agabus utter?

Why didn't Paul turn back and stay away from Jerusalem?

How was he received when he reached the capital city?

What proposal did James and the elders make to him?

What do you think of Paul's action in this respect?

### The Golden Text

What does the New Testament teach regarding the sufferings of Christians in this world?

Why is this necessary?

Discuss the context of Peter's statement which serves as the golden text.

What does it mean to suffer as a Christian?

How did Paul demonstrate the truthfulness of this teaching?

What did Peter exhort Christian sufferers to do?

### The Uproar Excited against Paul

What seven days were almost completed?

What was Paul's part in the ceremonies in the temple?

Who stirred up the confusion regarding Paul and why?

What important lesson should we learn from their attitude?

On what other occasions did Paul try to conciliate his brethren?

Was he justified in such action? Give reasons for your answer.

Under what circumstances should Christians today seek to conciliate others?

### His Rescue by the Chief Captain

Who was the chief captain and what did he command?

Why was he stationed so near the temple?

Why were the Romans so strict with the Jews at this time?

Describe the manner in which Paul was rescued.

Why was he bound with two chains?

Why did the chief captain want to take him into the castle?

How did the multitude react as they were going into the building?

What similar event occurred in Jerusalem some years before this?

### Permission to Speak to the People

#### Requested and Obtained

What was evidently the chief captain's principal interest in Jerusalem?

What was his apparent attitude toward the religious issues?

How did he react to Paul's question to him?

Why did Lysias think that he was the seditious Egyptian?

What did Paul tell the chief captain regarding himself?

In what sense was Tarsus "no mean city"?

Why did Lysias give Paul permission to speak to the people?

What effect did his address have on the crowd?

Why did the Jews so completely misjudge Paul.

## Lesson XI—September 9, 1962

## PAUL'S DEFENSE IN JERUSALEM

## Lesson Text

Acts 22: 1-8, 19-25

1 Brethren and fathers, hear ye the defence which I now make unto you.

2 And when they heard that he spake unto them in the Hebrew language, they were the more quiet: and he saith,

3 I am a Jew, born in Tar'-sus of Ci-li'-ci-a, but brought up in this city at the feet of Ga-ma'-li-el, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, even as ye all are this day:

4 And I persecuted this Way unto the death, binding and delivering **into prisons both men and women.**

5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and journeyed to Da-mas'-cus to bring them also that were there unto Je-ru'-sa-lem in bonds to be punished.

6. And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and drew nigh unto Da-mas'-cus, about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am

Je'-sus of Naz'-a-reth, whom thou persecutest.

19 And I said, Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

20 And when the blood of Ste'-phen thy witness was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting, and keeping the garments of them that slew him.

21 And he said unto me. Depart: for I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gen'-tiles.

22 And they gave him audience unto this word: and they lifted up their voice, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

23 And as they cried out, and threw off their garments, and cast dust into the air,

24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, bidding that he should be examined by scourging, that he might know for what cause they so shouted against him.

25 And when they had tied him up with the thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."* (2 Tim. 2: 3.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 22: 9-18.

## Daily Bible Readings

September 3.

M. Suffering as a Christian (1 Pet. 4: 12-19)

September 4.

T. Blessedness of Faithful Sufferers (Matt. 5: 1-16)

September 5. W.

..... Lose Life Save It (Matt. 16: 21-28)

September 6. T.

..... Must Bear Cross (Luke 14: 25-35)

September 7. F.

..... Suffering to Be Rewarded (Mark 10: 23-31)

September 8. S.

..... Comfort in Persecution (2 Thess. 1: 1-12)

September 9. S.

..... The Christian's Armor (Eph. 6: 10-20)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Paul, the multitude, the chief captain, and a centurion.

## Introduction

It has been pointed out in previous of the most persecuted persons for lessons that the apostle Paul was one Christ's sake on record. In writing



to the Corinthian brethren, he said, "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labor and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches." (2 Cor. 11: 24-28.)

Many people who suffer much less than Paul did become bitter, and make an effort to defend *themselves*; but it should be observed that whatever defense Paul made, there was always something greater than *himself* involved. This is to say that, so far as Paul was concerned, there were two centers—himself and Christ. This, of course, is precisely what Jesus taught, and Paul's aim was to follow Jesus. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself [one center], and take up his cross, and follow me [another center]." (Matt. 16: 24; cf. 2 Cor. 5: 9.) The word "deny," according to Arndt and Gingrich, means to act in a wholly

selfless manner, give up one's personality; while Thayer says the idea is to forget or lose sight of one's self and his own interests.

If any one will only take the time and make the effort to read the various defenses which Paul made, he will easily see that that was always his attitude. It was, to be sure, necessary for him to call attention to the situation in which he was involved; but any thoughtful person knows that his principal aim was not his personal benefit, but the conversion of those who were mistreating him. "And as he thus made his defence, Festus saith with a loud voice, Paul, thou art mad; thy much learning is turning thee mad. But Paul saith, I am not mad, most excellent Festus; but speak forth words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, unto whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things is hidden from him; for this hath not been done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. And Agrippa said unto Paul, With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds." (Acts 26: 24-29.)

### The Golden Text

*"Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus"* These words were spoken by a father to his son in the gospel, whom he was about to leave in a cruel and sinful world; and he wanted him to know that there is no glory in any service for Christ, if it stops short of sacrifice. Jesus had taught his disciples that "whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. 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?" (Matt. 16: 25, 26.) The story is told of Dr. Temple, when he was Bishop of London, how that he assigned a young man to a position which involved much danger. The young man's friends tried to dissuade him from

accepting it, and when he went to the bishop and told him that he believed that he would not live two years if he accepted the appointment. Dr. Temple listened to him patiently, and then replied somewhat in this way: "But you and I do not mind a little thing like that—do we?"

As life moves forward there comes to most of us a clearer view of its meaning, and of its intense importance. We are led to realize more and more that we are surrounded by many strange and hidden alien forces, and are harassed by numberless unseen foes. These must be met: and it will require hardship and suffering on the part of the faithful child of God to meet them. Paul used the metaphor of a soldier on duty, and he bade Timothy, and all of us through him (cf. 2 Tim. 2:

2), to act the part of a good soldier, as he suffered for the cause of Christ.

The real motive which prompts the Christian to suffer hardship for the cause of Christ is trust which is born of vision. The vision is that of the Divine ideal, and it is made possible by spiritual insight into God's revealed will. (Cf. Psalm 119: 18.) When people are willing to look into God's law as they should, they will see his will for them (cf. John 7: 17; Matt. 13: 12); and when once they have seen God's will for them, there must be a living trust in that ideal,

even when it involves hardships. This principle is forcefully illustrated by the case of Moses. "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he looked unto the recompense of reward." (Heb. 11: 24-26.) Moses saw a vision of the Divine ideal for him, and he maintained a living trust in it. (Cf. Heb. 12: 1, 2.)

## The Text Explained

### Paul's Autobiographic Defense

(Acts 22: 1-8)

*Brethren and fathers, hear ye the defence which I now make unto you.*

We learned in the previous lesson that the chief captain was completely mistaken regarding Paul's identity, and the apostle probably felt that many of his own Jewish brethren were also grossly ignorant of him; and it may have been for that reason that he decided upon the type of defense which he made after receiving permission from the chief captain to speak to the people. We know that Paul, although he had been falsely accused and beaten by the Jews, had no ill feelings toward them. The courteous and even affectionate terms which he used in addressing them were evidently intended to conciliate them.

*And when they heard that he spake unto them in the Hebrew language, they were the more quiet: and he saith.* Paul was suspected of being a renegade from the faith of his fathers, and was charged with specific acts of violation of the law with reference to the temple; and, knowing how many of the orthodox Jews felt toward the Grecian Jews, Paul not only claimed kinship with them, calling them brethren and fathers; he also was careful to speak the only language they really respected, especially as it concerned their religion. His introduction, therefore, was characterized by rhetorical adroitness; and it had the desired effect, all of which is further evidence that his aim was not personal justification, but the winning of others to Christ. This should

be a great lesson to us in our dealings with those who may differ with us. Conciliation, where no principle of right is violated, is always a wise course to follow.

*I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, even as ye all are this day: and I persecuted this Way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.* Those who are acquainted with the Book of Acts are aware of the fact that there are three separate accounts of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the man who became the apostle Paul. These accounts are in the ninth, twenty-second, and twenty-sixth chapters of Acts. The first account is plainly historical, being Luke's report of the incident; while the other two are Luke's record of the use which Paul himself made of that which happened and its significance. It has already been pointed out that Paul's purpose in the account now before us was to conciliate the Jews who were clamoring for his destruction. In the twenty-sixth chapter, Paul was given the opportunity of speaking before a royal or court audience, and he used the opportunity more or less as an attorney to present his own position, inasmuch as he had been put to the necessity of appealing his case to Caesar. But in both instances, his principal hope was to win his listeners to Christ.

As Paul began his address, he clearly identified himself as to nationality, place of birth, education, and the kind of life he had lived.

His statement here is similar in content to the one he made to the Philippians in warning them against Judaizers. "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless." (Phil. 3: 5, 6.) There were many in the audience which heard Paul speak who knew that he was telling the truth in every word he uttered. Some of them no doubt had actually been associated with him in his persecution of the church.

Although born outside of Palestine, Paul was carefully educated at the feet of one of the most renowned teachers of his day; and, as he told the Philippians, he was reared a Pharisee, hence, "instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers." Howson says that Gamaliel's learning was so eminent, and his character so revered, "that he is one of the seven who alone among Jewish doctors have been honored with the title of 'Rabban.' As Aquinas, among the schoolmen, was called Doctor Angelicus, and Bonaventura Doctor Seraphicus, so Gamaliel was called the 'Beauty of the Law;' and it is a saying of the Talmud, that 'since Rabban Gamaliel died, the glory of the law has ceased.' " All of this goes to show that Paul was one of the most highly respected men of his day among the Jews before his conversion. (Cf. Gal. 1: 13, 14.)

In speaking of persecuting the church, Paul told the court audience in Caesarea, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this I also did in Jerusalem: and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my vote against them. And punishing them oftentimes in all the synagogues, I strove to make them blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities." (Acts 26: 9-11.) No wonder he told his Jerusalem audience that he "persecuted this Way unto the death." (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 13-16.) Furneaux

suggests that Paul probably used "this Way" instead of *Christianity* in order to avoid any irritating name for the Christian body. (Cf. Acts 9: 2.)

*As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and journeyed to Damascus to bring them also that were there unto Jerusalem in bonds to be punished.* Paul was trying to show the crowd before him that he was as "zealous for God, even as ye all are this day;" and it is as if he had said, If you doubt my word, ask the high priest and all the estate of the elders. It is possible that there were some in his audience who actually knew about these transactions, twenty-odd years before. He still spoke of the Jews in Damascus as "the brethren," which shows that he had no bitterness in his heart for his father's people. (Cf. Rom. 10: 1-3.) Paul's activities at the time of which he spoke shows what misguided zeal can do: and any one who stops to think today is aware of the fact that that spirit is still very much alive.

*And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and drew nigh unto Damascus, about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.* After having told his audience that he was as they were at the time he asked for and received the letters to Damascus, Paul evidently next endeavored to answer a question which must have been in their minds, namely, what caused him to change; and the answer was, He met Jesus on the Damascus way, and as he told king Agrippa, he was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision. (See Acts 26: 19ff.) People today, of course, can't see Jesus in person, as Paul did; but they can meet him in his word. And when they do come face to face with him and realize what it is all about, they are not going to be the same people after that, even to the point of withstanding persecution. Verses 9-18, the devo-

tional portion of the lesson for to-day, should be carefully read at this point. These verses, along with the next section of our lesson, give Paul's answer regarding the change which came over him.

### His Reason for Going to the Gentiles

(Acts 22: 19-21)

*And I said, Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: and when the blood of Stephen thy witness was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting, and keeping the garments of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles.* Luke says in Acts 9: 28-30 that the brethren in Jerusalem sent Paul to Tarsus, when some of the Grecian Jews with whom he was disputing were seeking to kill him; but he does not say anything there about Paul's conversation with the Lord about the matter. But here the apostle says, "And it came to pass, that, when I returned to Jerusalem, and while I prayed in the temple, I fell into a trance, and saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; because they will not receive of thee testimony concerning me."

This is not the only time that the Jews demonstrated their unwillingness to receive the truth from a person who had seen Jesus. After Jesus had healed the blind man of John 9, the Pharisees questioned the former blind man at length regarding the cure. He gave them the correct answer, but they refused to believe it; and it was then that he showed them that he had a far better understanding of the Scriptures than they did. But "they answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out." (John 9: 34.) And even today, not every one is willing to receive the truth from just anybody. Even preachers of the gospel have been known to manifest that attitude. Jesus says that "if any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching" (see John 7: 17); but how may one know that he has this willingness? (1) By his treatment of the truth he al-

ready has or knows (cf. James 4: 17); and (2) by his readiness to accept truth from any source. James Harvey Robinson has well said that "of all human ambitions an open mind, eagerly expectant of new discoveries and ready to remold convictions in the light of added knowledge and dispelled ignorance and misapprehensions, is the noblest, rarest, and most difficult to achieve."

### The Results Which Followed the Address

(Acts 22: 22-25)

*And they gave him audience unto this word; and they lifted up their voice, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. And as they cried out, they threw off their garments, and cast dust into the air.* "This word" was his remark about being sent to the Gentiles. It was like a spark in a powder keg, or a match in a gasoline tank; and the explosion of pent-up feelings which followed was, if anything, worse than the first. (See Acts 21: 30ff.) Farrar describes the scene in these words, "Then began one of the most odious and despicable spectacles which the world can witness, the spectacle of an oriental mob, hideous with impotent rage, howling, yelling, cursing, gnashing their teeth, flinging about their arms, waving and tossing their blue and red robes, casting dust into the air by handfuls, with all the furious gesticulations of an uncontrolled fanaticism." We have no way of knowing, except by inference and comparison with other accounts, what the remainder of Paul's speech on this occasion would have contained, had he not been so rudely interrupted; but God, of course, will deal with the offenders according to their deeds.

*The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, bidding that he should be examined by scourging, that he might know for what cause they so shouted against him.* Howson thinks that the commotion threw Lysias into a new perplexity, due to the fact that he did not understand Paul's Hebrew speech. That may have been true, and especially so in the light of his attitude toward Paul when the latter re-

quested permission to speak to the people. But when he saw the results which followed the address, he evidently concluded that his prisoner must be guilty of some enormous crime for all the people to cry out against him. But if that was the way the chief captain felt about the matter, he was again grossly mistaken. McGarvey says that it was quite a common practice among Roman provincial rulers to scourge into a confession of their crimes men whom they held as criminals, and against

whom adequate evidence was not at hand.

*And when they had tied him up with the thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?* The calm manner in which Paul spoke about the matter brought forth the desired results, and it stood in bold contrast with the uncontrolled actions of the mob. When people are in the right their words usually are impressive. (Read verses 26-29.)

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

Tell something of Paul's persecutions as a Christian?

Why was he treated in this manner so often?

Why do many people become bitter as the result of ill treatment?

What effect did persecutions have on Paul?

What was always characteristic of his defenses?

Why was this so?

What does it mean for one to deny himself?

What was always Paul's principal aim when he made a defense?

#### The Golden Text

Under what circumstance were these words written?

What did Jesus teach regarding this matter?

Why are some people unwilling to suffer hardship for the gospel?

What is essential if one is to remain loyal under all adverse circumstances?

How may one get the proper vision of God's will for him?

Show how Moses and Jesus illustrated this principle.

#### Paul's Autobiographic Defense

Why was it necessary for Paul to make this defense?

What was his evident attitude toward the people to whom he spoke?

Why did he speak in the Hebrew language?

What important lesson should we learn from all this?

Why did Luke preserve three accounts of Paul's conversion?

Tell something of the purpose of each one of them.

What information did Paul give regarding himself as he began his address?

Why did he mention Gamaliel?

What was the extent of Paul's persecution of the church?

Why did he mention all this?

What probable reason did he have for speaking of Christianity as "this Way"?

Why did he refer to the letters he obtained from the Jewish rulers?

What further evidence do we have here that he was not bitter toward his persecutors?

What lesson do we have here regarding misguided zeal?

Why did he tell his hearers about his conversion?

What effect comes to people who meet Jesus face to face in his word?

#### His Reason for Going to the Gentiles

Why did Paul leave Jerusalem and go to Tarsus?

Why wouldn't the Jews in the capital city receive testimony concerning Jesus from him?

What other instance of this attitude do we have in the New Testament?

What lesson should we learn from this?

How may one know that he is willing to do the will of the Lord?

#### The Results Which Followed the Address

What caused the crowd to interrupt Paul's speech?

Tell something of their conduct.

What did the chief captain then propose to do and why?

What caused him to change his plans?

What lesson should we learn from this?

## Lesson XII—September 16, 1962

### PAUL BEFORE FELIX

#### Lesson Text

Acts 24: 10-25

10 And when the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, Paul answered.

Forasmuch as I know that thou

hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I cheerfully make my defence:

11 Seeing that thou canst take

knowledge that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship at Je-ru'-sa-lem:

12 And neither in the temple did they find me disputing with any man or stirring up a crowd, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city.

13 Neither can they prove to thee the things whereof they now accuse me.

14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets;

15 Having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust.

16 Herein I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always.

17 Now after some years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings:

18 Amidst which they found me purified in the temple, with no crowd, nor yet with tumult: but *there were* certain Jews from A'-si-a—

19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and to make accusation, if they had again against me.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—*“Neither can they prove to thee the things whereof they now accuse me”* (Acts 24: 13.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—Acts 24: 1-9.

## Daily Bible Readings

September 10. M.  
September 11. T.  
September 12. W.  
September 13. T.  
September 14. F.  
September 15. S.  
September 16. S.

20 Or else let these men themselves say what wrong-doing they found when I stood before the council,

21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question before you this day.

22 But Felix, having more exact knowledge concerning the Way, deferred them, saying, When Lys'-i-as the chief captain shall come down, I will determine your matter.

23 And he gave order to the centurion that he should be kept in charge, and should have indulgence; and not to forbid any of his friends to minister unto him.

24 But after certain days, Felix came with Dru-sil'-la, his wife, who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ Je'-sus.

25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me.

Paul's Plea Before Felix (Acts 24: 24-27)

Paul Before Festus (Acts 25: 7-11)

Paul's Appeal to Agrippa (Acts 26: 19-23)

Paul Declared Innocent (Acts 26: 27-32)

Enduring Hardship (2 Tim. 2: 1-13)

Triumph Over Bonds (Phil. 1: 12-22)

Fellowship with Christ (Phil. 3: 7-11)

**TIME.**—A.D. 57.

**PLACE.**—Caesarea.

**PERSONS.**—Paul, Felix, Drusilla, and the accusing Jews.

## Introduction

Our last lesson closed with Paul's question to the centurion regarding the legality of scourging a Roman citizen who was uncondemned. When that information was conveyed to the chief captain, he was both astonished and alarmed; for he knew full well that no man would dare to claim the rights of Roman citizenship, if it did not really belong to him: and he,

accordingly, hastened in person to the prisoner. After a brief question. Lysias not only learned that Paul was in reality a Roman citizen, but that he held the privilege under far more favorable circumstances than did the chief captain. (McGarvey says that the rights of Roman citizenship were obtained lawfully in three different ways, namely, (1)

Conferred by the senate for meritorious conduct; (2) inherited from a father who was himself a citizen; and (3) the birthright of one who was born in a free city. It was unlawfully obtained by large sums of money in the absence of the three conditions named above.)

Thus Paul saved himself a second time from ignominy, and this time from indescribable suffering, by the simple and quiet proclamation of his rights as a Roman citizen. But notwithstanding the fact that Lysias immediately ordered the removal of the instruments of torture, he was compelled to keep Paul in custody: for he still did not know why the Jews were so bent on his destruction, and he knew that this was the only way to keep Paul from them. But the chief captain was himself still full of alarm because he had bound a Roman, even though he did it in ignorance. "But on the morrow, desiring to know the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him, and commanded the chief priests and all the council to come together, and brought Paul down and set him before them." (Acts 22: 30.)

But again the chief captain was disappointed; for even the Sanhedrin was thrown into "a great clamor" as a result of Paul's statement, after perceiving that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees: touching the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." This resulted in "a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was

divided." The chief captain became afraid that Paul would be torn in pieces by them, and he "commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the castle." But the Lord stood by Paul the night following, and said, "Be of good cheer: for as thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." (See Acts 23: 1-11.)

As soon as it was day, about forty Jews bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. Paul's sister's son revealed this to the chief captain, and he forthwith sent the apostle to Caesarea, to Felix the governor, with a letter, which was not correct in every detail, as anyone can see by comparing it with the facts as recorded by Luke. And when the soldiers "came to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor," they presented Paul also before him. After reading the letter, he asked of what province the prisoner was; "and when he understood that he was of Cilicia, I will hear thee fully, said he, when thine accusers also are come: and he commanded him to be kept in Herod's palace." (See Acts 23: 12-35.) Five days later the high priest and certain elders, along with an attorney, came down from Jerusalem; and they informed the governor against Paul. After the prosecuting address had been delivered by Tertullus, evidently a Roman attorney, "the Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that these things were so." (Read Acts 24: 1-9.)

## The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is found in the principal text, and it will be considered in its proper place.

## The Text Explained

### Paul's Defense before Felix

(Acts 24: 10-21)

*And when the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, Paul answered,*

*Forasmuch as I know That thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I cheerfully make my defence: seeing that thou canst take knowledge that it is not more than twelve days since I came up to wor-*

*ship at Jerusalem: and neither in the temple did they find me disputing with any man or stirring up a crowd, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city. Neither can they prove to thee the things whereof they now accuse me.*

The governor beckoned unto Paul to speak after Tertullus and the Jews had finished their remarks. They made one general charge against Paul—that of being a pestilent fellow: and under it three specific charges.

namely, (1) a mover of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world; (2) a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes; and (3) an attempt to profane the temple. So far as the record goes, Paul had no previous notification of the charges against him, and he was put to the necessity of replying to them without a moment's preparation, or a single witness to support his statements. But he did, of course, have the promise of the Lord (cf. Matt. 10: 16-20) and that was entirely sufficient.

Felix had probably been governor in Judaea about five years at the time of this lesson, but Paul's statement "that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation" may imply that he held a lesser judicial office, prior to his becoming governor. At any rate, Paul recognized his ability as a judge, and apparently went as far as he could with his complimentary remarks as he began his defense. And as we examine Paul's remarks, it will be seen that he replied to the charges which were made against him, one by one. Paul had passed through Caesarea on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 21: 8-16), and it was probably on the third day after reaching the city that he assumed the responsibility in connection with the vow of the four men and purified himself in the temple (Acts 21: 17, 18, 26, 27). Paul's part in those ceremonies were terminated before the seventh day: and inasmuch as he had been in prison in Jerusalem and Caesarea six days (Acts 22: 30; 24: 1), there was not much time left for him to stir up an insurrection, at least in Jerusalem. This was his reply to the first specific charge against him: and he knew that Felix could see that it was true.

Paul then went on to show that the Jews in Jerusalem did not find him disputing with any man in the temple or stirring up a crowd, nor in the synagogues, nor anywhere in the city; which was the answer to the charge of being a pestilent fellow, and also a further refutation of the charge of being an insurrectionist, the only charge which concerned the Roman law. Following that, he countered that the charges which the Jews had made against him were nothing more than mere assertions, which could not

be backed up with any proof whatsoever.

*But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets; having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for [accept, margin], that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust. Herein [or? this account, margin] I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always. (Cf. Acts 23: 1.)*

This was Paul's reply to the charge that he was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. *They*, not *he*, called it a sect. Paul claimed that Christianity was the true fulfillment of Judaism, and not simply a deviation from it. (See Gal. 3; Rom. 9.) Paul's religion involved no new object of worship, nor anything different from that which was revealed in the law and the prophets. He told Felix that he believed all things which his accusers professed to believe. This belief in the law and the prophets gave Paul a hope founded on God: because his word and the promises found in his revelation furnish the only ground for such a hope. His reference to the belief of his accusers in the resurrection implies that if there were any Sadducees present, they were so few in number as to require no notice on his part by way of exception.

Paul's effort to have a good conscience was due to that which he said in verses 14, 15. Any one who has that kind of faith will strive always to have his conscience void of offence toward God and men. (Cf. 1 John 3: 1-3.) Conscience, strictly speaking, is a part of the "mechanism" with which all responsible people are endowed by their Maker. It should be noted, however, that it is the *judgment*, and not the conscience, which guides one, or which determines that which is right or wrong. Milligan points out that even the conscience itself is subject to the dictates and teachings of the understanding. It is always a faithful monitor: but its office is not to judge, but to execute. It is the sheriff which faithfully carries out the decisions of Reason, whether



they are right or wrong; whether they be true or false; whether they be just or unjust. Paul always had a good conscience, that is, an approving conscience; because he always acted conscientiously. But, notwithstanding all this, he was a very great sinner at one time; because his judgment erred.

Lipscomb observes that what one thinks is right or wrong depends upon the standard of right and wrong which he adopts; and this, in turn, depends upon his surroundings and the influences which mold his thinking, or, what is properly embraced in the term education. This explains why people can act differently with reference to the same thing, and both have a clear conscience. For example, two men may read that which the Bible says about baptism as a condition of salvation. One is convinced that the Lord meant to teach that penitent believers must be baptized in order to please him. while the other, having adopted the viewpoint that baptism is not a condition of salvation, is just as confident of acceptance with the Lord, as is the other. Both have a clear conscience. (Cf. 1 Pet. 3: 21.)

*Now after some years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings: amidst which they found me purified in the temple, with no crowd, nor yet with tumult: but there were certain Jews from Asia—who ought to have been here before thee, and to make accusation, if they had aught against me. Or else let these men themselves say what wrong-doing they found when I stood before the council, except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question before you this day.*

These verses contain Paul's answer to the charge of profaning the temple. He was specifically charged with that deed in Acts 21: 28—"and moreover he brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath defiled this holy place"—; but when Tertullus and the Jews at Caesarea presented their charges to Felix, this direct charge was changed to an attempted effort at profanation—"who moreover assayed to profane the temple." (Acts 24: 6.) The expression "after some years" refers to the time of his

missionary journeys, while he was away from Jerusalem; and so, when he returned it was to "bring alms to my nation, and offerings." Albert Barnes says that the word used here properly denotes an offering or gift of any kind; but it is usually applied to an oblation, or offering made to God in the temple—a thank-offering, a sacrifice. This is probably the meaning here. He came to bring *aid to his needy countrymen, and an offering to God*; and it was therefore not part of his purpose to interfere with or to profane the worship of the temple.

The marginal reading for "amidst which" is in *presenting which*, and with that reading the statement says concerning the offering, "In presenting which they found me purified in the temple," referring, of course, to the time of the Nazirite offering. (Acts 21: 26, 27.) The original word for "offering" in 21: 26 and 24: 17 is the same, but it does not follow that Paul intended, before going to Jerusalem, to make the one in 24: 26, for it was proposed by James and the elders; but it is quite possible that Paul did use some of the money he brought with him for that purpose. There was no crowd in the temple when Paul went there in connection with the Nazirite ceremony, until the Asiatic Jews gathered one (21: 27): and no tumult, until they created one (21: 30). The italicized words in the expression "but there were certain Jews from Asia" indicates that there is no verb, and the probability is that Paul, after making the reference to them, simply pointed out that they were not present to witness against him—the only ones who really knew what happened. And since they were not there. Paul suggests that the ones who were present, and who tried him in Jerusalem, tell what wrong-doing they found, except for the remark he made which threw the Sanhedrin into a "great clamor." Paul evidently meant this reference to indicate to Felix that even the Jewish high court had done the very thing which he had been accused of doing.

#### The Case Deferred by Felix (Acts 24: 22, 23)

*But Felix, having more exact knowledge concerning the Way, dr-*

*ferred them, saying. When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will determine your matter. And he gave order to the centurion that he should be kept in charge, and should have indulgence: and not to forbid any of his friends to minister unto him.*

Felix had more information regarding Christianity than the Jews apparently thought he did; and it is very evident that he knew enough to see that they were moved in their opposition to Paul merely by their notorious hostility to the harmless followers of Christ. Paul made a strong impression on the mind of Felix; but, as Howson notes, he was one of those characters, which are easily affected by feelings, but always drawn away from right action by the overpowering motive of self-interest. Lysias had already informed Felix by letter that he had found Paul "to be accused about questions of their law; but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds." (23: 29.) There is nothing to indicate that the chief captain was ever called to Caesarea for this case.

The very manner in which Felix ordered Paul treated while in confinement is ample proof that he found no evil in him; and, so far as he was concerned, he would certainly have set him free, but for two reasons, namely, (1) he wanted to please the Jews, because he knew that they could register some serious charges against his administration (24: 27), and (2) he hoped to get money from Paul, or his friends, for the purchase of his freedom, (24: 26). The providence of God may have kept him there for another reason!

### **Paul's Speech before Felix and Drusilla**

(Acts 24: 24, 25>

*But after certain days, Felix came with Drusilla, his wife, who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. And as he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered. Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me.* It is not always easy to comprehend that which is implied in the universality of the gospel, and

God's desire and efforts to get it into the hearts of all men. With hearers like the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), or Lydia (Acts 16), the task is relatively simple; but when it comes to reaching people like Felix, the method of procedure is entirely different. It frequently requires sufferings and hardships on the part of God's faithful messengers in order to reach some people; but we may be sure that God will always give them the necessary grace to enable them to bear such hardships and sufferings.

Felix was one of those rulers, all too common in that day and this, who exercised great power without conscience. He had formerly been a slave to Agrippina, the mother of Nero; but he had in some way gained his freedom. He was made governor of the province of Judaea, and, according to Tacitus, being guilty of "every kind of cruelty and lust, he exercised the authority of a king with the temper of a slave." Tacitus also, in his *Annals* (11: 54) represents Felix as considering himself licensed to commit any crime, relying on the influence which he possessed at court to escape punishment.

This governor of Judaea was married three times, each time to a woman of royal birth. Two of his wives were named Drusilla. One was a Roman, the niece or granddaughter of Antony and Cleopatra, referred to by Tacitus; and the other, who was his last wife, was a beautiful young Jewess, the daughter of Herod Agrippa (Acts 12), and sister of Herod Agrippa II and Bernice (Acts 25). This Drusilla was first married to Azizus, king of Amesa, who had been circumcised in order that he might receive her. Sometime after her marriage to Azizus, Felix saw Drusilla, fell in love with her, and through the influence of one of his friends, a Jew and pretended magician by the name of Simon, he unscrupulously persuaded her to forsake her husband and defy Jewish law by marrying him, although he had not himself become a Jew. See Josephus, *Antiquities* 20: 7, If. The cruelty of which Felix was guilty, the manner in which he and Drusilla were brought together, and his lust for gain, give us some idea of the character of the audience which

sat before Paul on this occasion. But God desires the salvation of every one (2 Pet. 3: 9), being no respecter of persons (Acts 10: 34, 35); and since people like Felix and Drusilla seldom ever go where his word is preached, it is sometimes necessary to bring the gospel to them; and that under unusual circumstances.

It is quite possible that Felix and Drusilla expected Paul to speak on what is usually thought of as the *doctrinal* side of Christianity, but instead of that he spoke on the *practical* side—setting forth the kind of life which must be lived by those who are acceptable to God. This, of course, was entirely appropriate for the occasion. It was to Felix's credit that he trembled, rather than be-

coming angry, as some do today, even professed Christians; but he would not allow Paul to finish. If he had waited another moment the apostle would have told him of Christ who was able to make him right at the very center of his being—one who could free him from all his sins and make him unspeakably happy; and then the coming judgment would have no terror for him. But the sermon was never finished: Felix himself had cut it short; and although Paul remained in his custody for two years longer, and the governor frequently sent for him and communed with him; there is no evidence that he ever trembled again or showed any inclination to reverse his decision.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson? Paul always strive to have a good conscience.  
Repeat the golden text. What is the "conscience" and how may one have one void of offence toward God and man?

### Introduction

How did the chief captain react to the information that he had bound and was about to punish an unconquered Roman citizen?

In what way did people of that day become Roman citizens?

What difference in this respect was noted between Paul and the chief captain?

Why did Lysias continue to keep Paul in custody?

What was his next move in his efforts to learn why the people cried out against Paul?

What was the result of the inquiry before the Sanhedrin?

Why and under what circumstances was Paul sent to Caesarea?

What happened when Paul was presented to the governor?

Tell of Paul's first trial in Caesarea.

### Paul's Defense before Felix

Under what circumstances was Paul permitted to speak for himself?

What charges had the Jews brought against him?

What special blessing did Paul enjoy at this time?

How did he feel about being tried before Felix?

How did he reply to the charge of being an insurrectionist?

What did he say with reference to the charge of being a pestilent fellow?

In what way did he deal with the charge of being a ringleader of the Nazarenes?

Who called it a "sect" and why?

What makes it possible for two people of opposite views to have a good conscience regarding the same thing—baptism, for example

How did Paul deal with the charge of profaning the temple?

What did Paul say about the Jews from Asia who stirred up the trouble in Jerusalem?

What reference did he make to his trial before the Sanhedrin and why?

### The Case Deferred by Felix

What kind of an impression did Paul make on Felix? Discuss in detail.

Why did the governor defer the matter?

What order did Felix give regarding Paul and why?

### Paul's Speech before Felix and Drusilla

What lesson do we learn from this situation regarding efforts to reach all men with the gospel?

What do we know of the character of Felix?

Under what circumstances were he and Drusilla married?

Why did Felix and Drusilla want to hear Paul discuss the faith in Christ Jesus?

What did they probably expect him to say?

What did he say and why?

What effect did his sermon have on Felix?

Why didn't the governor do something about it?

What lesson should we learn from this?"

# Lesson XIII—September 23, 1962

## PAUL APPEALS TO CAESAR

### Lesson Text

Acts 25: 6-12, 23-27

6 And when he had tarried among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down unto Caes-a-re'-a; and on the morrow he sat on the judgment-seat, and commanded Paul to be brought.

7 And when he was come, the Jews that had come down from Je-ru'-sa-lem stood round about him, bringing against him many and grievous charges which they could not prove;

8 While Paul said in his defence, Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Cae'-sar, have I sinned at all.

9 But Fes'-tus, desiring to gain favor with the Jews, answered Paul and said, Wilt thou go up to Je-ru'-sa-lem, and there be judged of these things before me?

10 But Paul said, I am standing before Cae'-sar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou also very well knowest.

11 If then I am a wrong-doer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if none of those things is *true* whereof these accuse me, no man can give me up unto them. I appeal unto Cae'-sar.

12 Then Fes'-tus, when he had conferred with the council, answered,

Thou hast appealed unto Cae'-sar: unto Cae'-sar shalt thou go.

\* \* \* \* \*

23 So on the morrow, when A-grip'-pa was come, and Ber-ni'-ce, with great pomp, and they were entered into the place of hearing with the chief captains and the principal men of the city, at the command of Fes'-tus Paul was brought in.

24 And Fes'-tus saith, King A-grip'-pa, and all men who are here present with us, ye behold this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews made suit to me, both at Je-ru'-sa-lem and here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.

25 But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death: and as he himself appealed to the emperor I determined to send him.

26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, king A-grip'-pa, that, after examination had, I may have somewhat to write.

27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not withal to signify the charges against him.

**Golden Text.**—*"This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds"* (Acts 26: 31.)

**Devotional Heading.**—Acts 25: 13-22.

### Daily Bible Readings

September 17.	M.....	Paul in Caesarea (Acts 24: 22-27)
September 18.	T.	Paul Appeals to Caesar (Acts 25: 1-12)
September 19.	W.	.....Shipwreck (Acts 27: 14-44)
September 20.	T.	.....Winter in Melita (Acts 28: 1-10)
September 21.	F.	.....Arrival in Rome (Acts 28: 11-22)
September 22.	S.	.....Letter Written from Rome (Phil. 1: 1-11)
September 23.	S.	A Letter to the Church in Rome (Rom. 1: 8-17)

**Time.**—A.D. 59.

**Place.**—Caesarea.

**Persons.**—Paul, Festus, Agrippa, and the court audience.

### Introduction

We learn from Josephus and other office by the Romans, and that the sources that Felix was removed from principal men of Caesarea went to

Rome to accuse him before the emperor. We are further told that Felix would certainly have been punished, had Nero not listened to the importunate solicitations of his brother Pallas, who was at that time held in the greatest honor by the emperor. But before going to Rome to face the charges which had been brought against him, Felix made one more effort to gain favor with the Jews, and that was to leave Paul in bonds. (See Acts 24: 27.) This, along with the governor's desire for a bribe, as we learn from the closing part of Acts 24, and as was pointed out in the previous lesson, accounts from Paul's two-year's imprisonment in Caesarea after he was declared innocent by the Romans.

Festus was the man who was appointed to succeed Felix as governor of the province, and in keeping with the general custom, his first acts were to acquaint himself with habits and prevalent feelings of the people over whom he was to rule. It is not surprising therefore to read, "Festus therefore, having come into the province, after three days went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea." (Acts 25: 1.) Caesarea was the seat of the Roman government for the province

of Judaea. The Jews were said to have been the most remarkable people in the Roman empire, and it is certain that no city meant to any people what Jerusalem meant to them; and any ruler who wanted to "feel the pulse" of his subjects in Judaea would of necessity have to go to Jerusalem.

The arrival of Festus in Jerusalem was the signal for the Jewish leaders to make a fresh attempt upon the life of Paul. Although two years had passed since the plot to assassinate the apostle (Acts 23: 12ff) had failed, they still felt that that was their best means of ending his life. And so "the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they besought him, asking a favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem; laying a plot to kill him on the way. Howbeit Festus answered, that Paul was kept in charge at Caesarea, and that he himself was about to depart thither shortly. Let them therefore, saith he, that are of power among you go down with me, and if there is anything amiss in the man, let them accuse him." (Acts 25: 2-5.)

### The Golden Text

*"This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds"* This was the repeated judgment of the Roman officials before whom Paul was tried; and even the Jews themselves were never able to convince themselves, aside from their intense prejudice, that he was a malefactor worthy of death. Their fight was to maintain the *status quo* of their religion, and were, of course, ready to condemn any one who acted contrary to their preconceived notions. That was the basis on which they condemned and caused Jesus to be put to death. And as dark as the picture is, any thoughtful person knows that that is still the way multitudes of religious people operate today. Instead of sitting down and calmly considering the merits of a proposition which is suggested by careful students of the Bible, they are ready to take whatever steps which are necessary to destroy the influence of any one who teaches anything contrary to their own views.

The two years which Paul spent in the prison in Caesarea were perhaps the most inactive years of his life as a Christian up to this time; and people have sometimes wondered why he was allowed, in the providence of God, to remain there so long. But any one who is acquainted with the teaching of the Bible does not question God's providence. We know that Paul enjoyed some freedom and had access to his friends and brethren; and it is altogether possible that he exercised a great influence for good, even though he was not free to move about as he pleased. Luke's famous "we" passages indicate that he went to Jerusalem with Paul and left Caesarea with him for Rome; and it is quite possible that he was with him during the greater part, if not all, of the time he was detained in prison, that is, he was himself in the city where Paul was incarcerated. Some Bible students think that it was during this time that Luke gathered

the material for the book which bears his name, and possibly Acts too.

But there is a lesson which we shall all learn from Paul's experience while in prison—do the best we can when circumstances are beyond our control. David Smith sums up the matter in these words: "There is no extant letter which he wrote from Caesarea; nor is it recorded that he won a single convert in the garrison of the Praetorium. Yet it is incredible that the two years should have passed idly. He would fain indeed have been prosecuting his mission and achieving his cherished dream of visiting Rome and carrying the gospel to the western limit of Europe; but he would not neglect the lesser employments which lay to his hand. He would be mindful of his churches; and, though none have survived, he would write many a letter of counsel and encouragement.

Luke was with him to serve as his amanuensis: nor would there be lacking among the friends who visited him at the Praetorium, willing hands to perform this and kindred offices on his behalf. And he would be very busy with the Holy Scriptures, searching them and meditating on them and finding in them ever fresh testimonies to the gospel of salvation in Christ Jesus. In truth his chamber would be no prison but a study, a school of Christ, an house of prayer." In the words of Richard Lovelace,

Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage;  
Minds innocent and quiet take  
That for an hermitage;  
If I have freedom in my love  
And in my soul am free,  
Angels alone, that soar above,  
Enjoy such liberty.

## The Text Explained

### The Trial before Festus

(Acts 25: 6-8)

*And when he had tarried among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and on the morrow he sat on the judgment-seat, and commanded Paul to be brought. And when he was come, the Jews that had come down from Jerusalem stood round about him, bringing against him many and grievous charges which they could not prove; while Paul said in his defence, Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I sinned at all.*

After Festus had completed his mission to Jerusalem, he returned to his capital, and ordered the trial of Paul to begin at once. This was in marked contrast with the attitude of Felix. The information which we have regarding Festus indicates that he was a much better man than his predecessor in office, but even at that, he was not all that was desired in a governor, as we shall see later. It does, however, appear that Festus was anxious to get at the facts in the case, and it is natural to infer from verse 18 that he was under the impression that Paul was charged with some kind of crime against humanity or the state. "Concerning whom, when the accusers stood up,

they brought no charge of such evil things as I supposed."

The charges which the Jews brought against Paul were described by Luke as being "many and grievous," and it is also stated that they could not prove them. It is easy to see from Paul's defence that they were substantially the same as those which were made against him in the presence of Felix, namely, heresy, sacrilege, and treason—against the law of the Jews, against the temple, and against Caesar. The result was that Festus was perplexed (verse 20), being unfamiliar, as he was, with the customs of the Jews. (Cf. Acts 26: 24-26.) Although confused by the failure of the Jews to bring the charges which he supposed they would make against Paul and their failure to prove the ones they did make, along with Paul's clear reply to them, the governor had no difficulty in seeing that the trouble was due to difference in religious viewpoints. (See verse 19.)

The situation which the Jews created by their attitude has in it an impressive lesson for all religious people, that of the necessity of trying to resolve any difference which they may have with others in the light of the inspired word of God, so as to avoid confusion and perplexity on the part of the unttaught. Multiplied

thousands of people are kept from obeying the gospel because of such conditions. Those who feel that they are right in that which they believe and teach have an obligation toward the unlearned. They can contend for the faith in the spirit of Paul, rather than according to the manner of the Jews who opposed him. Consider the impression which Paul made on his judges in contrast with that which was made by the Jews who falsely accused him. Any faithful Christian can, through prayer and diligence, manifest the spirit of Christ; or, to state the same thing in other words, he can disagree with others without himself being disagreeable.

### Paul's Appeal to Caesar

(Acts 25: 9-12)

*But Festus, desiring to gain favor with the Jews, answered Paul and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?* Later on, when the governor explained Paul's case to the visiting king Agrippa, he said, "And I, being perplexed how to inquire concerning these things, asked whether he would go to Jerusalem and there be judged of these matters." (Verse 20.) Two different reasons were assigned for the governor's question to Paul's regarding the transfer of the proceedings of his trial from Caesarea to Jerusalem, namely, (1) his desire to gain favor with the Jews, as stated by Luke; and (2) his own perplexity, as stated by himself. There does not appear to be any contradiction here—Festus was perplexed, and he did want to conciliate the Jews. With all the facts we have regarding Festus, he seems to have been, on the whole, a prudent and an honorable man, and he might have proved a very successful ruler under more favorable circumstances; he was simply charged with an impossible task. Conditions in Judaea had been deteriorating for some ten years, due to the maladministration of Felix, and it was too late for Festus to save the day. Furthermore, it was nothing but natural for him to endeavor to pacify the Jews when he learned of their resentment toward the conduct of Felix: but it was not right for him

to do that at the expense of Paul's life.

But in all fairness to Festus, it should be noted that it is altogether possible that he did not know that the Jews were planning to kill Paul on the way to Jerusalem, should their request for the transfer be granted. But in seeking to gain the favor of his unhappy subjects, he soon found himself involved in a characteristic web of intrigue. And, too, his ignorance of both Judaism and Christianity did not help the situation, and there is no indication that he tried to improve himself in this respect. This ignorance, along with his action in siding with Agrippa in ordering the Jews to tear down a wall which they had erected to obstruct the king's view into the temple from his dining-room, did not win him any favor with his subjects. (See Josephus, Ant. 20: 8, 11.) Festus died in despair during the second year of his administration.

*But Paul said, I am standing before Caesar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou also very well knowest. If then I am a wrong-doer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if none of those things is true whereof these accuse me, no man can give me up unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Thou hast appealed unto Caesar: unto Caesar shalt thou go.*

Paul's action in appealing to Caesar must have come as a great surprise to Festus, and no doubt filled him with a great amount of chagrin. To have his first administrative act challenged by a prisoner whom the Jews hated and were seeking to kill would prejudice him in the eyes, not only of his unwilling subjects, but the imperial government as well. But Paul knew better than Festus what it would mean for him to go to Jerusalem; and Festus was aware of Paul's rights as a Roman citizen, and he, accordingly, asked him if he was willing to go to the Jewish metropolis, rather than ordering him to go. The right of appeal to the emperor was one of the most important privileges of Roman citizenship, and, as Hort notes, by the mere pronuncia-

tion of these potent words, "I appeal unto Caesar," Paul instantly removed his cause from the jurisdiction of the governor before whom he stood, and transferred it to the supreme tribunal of the emperor at Rome.

Paul probably had at least three good reasons for his appeal to Caesar, namely, (1) he knew from past experience, if not from actual fresh information, what the Jews would try to do during his transfer from Caesarea to Jerusalem (see Acts 23: 12-21); (2) he knew something of the unfair, as well as dangerous, treatment which he would receive from the Jews in Jerusalem, should he be tried there; and (3) he saw in the appeal an opportunity to fulfill a long and burning desire to go to the Imperial City. It is true that he had hoped to go there as a free man (see Rom. 15: 22ff); but he doubtless felt that it would be better to go as a prisoner, than to risk his life in going back to Jerusalem. We know that after Paul reached Rome he was able to say "that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel; so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest; and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear." (See Phil. 1: 12-14.)

Festus, as already pointed out, knew the rights of a Roman citizen, and we are therefore not to understand that he conferred with the council in order to decide whether or not to grant Paul's request. It is altogether possible that the governor's purpose in conferring with his advisors was to make certain that Paul was indeed a Roman citizen, and that he had not in some way forfeited his right of appeal by some crime of the past.

**The Apostle's Case Publicly Stated**  
by the Governor  
(Acts 25: 23-27)

*So on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and they were entered into the place of hearing with the chief captains and the principal men of the city, at the command of Festus Paul teas brought in. It is not often that*

a gospel preacher is given the opportunity to address so brilliant an audience, but one has only to read Paul's address in chapter 26 in order to see that he took full advantage of the occasion to preach for a decision for Christ. Paul's appeal to Caesar had placed the governor in a very embarrassing position, and with the coming of Agrippa and Bernice for a state visit to pay their respects to the newly installed procurator, Festus had laid Paul's case before the visiting king, no doubt because of the latter's great knowledge of the Jews and the particular questions in Paul's case. (See Acts 26: 1-3.) After Agrippa had heard that which Festus had said regarding the prisoner, he expressed the desire to hear him himself; and that accounts for the assembly now under consideration. (See verse 22.)

This Agrippa was the son of Herod Agrippa of Acts 12. Claudius Caesar, at the request of the elder Agrippa, had given the son the kingdom of Chalcis upon the death of his uncle, his father's brother and husband of his sister Bernice. He was also given the right to superintend the temple in Jerusalem and to appoint the high priest, and was later promoted to a larger kingdom. The wicked lives which Agrippa and Bernice were then apparently living may account for their failure to obey the gospel which Paul preached unto them. (See Acts 26: 28; cf. 24: 25.)

*And Festus saith, King Agrippa, and all men who are here present with us, ye behold this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews made suit to me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death: and as he himself appealed to the emperor I determined to send him. Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and especially before thee, king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I may have somewhat to write. For it seemeth to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not withal to signify the charges against him.*

It is clear from Acts 26: 30-32 that Festus did not get much help for writing the letter. "And the king rose up, and the governor, and Ber-



nice, and they that sat with them: and when they had withdrawn, they spake one to another, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. And Agrippa said unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar." The appeal had been made, and there was nothing the governor could do about it, except to send the prisoner to Rome. The governor had allowed himself to be caught in a net from which he could not free himself: he had kept an in-

nocent man in prison while trying to gain favor with his enemies. We do not know what might have happened to Paul, or to Festus, as for that matter, had the apostle been set free; but regardless of that, the situation of the governor was not benefited any, and there is no indication that he gained favor with the Jews. As already pointed out, he died of despair within less than two years. This should teach us to do right regardless of the circumstances which surround us.

## 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 changing governors in Judaea?

What was the attitude of Festus when he arrived to take over as procurator?

What advantage did the Jews take with the change in administrations?

What was Festus' reply to them? and why?

### The Golden Text

Why were the Jews so bitter against Paul?

What was the repeated verdict of the Romans regarding him?

What important lesson should we learn from these circumstances?

In what way did Paul probably spend his two years in the Caesarean prison?

What should any Christian do when shut up by circumstances beyond his control? Give reasons for your answer.

Why don't stone walls and iron bars always make a prison?

### The Trial before Festus

How did Festus compare with Felix with respect to Paul's trial?

What kind of man did Festus appear to be?

What charges did the Jews bring against Paul?

What had Festus expected in this respect?

What conclusion did the governor reach regarding the attitude of the Jews toward Paul?

What lesson should we learn from this regarding untaught people?

Why is this lesson so greatly ignored by Christians today?

What should be the spirit which brethren should manifest in differing from others?

How can people disagree without being disagreeable?

### Paul's Appeal to Caesar

Under what circumstances did Paul make this appeal?

What reasons are assigned for Festus' question to Paul about going to Jerusalem?

Why the two reasons?

Why did Festus have such a difficult task before him as governor?

Why did he allow himself to get involved with the Jews to such an extent?

What effect did Paul's appeal to Caesar probably have on the governor?

How was such an appeal regarded by the Roman government?

What were Paul's probable reasons for making the appeal?

Why did Festus confer with the council after the appeal was made?

### The Apostle's Case Publicly Stated by the Governor

Discuss the great opportunity which came to Paul in this occasion.

Why did he preach a gospel sermon instead of answering the specific charges which the Jews had made against him?

Why did Festus lay Paul's case before Agrippa?

Who were Agrippa and Bernice?

What was the result of Paul's address before the court audience?

What fate befell Festus?

What lesson should we learn from his experience?

## Lesson XIV—September 30, 1962

## PAUL IN ROME

### Lesson Text

Acts 28: 16-30

16 And when we entered into Rome, Paul was suffered to abide by himself with the soldier that guarded him. 17 And it came to pass, that after three days he called together those that were the chief of the Jews: and when they were come together, he

said unto them, I, brethren, though I had done nothing against the people, or the customs of our fathers, yet was delivered prisoner from Jeru'-sa-lem into the hands of the Romans:

18 Who, when they had examined me, desired to set me at liberty, because there was no cause of death in me.

19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Cae'-sar; not that I had aught whereof to accuse my nation.

20 For this cause therefore did I entreat you to see and to speak with *me*: for because of the hope of Is'-ra-el I am bound with this chain.

21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters from Judae'-a concerning thee, nor did any of the brethren come hither and report or speak any harm of thee.

22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, *they* came to him into his lodging in great number; to whom he expounded *the matter*, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Je'-sus, both from the law of Mo'-ses and from the

prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.

25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Spirit through I-sa'-iah the prophet unto your fathers,

26 Saying,

Go thou unto this people, and say, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand;

And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive:

27 For this people's heart is waxed gross,

And their ears are dull of hearing, And their eyes they have closed; Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes,

And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And should turn again, And I should heal them.

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gen'-tiles: they will also hear.

30 And he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—*"Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even so as it hath been spoken unto me"* (Acts 27: 25.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—Acts 28: 11-15.

## Daily Bible Readings

September 24.	M. Paul's Conference with Jews in Rome (Acts 28: 17-22)
September 25.	T. . Paul Preaches to the Jews in Rome (Acts 28: 23-25)
September 26.	W. Paul Cites the Prophet Isaiah (Acts 28: 25-28)
September 27.	T. Paul in His Own Hired House (Acts 28: 30, 31)
September 28.	F. Paul Guarded by a Soldier (Acts 28: 16)
September 29.	S. Paul a Prisoner in Bonds (Eph. 6: 20)
September 30.	S. .... Paul a Prisoner for Christ (Phile. 8-21)

**TIME.**—A.D. 60.

**PLACE.**—Rome.

**PERSONS.**—Paul and the chief of the Roman Jews.

## Introduction

"And when it was determined that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, of the Augustan band. And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail unto the places on the coast of Asia, we put to sea,

Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us." (Acts 27: 1, 2.) Thus begins the narrative of one of the most interesting trips on record. Robertson notes that the great detail and minute accuracy with which Luke describes this voyage and shipwreck throws more light

upon ancient seafaring than everything else put together. One of the great works on the subject is the *Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul*, the third edition of which (1866) was used by Ramsay as a guide to his chapter on The Voyage to Rome. This is mentioned for interested students.

Paul's travelling companions from Caesarea to Rome were Luke and Aristarchus, a man from Thessalonica in Macedonia. The famous "we" passages of the narrative are the basis for saying that Luke was in the company. Ramsay is of the opinion that Luke and Aristarchus went along as Paul's slaves, since they would not have been permitted to travel with him as his friends; and in justification of his viewpoint he cites a case mentioned by Pliny in which the wife of a prisoner who was being taken to Rome begged to go as his servant, but was denied that privilege. This is also the viewpoint of David Smith who cites the same letter which quotes the wife as saying, "You will give a man of con-

sular rank some attendants to serve his food, to attire him, to put on his sandals: I will singly perform every office."

Dr. Smith then goes on to say, "Thus it appears that, though he might not take friends with him, a prisoner might have attendants; and it was doubtless in this capacity that those two devoted followers accompanied the apostle. His health was broken by all that he had recently undergone, and Luke would go with him as his physician and Aristarchus as his servant. Their attendance would lend him dignity and procure him exceptional consideration; and from the outset he was courteously treated by Julius, the centurion in command of the convoy." While all of this may be true, it is also true that Paul mentions Aristarchus in a letter he wrote from Rome as "my fellow-prisoner," which probably indicates that the latter was also a prisoner who was being sent from Caesarea to Rome. (See Col. 4: 10.)

## The Golden Text

*"Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even so as it hath been spoken unto me."* This is a great affirmation of faith; and it is well to observe, in this connection, that there are two words in the New Testament which are rendered "be of good cheer." One of these words (*tharseo*) was used by Jesus six times, and by those with Jesus one time (see Matt. 9: 2, 22; 14: 27; Mark 6: 50; John 16: 33; Acts 23: 11; and Mark 10: 49); and it means, according to Arndt and Gingrich, be cheerful, be courageous, have courage! don't be afraid! The other word is *euthumeo* and means, according to the same authority, be cheerful, cheer up, keep up one's courage. This word is found in the New Testament three times, and was used by Paul twice (Acts 27: 22, 25), and by James once (James 5: 13).

There does not seem to be any basic difference in the meaning of these two words: they are both stirring and heartsome. Some one has said that if there is any difference between them, Paul's word is more sprightly and has a touch of gaiety, that is, merriment about it. The passage in James is cited in

proof of this possible difference in meaning, which, in the King James Version, is translated "merry." At any rate, one would not go very far wrong in picturing Paul, bright and alert on the crowded deck of that doomed ship, walking among the despairing passengers and crewmen with a cheerful word of encouragement.

But Paul had something on which to base his confidence. He was not afraid because God's message had been spoken to him, and he believed that which it said. That had always been his attitude toward the Lord since he met him on the Damascus road. But the direct message which he heard was no more divine than that which is spoken to all Christians today through the inspired New Testament; and anyone who believes this inspired message can have the same confidence. "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; cf. Rom. 8: 28.) And it is well to note that the sinful people on board that ship were saved from

the sea because of Paul's faith. (See Acts 27: 24; cf. Gen. 18: 22-33; Matt. 5: 13.)

## The Text Explained

### Paul's Entrance into and His Situation in Rome

(Acts 28: 16)

*And when we entered into Rome, Paul was suffered to abide by himself with the soldier that guarded him.*

The entire voyage from Caesarea should be carefully studied and traced on the map. Following the shipwreck, which came as a result of the failure to heed Paul's advice, the company spent three months on the island of Melita, probably the one we now know as Malta. Although a prisoner, Paul made use of the opportunities for service during the time they were on the island; and while Luke makes no mention of any converts to the faith on Melita, it is quite possible that disciples were made and left there. The impression which Paul made on the islanders must have marked him in their estimation as the most unusual prisoner they had ever seen. (See Acts 28: 1-10.) The courteous treatment which the apostle received from the day that the ship left Caesarea clearly shows that he was no ordinary prisoner. He was "a Roman, and uncondemned." It is thought that "the certain other prisoners," who along with Paul were delivered to the centurion to take to Rome, were condemned criminals who were destined to pay their part in fighting with the wild beasts in the arena for the entertainment of the people of Rome. Ramsay says that there was a perpetual demand made by Rome on the provinces for human victims to amuse the populace by their death in the arena. Paul, it appears, was not compelled to remain in the cells with men of that class.

Luke's account of the trip from Melita to Rome is given in these words: "And after three months we set sail in a ship of Alexandria which had wintered in the island, whose sign was The Twin Brothers. And touching at Syracuse, we tarried there three days. And from thence we made a circuit, and arrived at Rhegium: and after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second

day we came to Puteoli; where we found brethren, and were entreated to tarry with them seven days: and so we came to Rome. And from thence the brethren, when they heard of us, came to meet us as far as the Market of Appius and the Three Taverns; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage." (Acts 28: 11-15.)

The double mention of coming to Rome (verses 14, 16) has been explained to mean that they first came to the *district* of Rome in which the city was located, and then to the city itself. It is interesting to note that portions of the great Roman Appian Road are still in use; and if one wants to walk where Paul did, he can do it there. When they reached the city proper, the apostle was treated with the utmost leniency. He was allowed to rent a place in which to reside, and was permitted to live there at his own convenience under the surveillance of a soldier who was responsible for his presence when it was required. This unusual treatment of Paul may have been due, in part at least, to the centurion's good report of him.

### The Conference with the Roman Jews

(Acts 28: 17-22)

*And it came to pass, that after three days he called together those that were the chief of the Jews: and when they were come together, he said unto them, I, brethren though I had done nothing against the people, or the customs of our fathers, yet was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans: who, when they had examined me, desired to set me at liberty, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had aught whereof to accuse my nation. For this cause therefore did I entreat you to see and to speak with me: for because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.*

Although Paul was apparently confined to the house in which he dwelt,

and could not, as his custom was when entering a new place, go to the synagogue of the Jews, if there was a synagogue in the place, he, nevertheless, was not idle but began his work among the Jews first almost immediately after his arrival in Rome. It is a noticeable fact that Paul was completely free from any bitter feeling toward the Jews who had done so much to destroy both him and his influence. His attitude toward them, in fact, had already been expressed in a letter which he had written to the Roman Christians some two years before he himself went there. "Brethren, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." (Rom. 10: 1-3.)

If any follower of Christ had a valid reason to feel bitter toward his antagonistic Jewish brethren, it was Paul; but, according to Luke's account, he did not speak a single unkind word against them. But in pursuing that course, the great apostle was but following the teaching and example of his Lord. "For what glory is it, if, when ye sin, and are buffeted for it, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not: but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (1 Pet. 2: 20-23; cf. Rom. 12: 17-21.)

People who have been redeemed from sin by the blood of Christ are under obligation to save, not only themselves, but also all others, to the extent of their ability and opportunity. This is the lesson which we should learn from Paul's attitude and example toward the Jews. His first aim therefore, after reaching Rome, was to clear the way of all misunderstanding, in so far as he was able,

and thereby prepare as many as possible for the reception of the gospel which he had to preach to them. The whole context shows that the Jews whom he called to him were those who were not acquainted with the new Way of life, that is, Christianity. All Israelites hoped for the coming of the Messiah; but inasmuch as most of them did not recognize him when he came, many of those who did were compelled to suffer for their faith. That is what Paul meant when he said, "For because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." It has always been true that those who see the truth first are ill-treated by those who are more backward regarding it.

*And they said unto him, We neither received letters from Judaea concerning thee, nor did any of the brethren come hither and report or speak any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against.* The "letters" probably referred to official documents which would have come from the Sanhedrin regarding the charges against Paul, which they did not receive; while the *report* and *speech* would be the informal and unofficial talk of their brethren from Judaea. The reply which the Jews gave to Paul must have been reassuring, and it was in marked contrast with the treatment he had consistently received from the Jews of the homeland.

The remark about the "sect everywhere spoken against" is susceptible of more than one implication. In the first place, it implies a greater ignorance of Christianity among the Jews in the Imperial City than seems reasonable to suppose; while on the other hand, they appeared willing to give the apostle a respectful hearing regarding his side of the question. And it is further implied that the number of Jewish Christians in Rome was relatively small. But whatever may have been the real attitude of the Jews who came to Paul's dwelling regarding Christianity, we may be certain that he was grateful for the opportunity of preaching the gospel to them.

### Paul's Roman Ministry

(Acts 23: 23-30)

*And when they had appointed him a day, they came to him in his lodging in great number; to whom he expounded the matter, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Spirit through Isaiah the prophet unto your fathers, saying.*

*Go thou unto this people, and say,  
By hearing ye shall hear, and shall  
in no wise understand;  
And seeing ye shall see, and shall  
in no wise perceive:  
For this people's heart is waxed  
gross,  
And their ears are dull of hearing,  
And their eyes they have closed:  
Lest haply they should perceive  
with their eyes,  
And hear with their ears,  
And understand with their heart,  
And should turn again,  
And I should heal them.*

*Be it known therefore unto you, that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles: they will also hear it.*

These verses give the account of Paul second interview with the Jews who came into his dwelling, as well as the result which followed. Verse 25 gives one of those instances, found throughout the Bible, which show that the Scriptures themselves claim to be inspired: "Well spake the Holy Spirit through Isaiah the prophet." And it is also interesting to observe that a prediction of the Old Testament can be and often is applicable to more than one situation. (Cf. Matt. 13: 14. 15: John 12: 39, 40.) As suggested earlier in this lesson, Paul, even in prison, continued his policy of preaching to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles.

*And he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him.* The next

verse says, "Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him." (cf. verse 23.) We have no way of knowing how many people Paul converted to Christianity during those two years, but it is fair to assume that the number was not insignificant. (Cf. Phil. 1: 12, 13; 4: 22.) It was during these two years that Paul wrote four of his epistles, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians, probably in that order. These letters are popularly known as the prison epistles, and they are of sufficient worth to immortalize any man. It is generally thought by Bible students that Onesimus, a run-away slave, was one of Paul's converts during his prison years, and that the letter to Philemon was intended to effect a reconciliation between him and his master Philemon. The abrupt manner in which the Book of Acts closes had led many Bible students to think that Luke probably intended to write another volume, to be added to Luke and Acts which may be regarded as his two-volume history of Christianity.

There is nothing said directly in any part of the New Testament regarding the outcome of Paul's appeal to Caesar; but most conservative students of the life of Paul are convinced that he was successful in obtaining his release from prison; and that he spent some four or five years preaching the gospel and planting churches before his second Roman imprisonment, at the conclusion of which he went to be with Jesus. The principal arguments for acquittal and subsequent second imprisonment are found in the so-called pastoral epistles, those to Timothy and Titus. The work which they represent Paul as doing has no place in Acts and his other epistles: for example: his leaving Timothy in Ephesus to counteract the influence of certain false teachers, while he went into Macedonia (1 Tim. 1: 3); his leaving Titus in Crete to set in order the things that were wanting there (Tit. 1: 5); his visit to Miletus where he left Trophimus sick (2 Tim. 4: 20); and his proposed journey to Nicopolis where he hoped to spend the winter (Tit. 3: 12).

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place and persons.

### Introduction

What is the principal value of Acts 27: 1-28: 15 to us?

What men were the closest to Paul on that voyage?

How do we know that Luke went along?

What was the probable status of Aristarchus? Give reasons for your answer.

### The Golden Text

In what way did Paul express his faith to the men on ship?

What is the meaning of "be of good cheer"?

Discuss other instances of the occurrence of this expression in the New Testament.

Why was Paul so confident?

What lesson is there in his example for us?

### Paul's Entrance into and His Situation in Rome

Give a general outline of the journey from Caesarea to Rome.

Tell of the shipwreck and of Paul's experience on the island of Melita.

Discuss Paul's entrance into Rome.

What special treatment did he receive when he reached the city?

### The Conference with the Roman Jews

In what way did Paul begin his work in the Roman prison?

Why call in the Jews first?

What was his attitude toward them and all other Jews?

Why didn't Paul feel bitter toward his persecutors?

What is the teaching of Christ in this respect?

What application does this teaching and example have to us?

Why is it essential to clear up misunderstandings before attempting to preach the gospel to people who are affected by them?

What was the hope of Israel?

What often happens to people who realize or recognize the fulfillment of a promise made in the Bible?

Why is this true?

What reply did the Jews make to Paul's statement to them?

What did they probably mean by "letters"?

What effect did their reply probably have on Paul?

What further request did they make of him?

What was the "sect everywhere spoken against"?

What are some of the implications of their remarks?

### Paul's Roman Ministry

Give a summary of his second conference with the Jews who came to his dwelling.

What evidence do we have here of the inspiration of the Bible?

How do we know that an Old Testament reference may apply to several different occasions?

How long did Paul remain in the Roman prison?

What is known of the success of his work of gospel preaching?

What letters did he write while in the prison?

What is probably implied by Luke's abrupt ending of the Book of Acts?

What evidence do we have that Paul was probably acquitted and released from prison?





# FOURTH QUARTER

## THE PERIOD OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

### (Northern Kingdom)

*Aim.—To study the history of one of the darkest periods of the descendancy of Jacob who, because of their sin and rebellion, suffered great oppression and who found deliverance only when they turned to Jehovah in penitence and prayer.*

#### Lesson I—October 7, 1962

### THE KINGDOM DIVIDES

#### Lesson Text

1 Kings 12: 12-20

12 So Jer-o-bo'-am and all the people came to Re-ho-bo'-am the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come to me again the third day.

13 And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him,

14 And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

15 So the king hearkened not unto the people; for it was a thing brought about of Je-ho'-vah, that he might establish his word, which Je-ho'-vah spake by A-hi'-jah the Shi'-lo-nite to Jer-o-bo'-am the son of Ne'-bat.

16 And when all Is'-ra-el saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the

son of Jes'-se: to your tents, O Is'-ra-el: now see to thine own house, David. So Is'-ra-el departed unto their tents.

17 But as for the children of Is'-ra-el that dwelt in the cities of Ju'-dah, Re-ho-bo'-am reigned over them.

18 Then king Re-ho-bo'-am sent A-do'-ram, who was over the men subject to taskwork; and all Is'-ra-el stoned him to death with stones. And king Re-ho-bo'-am made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Je'-ru'-sa-lem.

19 So Is'-ra-el rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

20 And it came to pass, when all Is'-ra-el heard that Jer-o-bo'-am was returned, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Is'-ra-el: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Ju'-dah only.

*Golden Text.—"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16: 18.)*

*Devotional Reading.—1 Kings 12: 1-11.*

#### Daily Bible Readings

October 1. M.  
October 2. T.  
October 3. W.  
October 4. T.  
October 5. F.  
October 6. S.  
(October 7. S.

Division Threatened (1 Kings 11: 1-13)  
Division Occurs (1 Kings 12: 12-20)  
Politics and Religion (1 Kings 12: 25-33)  
God's Judgment Predicted (1 Kings 13: 1-6)  
Destruction of a Wicked House (1 Kings 15: 25-30)  
Prophecy of Reunion (Ezek. 37: 21-28)  
Reunion in Christ (1 Cor. 12: 25-31)

*Time.*—975 B.C.

*Place.*—Shechem.

*Persons.*—Rehoboam, his advisors, Jeroboam, and the people of Israel.

## Introduction

We know from the general teaching of the Bible, and from such specific statements as 2 Sam. 7: 12-16, that Jehovah never intended that his people should be divided into two kingdoms. But when sin entered in among them, division was inevitable. Solomon had departed from the way of the Lord, and thereby had lost the kingdom. "And Jehovah was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from Jehovah, the God of Israel, who had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which Jehovah commanded. Wherefore Jehovah said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to thy son, for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen." (1 Kings 11: 9-13.)

This was the divine reason for dividing the kingdom, and it appears to have been based on the same principle which led to the confusion of tongues during the earlier years of the human race. "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. And Jehovah came down to see the city and

the tower, which the children of men builded. And Jehovah 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. Come, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So Jehovah scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off building the city." (Gen. 11: 4-8.)

When people are united in any sinful practice, that means that their evil will grow<sup>7</sup>; but when God divides them, their purposes, plans, and actions are greatly weakened, if not entirely destroyed. (1 John 2: 19; 1 Cor. 11: 19.) If the Israelites had been permitted to remain united and prosperous, the result would have been the abandonment of the nation, with all its wealth and power, to idolatry; for in union there is strength, even though it be strength for evil. Therefore, as Isaac Errett points out, when the continued union of the twelve tribes would necessarily result in the surrender of the kingdom to the pollutions and iniquities of idol-worship, thus subverting the very purpose for which the several tribes were chosen to be God's peculiar people, division became preferable to union; because the strength which would come from such union would be strength for evil. This was the divine reason for the division, but the human reason for the revolt was due to another and different motive, as we shall see later on when we come to discuss the lesson text for today.

## The Golden Text

*"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall"*

Pride is the very opposite of the spirit which characterized Solomon when he became king. "In Gibeon Jehovah appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, ... I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this thy great people." (1 Kings 3: 5-9.)

This reply to the Lord's question greatly pleased Jehovah, and he, accordingly, promised him the wisdom which he requested, and also riches and honor which he did not ask for; with the result that Solomon became the wisest, most honored, and the richest king of his day. "Behold, I have done according to thy word:

lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there hath been none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days." (Verses 12-14.)

But instead of exerting an influence for good upon the world about him by dedicating himself to the cause of Jehovah, Solomon yielded himself to the influence of the world, and took all the homage which it brought to him. The humility which characterized him at the beginning of his reign gave way to the pride of

his heart, with the result that in his efforts to become worldly great, he surrounded himself with influences which demoralized, pulled to pieces, and brought to decay the spiritual qualities which he possessed. And when he no longer walked in the way of Jehovah, God told him that the kingdom would be rent from his family. And what we need to learn to-day is that the same thing can and will happen to anyone who follows the same path which Solomon trod. In the language of William Knox, in *Mortality*,

Oh! Why should the spirit of mortal  
be proud?

Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast  
flying cloud,

A flash of the lightning, a break of  
the wave,

Man passes from life to his rest in  
the grave.

## The Text Explained

### The Provoking Answer of Rehoboam

(1 Kings 12: 12-15)

*So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come to me again the third day.* Before the death of Solomon, Jehovah revealed to Jeroboam, a servant of the king's, through the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite, that ten tribes would be taken from the house of David and that he would be made king over them. God further informed Jeroboam that he would firmly establish his kingdom, if he would carefully follow the Lord's leading. Solomon evidently heard of Jeroboam's designs; for the record says, "Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam; but Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon." Read 1 Kings 11: 26-40.

After the death of Solomon, but before the formal crowning of his son and successor Rehoboam, the people sent to Egypt and called Jeroboam back to his homeland, and he went with his fellow countrymen to Shechem for the crowning ceremonies. When they assembled in Shechem, Jeroboam did not appear as the rival or enemy of Rehoboam, but as the spokesman for the oppressed people. Looking at the matter from the human side, that appears to have been the reason why Jeroboam was called

out of Egypt; for we read "that Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee. And he said unto them. Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed" (1 Kings 12: 1-5.)

This was a flat demand for a statement of policy on the part of the new king. They were tired of the heavy taxes and the tyrannical treatment which Solomon had imposed upon them; and they wanted to know what to expect from Rehoboam before pledging to him their loyalty. The king asked for time to formulate an answer, which was wise on his part; but from the way he acted when the people returned to him, he demonstrated himself to be very foolish. The first thing he did was to take "counsel with the old men, that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye me to return answer to this people? And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever." (Verses 6, 7.)

These old men no doubt had seen the folly of Solomon's behavior respecting the people, and they knew exactly how to advise the incoming king; but he forsook their counsel, and turned to the young men who had grown up with him for advice. When Rehoboam sought advice from the old men, he said, "What counsel give ye me to return answer to this people?" but when he came to the young men, his words were, "What counsel give ye, that *we* may return answer to this people." There was nothing unusual in Rehoboam's behavior with respect to his advisors; for that is practically the way all new rulers begin their administrations. They want the advice of the men they know, and they feel that their modern ideas and approach to the problems before them are better and will be more effective than the men of experience who have gone before them. And, too, this attitude on the part of young and inexperienced people is not limited to governmental affairs, it is true in practically all areas of life. This lesson is important, and needs emphasis.

*And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, and spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.* The young men advised Rehoboam to tell the people that his little finger was thicker than his father's loins, which, in effect, was to say that the smallest thing about him would be greater than the greatest about his father. Or, to state the same thing in other words, the young men advised the new king to use strong and harsh language, and thereby put the people in their place once and for all. But this didn't work then, and it won't work now. Some people who are in authority can force their wills upon the people for a time, but a change will come sooner or later.

The harsh treatment which Rehoboam proposed was the difference between "whips" and "scorpions," the chief difference being that of severity. The *whip* was a lash, while the *scorpion* was a knotted scourge. The severity of the latter instrument was

compared to a scorpion, an invertebrate having an elongated body and a narrow segmented tail with a venomous sting at its tip. The practical meaning of punishment by scourging was that of very keen pain. Rehoboam had the opportunity of making a wise choice, but his character was not equal to the occasion: and neither will anyone else do any better, who follows the way of foolish counsel.

*So the king hearkened not unto the people; for it was a thing brought about of Jehovah, that he might establish his word, which Jehovah spake by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.* This is a wonderful illustration of the manner in which the providence of God works. Earlier in this lesson we saw the *divine* reason for the division of the kingdom, and here we have the *human* reason, that is, as it appeared to be the human reason. Providence is an effect produced by a special act of God through the use of natural means. God said that he would rend the kingdom away from the house of David, or literally from the son of Solomon, but he used natural means to accomplish it. The harsh attitude which Rehoboam manifested was the immediate cause of the rupture in the kingdom, while the "attitude" itself was assumed because of the character of the man himself. Jehovah was said to have brought the "thing" about because it was through his overruling that the king was faced with the necessity of making a choice in the matter. (Ex. 7: 1-3; 9: 15-17.) If Rehoboam had been a better man, the providence of God would have resulted in his being seen as a man who could make decisions for the glory of God and the good of mankind. God never causes anyone to do wrong (James 1: 13-16); but he does sometimes cause people to be put in a situation which will reveal the kind of people they are. And if such people are what they should be, they may be assured that God will not abandon them to the evil one. (1 Cor. 10: 13; Heb. 4: 14-16.)

### The People Renounce the House of David

(1 Kings 12: 16, 17)

*And when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying,*

*What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents. But as for the children of Israel that dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.*

The reaction of the people was immediate, and it was no doubt contrary to that which the king had expected. It is hardly reasonable that he would have deliberately driven the people from him. If he had expected that, he most certainly would have given a different answer. The people did exactly what God said (through the prophet) that they would do, but there is no indication that they intentionally planned to obey God. They acted with perfect human freedom, but in doing so they accomplished God's purpose with reference to the kingdom. Paul and other New Testament speakers and writers frequently referred to the principle of how people can accomplish God's will without any intention of doing so. "For they that dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him." (Acts 13: 27; 3: 17, 18; 1 Cor. 2: 6-8.) People, by their own deliberate action, are daily fulfilling the will of God; but what happens to them in the day of judgment will depend upon the character and motive behind their deeds. This lesson cannot be too greatly emphasized.

### **Jeroboam Made King: over Israel**

(1 Kings 12: 18-20)

*Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the men subject to Taskwork; and all Israel stoned him to death with stones. And king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.* This was another foolish move on the part of Rehoboam, that of sending Adoram, evidently to compel obedience on the part of the people; but they were not long in making a believer out of the king. After he reached Jerusalem he assembled a large army to bring the rebellious Israelites back into his kingdom, but Jehovah interposed with a prophetic prohibition; and "they hearkened unto the word of Jehovah, and re-

turned and went their way, according to the word of Jehovah." See verses 21-24.

*So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day. And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was returned, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.*

Here again, there is no indication that the people of Israel acted with any desire to please God when they made Jeroboam king over them, notwithstanding the fact that Jehovah had spoken to Jeroboam about the matter through Ahijah the prophet. The whole context shows that Jeroboam was at that very time contemplating the seizure of the kingdom, and Jehovah was simply telling him that he would establish him as king, if he would walk humbly before him. (2 Chron. 13: 5-8.) As was pointed out earlier in this lesson, Jehovah had determined to rend the kingdom from the monarch of Judah, because of the sin of Solomon; and it has also been pointed out that this was done through providential intervention, that is, through natural means. The Israelites did not rebel against Rehoboam because God wanted them to, but rather because it was their own desire; and furthermore, Jeroboam was not chosen by God to be king over Israel; he was selected by the people, and God used him until he himself rebelled against God. Jehovah made it plain to him through Ahijah just what he would have and what he would not have. A part of the original kingdom would always remain under the rule of a son of David.

The ten tribes which rebelled against the house of David were all the people except Judah, Benjamin, and Levi. The Levites were not reckoned among the twelve tribes which received land grants. Some people have been made to wonder about the statement, "there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only," when it is a matter of record that Benjamin was always included in the kingdom of Judah. This may have been due to the comparative insignificance of the tribe of Benjamin. The capi-

tal of the united kingdom was Jerusalem, and since it was on the border between Judah and Benjamin, the entire population of the two tribes may have come to be regarded as one tribe when reference was made to them. We know from the fact that only ten tribes made up the northern kingdom, there must have

been two tribes in the other kingdom. 1 Kings 11: 32, 36 speaks of only "one tribe," and that may indicate that Benjamin simply "chose" to remain loyal to Judah. (Verse 31.) But whatever may be the correct explanation of this, we know that Benjamin was a part of the southern kingdom.

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

How does the Lord always feel about the unity of his people?

Under what circumstances does he tolerate division?

Why was the kingdom of Israel divided?

Why was division preferable to union under those circumstances?

#### The Golden Text

What is pride?

How is it illustrated in the case of Solomon?

What caused Solomon to change his attitude in this respect?

What important lesson should we learn from this?

#### The Provoking Answer of Rehoboam

What revelation did Jeroboam receive before the death of Solomon?

How did the king react to Jeroboam's activities?

Under what circumstances was Jeroboam recalled from Egypt?

What important meeting took place in Shechem?

What request was placed before the king? and why?

What was the king's reply? and why?

What advice did he receive and how did he regard it?

Discuss this in the light of present-day people.

How did Rehoboam address the people on the third day?

Why did he want to appear harsh to them?

In what sense was this brought about by the Lord?

What is the meaning of "providence" and how does it work?

What was the human cause of the division of the kingdom?

Why are people frequently placed in the position where a choice must be made?

What has God promised the righteous in this respect?

#### The People Renounce the House of David

How did the people react to Rehoboam's reply to them?

What effect did it evidently have on him?

Was it God's plan for the people to act as they did? Give reason for your answer.

Discuss the principle involved in this in the light of the New Testament teaching.

#### Jeroboam Made King over Israel

What did Rehoboam do when the people rebelled against him? and why?

What was the reaction of the people and what did the king do?

What happened when he got ready to compel the ten tribes to return to his kingdom?

Was Jehovah's plan carried out in having Jeroboam made king over the ten tribes? Give reasons for your answer.

Why wasn't the tribe of Benjamin mentioned as remaining loyal to Rehoboam, along with that of Judah?

## Lesson II—October 14, 1962

### JEROBOAM CAUSES ISRAEL TO SIN

#### Lesson Text

1 Kings 12: 25-33; 14: 15-18

25 Then Jer-o-bo'-am built She'-chem in the hill-country of E'-phraim, and dwelt therein; and he went out from thence, and built Pe-nu'-el.

26 And Jer-o-bo'-am said in his heart, Now will the kingdom return to the house of David:

27 If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Je-ho'-vah at Je-ru'-sa-lem, then will the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Re-ho-bo'-am king of Ju'-dah; and they will kill me,

and return to Re-ho-bo'-am king of Ju'-dah.

28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Je-ru'-sa-lem: behold thy gods, O Is'-ra-el, which brought thee up out of the land of E'-gypt.

29 And he set the one in Beth'-el, and the other put he in Dan.

30 And this thing became a sin;

for the people went to *worship* before the one, even unto Dan.

31 And he made houses of high places, and made priests from among all the people, that were not of the sons of Le'-vi.

32 And Jer-o-bo'am ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Ju'-dah, and he went up unto the altar; so did he in B6th'-61, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth'-el the priests of the high places that he had made.

33 And he went up unto the altar which he had made in Beth'-el on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and he ordained a feast for the children of Is'-ra-el, and went up unto the altar, to burn incense.

15 For Je-ho'-vah will smite is'-ra-el, as a reed is shaken in the water; and he will root up Is'-ra-el out of this good land which he gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the River, because they have made their A-she'-rlm, provoking Je-ho'-vah to anger.

16 And he will give Is'-ra-el up because of the sins of Jer-o-bo'am, which he hath sinned, and wherewith he hath made Is'-ra-el to sin.

17 And Jer-o-bo'am's wife arose, and departed, and came to Tir'-zah: *and* as she came to the threshold of the house, the child died.

18 And all Is'-ra-el buried him, and mourned for him, according to the word of Je-ho'-vah, which he spake by his servant A-hi'-jah the prophet.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*My little children, guard yourselves from idols*” (1 John 5: 21.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Kings 11: 1-3.

### Daily Bible Readings

October 8.	M. Rehoboam Unfaithful (1 Kings 11: 1-13)
October 9. T.	..... Civil War (1 Kings 16: 8-16)
October 10.	W. Israel's Defeat by Judah (2 Chron. 13: 1-22)
October 11. T.	..... A Prophet's Disobedience (1 Kings 13: 11-32)
October 12.	F. Jeroboam Corrupts the Worship (1 Kings 12: 1-32)
October 13. S.	..... Bondage of Israel (2 Kings 17: 1-23)
October 14. S.	..... Assyrian Captivity (2 Kings 17: 24-41)

TIME.—975 B.C.

PLACES.—Shechem, Bethel, and Tirzah.

PERSONS.—Jeroboam, the people of Israel, his wife, and the prophet Ahijah.

### Introduction

Jeroboam came to the kingdom because of the sins of others, but he soon demonstrated that he himself could not be trusted to follow the way of the Lord. In fact, there does not appear to be any significant element of piety in his character. The writer of First Kings has this to say about him: “And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, ... a servant of Solomon, . . . also lifted up his hand against the king. And this was the reason why he lifted up his hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, and repaired the breach of the city of David his father. And the man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valor; and Solomon saw the young man that he was industrious, and he gave him

charge over all the labor of the house of Joseph.” (1 Kings 11: 26-28.)

Jeroboam belonged to the tribe of Ephraim, one of the tribes which later pulled away from Rehoboam, and the fact that he rebelled against the king no doubt strongly commended him to the powerful tribe of Ephraim. This was especially true when it became evident that the majority of the tribes would secede from the established kingdom. Any such move on the part of the dissatisfied people would prove disastrous to them, unless they had a competent leader. All the facts we have regarding Jeroboam indicate that he was possessed of remarkable political sagacity, and sufficient en-

ergy to carry out any plans which were necessary to success. And, too, the prophet Ahijah, as we saw in the last lesson, assured him of complete success if he would listen to the word of the Lord. (1 Kings 11: 29-38.)

It apparently was not long after the message of Ahijah was spoken to Jeroboam until he was elevated to the throne of Israel; and he knew full well that God's hand was in it all. But one has only to read the history of his reign, even at the very beginning, in order to see that he

had no intention of following the will of God. However, we should not conclude from this that Jeroboam's course was unique: he was not the first, and indeed he was not the last, to forget the hand that blessed him. In the words of Isaac Errett, it is alike surprising and humiliating to learn, in our own experiences, the baseness and ingratitude of the human heart in forgetting God, and the insane self-reliance which so readily and recklessly substitutes human policy for divine counsel.

### The Golden Text

*"My little children, guard yourselves from idols."* Man is by nature a creature of worship; and it is as natural for him to worship, as it is for him to eat. In fact, it is impossible for him to live and not worship. He may not always worship the right object, or in the right way; but he will worship, nevertheless. All of this means that man must have a God, and when he loses the vision of the true God, he will make one for himself. This is to say that the making of idols is an attempt to find God, and God is always built up out of the imagination and according to the pattern of the builder himself. In the words of another, every idol is the result of a conception of God which is the magnified personal self-consciousness of the man who creates his idol. (Psalm 115: 4-8.)

The whole inspired history of the Jewish people is one long warning and protest against idolatry. Abraham obeyed the voice of God to abandon idolatry, and as a result he became the father of the faithful, Jacob ordered his family to bury their gods before they were finally settled in the land of Canaan; but even so, their descendants were never free from idolatry until after the Babylonian captivity. The most

of the gods of the Israelites were the gods of the people around them; and as we come over into the New Testament, it is easy to see that the same principle holds true with the people who profess to follow Christ. And while John probably had in mind idols which were "graven by art and device of man" when he penned the words which serve as our golden text for today, it is also well to note that anything, whether persons, property, or pleasure, which takes the place of God in our hearts, is very properly called an idol. See Webster's Unabridged Dictionary for the definition of a "god."

In order to guard ourselves against idolatry, we must make sure that we always keep before us the vision of the true God as he is revealed in the New Testament. If this is not done, then we are sure to become idolaters; for, as already observed, man is going to have an object of his devotion. A continuous search for the truth regarding God, and a constant effort to make sure that we obey God's will, is the only certain defense we have against idols. (Phil. 3: 17-19; Col. 3: 5.) These two passages are sufficient to show any thoughtful person that it is very, very easy for even Christian people to fall into idolatry.

### The Text Explained

#### Jeroboam's Unlawful Institutions

(1 Kings 12: 25-33)

*Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill-country of Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and he went out from thence, and built Penuel.* Inasmuch as Shechem was already a city before Jeroboam became king, the evident meaning of "built" is rebuilt or ex-

panded. (Judges 9: 1-49; 1 Kings 12: 1.) Shechem was in the hill-country of Jeroboam's native Ephraim, and he, desiring to make it his capital, enlarged and fortified it appropriately. He also enlarged and fortified Penuel, a city east of the Jordan. (Gen. 32: 30, 31; Judges 8: 8, 9, 17.)



*And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now will the kingdom return to the house of David: if this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, then will the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me, and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.*

The attitude of Jeroboam set forth in these verses gives the key to his character. A complete lack of faith on his part characterized his actions from the very beginning of his kingdom. He made no effort whatsoever to seek God's guidance in accordance with the promise made to him by Ahijah. "And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel. And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that which is right in mine eyes, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and will build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee." (1 Kings 11: 37, 38.)

It would be difficult to find a clearer promise than this one; but, like Israel before him, the word of hearing did not profit Jeroboam, because it was not united by faith on his part. (Heb. 4: If.) But looking at the matter from the human standpoint, Jeroboam was entirely right in his reasoning. The rallying of all of God's people in their religious center would have had a powerful effect on their thinking regarding their reunification. The wealth and glory of the traditions of Israel was much stronger than political ties; and Jeroboam well knew that it was essential to alienate the two peoples religiously, if their political separation was to be made permanent. This, however, was the way of human philosophy, and it could not have been pleasing to God. (Isa. 55: 8, 9.)

But *faith* would have suggested to the new king that it was only necessary for him to follow carefully the law of Jehovah, if he desired complete success in his new endeavor; but Jeroboam, alas! was in no sense a man of faith. He was a man of self-will and of policy. The Divine

Presence was completely overshadowed, so far as Jeroboam was concerned, by his own importance. The principle involved in all of this cannot be too greatly emphasized; for the lesson is just as applicable to people now, as it was in Jeroboam's day. There are too many people, even in the church, who feel that their own views regarding what they should do are better than the way of faith which is always contrary to human reasoning. Regardless of how unpromising conditions may look to us now, God is able to make all things work together for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8: 28; Rom. 12: 17-21; Matt. 6: 33.)

*Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.* It should be noted that Jeroboam "took counsel," but it was not the counsel of Jehovah. He sought only the counsel that would please him. Human nature is still pretty much the same. We are willing to take counsel, even though our way is fairly well predetermined, but we are careful, as a rule, to seek the advice of those whom we feel will agree with our own determinations.

With his own ideas of what should be done, Jeroboam began to devise ways and means by which he could alienate the people of Israel from their former allegiance. This, of course, required that he lead the people in complete disobedience to Jehovah. His plan was an adroit and subtle appeal to human nature: tell the people that they do not have the physical strength to continue their former service. Make them feel that they need a religion without tears, without unnecessary hardships: that undue sacrifices are unwarranted. This kind of advice no doubt made the people feel that the king had a genuine interest in their welfare, but his aim was to keep them away from Jerusalem, from the old songs and memories which would tend to draw them again to the worship of the temple in the holy city.

There are people today who think

that religion should be made fairly easy. How often are people encouraged to neglect that which God has positively commanded because of some hardship involved! Or even when the difficulty involved could hardly be called a hardship! But Jesus never made religion easy; in fact, he will not allow anyone to be at ease, that is, anyone who comes in contact with him. "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." (Matt. 16: 24.) "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that doth not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 10: 34-39.)

The truth of the matter is. Jesus spent a great part of his ministry getting people into trouble. If anyone doubts this statement, let him read the accounts of Zacchaeus, the woman of Samaria, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, the rich young ruler, and many others referred to in the New Testament. All of these people were apparently very well contented with their *status quo*, until they came in contact with Jesus; but then the situation changed, and they found themselves face to face with the necessity of making a radical change in their lives or never know another peaceful day. Indeed, it is never too much for people to go up to Jerusalem, that is, to do as the Lord has commanded. (Gal. 1: 6-9.)

*And this thing became a sin; for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.* It is a terrible thing to advise people against the will and the way of the Lord. "And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth." (1 Kings 13: 34.) The

sinful influence of Jeroboam became so great that we read in the subsequent history of Israel that other kings departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, where-with he made Israel to sin. So great was this sin, let it be emphasized, that it is listed as the prime reason for the final destruction of the kingdom of Israel. "Also Judah kept not the commandments of Jehovah their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made [practiced, margin]. And Jehovah rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight. For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king; and Jeroboam drove Israel from following Jehovah, and made them sin a great sin. And the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; until Jehovah removed Israel out of his sight, as he spake by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day." (2 Kings 17: 19-23.)

*And he made houses of high places, and made priests from among all the people, that were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he went up unto the altar; so did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made. And he went up unto the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart: and he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and went up unto the altar, to burn incense.*

The passage just quoted lists some of the basic changes which Jeroboam made in God's order. He changed the object of worship—golden calves for God; he changed the place of worship—Bethel and Dan for Jerusalem; he changed the time of worship—the eighth month for the seventh; he changed the priesthood—those of any tribe for Levi; he changed the house of worship—houses of high places for God's house. But history,

we are told, has a way of repeating itself. All informed students of church history know that in the early post-apostolic days of the church, certain leaders took the initiative in bringing about certain changes in the Lord's plan for his people. This ultimately resulted in the Homan Catholic Church.

The principal changes which were made in the Lord's plan for his church were a change in its government; a change in the name or designation by which it was known; a change in the subject of baptism—infants for believers: a change in the form of baptism—sprinkling and pouring for immersion; the introduction of human creeds; and the introduction of mechanical instruments of music in the worship. Later on the so-called Protestant leaders "protested" against Rome; but failing in their efforts to reform the apostate church, the various movements which were made, along with others, finally resulted in the formation of the major Protestant denominations of our day. It is interesting to observe that these denominational bodies have through the years, and still are, perpetuating every one of the major changes which were made in the original church and which resulted in the Roman Catholic Church. (Rev. 18: 4ff.)

### Ahijah's Prophecy against Jeroboam

(1 Kings 14: 15, 16)

*For Jehovah will smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; and he will root up Israel out of this good land which he gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the River, because they have made their Asherim, provoking Jehovah to anger. And he will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he hath sinned, and wherewith he hath made Israel to sin.* These are the closing words which the prophet Ahijah spoke to the wife of Jeroboam, whom the king had sent in disguise to inquire of the man of God regarding the illness of their son. (1 Kings 14: 1-16.)

The name of the son who was sick, and about whom Jeroboam's wife spoke to the prophet, was "Abijah," which means my father is Jehovah.

This, along with the rebuke which was administered to the king by the prophet from Judah (1 Kings 13), is enough to show that Jeroboam did not intend to depart from Jehovah completely. He was trying by human reason and means to protect his kingdom. But, as we have already seen, his actions were both daring, impious, and inexcusable. However, nothing that was said or done by the Lord through his prophets had any effect on Jeroboam. Not only was his own dynasty destroyed; the entire nation, as has already been pointed out, was taken away.

### The Only Bright Spot

(1 Kings 14: 17, 18)

*And Jeroboam's wife arose, and departed, and came to Tirzah: and as she came to the threshold of the house, the child died. And all Israel buried him, and mourned for him, according to the word of Jehovah, which he spake by his servant Ahijah the prophet.*

Tirzah was a town northeast of Shechem, captured by Joshua (Josh. 12: 24), and later made the capital of Israel by Jeroboam. In the terrible prediction which was made against the house of Jeroboam, Ahijah told the king's wife that only the child who was then sick would have an honorable burial. "Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the birds of the heavens eat: for Jehovah hath spoken it. Arise thou therefore, get thee to thy house: and when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die. And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him; for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward Jehovah, the God of Israel."

This is enough to show that there are some things worse than death. After God spared the life of Hezekiah, a son was born to him, Manasseh by name, who succeeded his father as king, and who became the worst monarch to reign over Judah. (2 Kings 21: 10-16.) This should be a powerful lesson to any person who seeks to change the Lord's way for his people. (Rev. 22: 18, 19.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What did Jeroboam demonstrate when he first came to the throne?  
What is known of him prior to his crowning?  
Why would he be popular with the northern tribes?  
What lesson should we learn from his ungrateful conduct?

### The Golden Text

How is man related to the idea of worship?  
Why is it so important that he guard himself against idolatry?  
How did the Israelites regard idol-worship?  
What is our danger in this respect today?  
What is the best way to keep ourselves from idolatry?

### Jeroboam's Unlawful Institutions

In what sense did Jeroboam build Shechem?  
What other city did he build and where was it located?  
Why didn't he seek for God's guidance when he became king of Israel?  
What promise had Jehovah made to him?  
Why didn't he take the promise seriously?  
What lesson is there in this for us?

Why did Jeroboam think that religious alienation was essential to his success?  
What would *faith* have done to him?  
Show how the same principle which actuated Jeroboam still works in people today.  
Why do so many people think that religion should be made easy?  
What is the teaching of Jesus regarding this question?  
Why did Jesus get so many people into trouble?  
Discuss the influence which Jeroboam exerted on the people of his kingdom.  
What changes did he make in the religious structure of his day?  
In what way has the history of his deeds repeated itself?  
Show that the principal changes which were made in the church are being perpetuated.

### Ahijah's Prophecy against Jeroboam

Under what circumstances did Ahijah utter this prediction?  
How do we know that Jeroboam did not intend to depart completely from Jehovah?  
What effect did the Lord's word have on him?

### The Only Bright Spot

Where and what was Tirzah?  
What was the only good thing about the house of Jeroboam?  
Discuss the prophecy which was spoken against the house of Jeroboam.  
What lesson should we learn from this?

## Lesson III—October 21, 1962

# WICKED KINGS OF ISRAEL

### Lesson Text

1 Kings 15: 25-28; 16: 15, 23-33

25 And Na'-dab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over Is'-ra-el in the second year of A'-sa king of Ju'-dah; and he reigned over is'-ra-el two years.

26 And he did that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he made Is'-ra-el to sin.

27 And Ba'-a-sha the son of A-hl'-jah, of the house of Is'-sa-char, conspired against him; and Ba'-a-sha smote him at Gib'-be-thon, which belonged to the Phi-lis'-tines; for Na'-dab and all Is'-ra-el were laying siege to Gib'-be-thon.

28 Even in the third year of A'-sa king of Ju'-dah did Ba'-a-sha slay him, and reigned in his stead.

15 In the twenty and seventh year of A'-sa king of Ju'-dah did Zim'-ri reign seven days in Tir'-zah. Now

the people were encamped against Gib'-be-thon, which belonged to the Phi-lis'-tines.

23 In the thirty and first year of A'-sa king of Ju'-dah began Om'-ri to reign over Is'-ra-el, and reigned twelve years: six years reigned he in Tir'-zah.

24 And he bought the hill Sam'-ri-a of She'-mer for two talents of silver; and he built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of She'-mer, the owner of the hill, Sam'-ri-a.

25 And Om'-ri did that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah, and dealt wickedly above all that were before him.

26 For he walked in all the way of Jer-o-bo'am the son of Ne'-ba't, and in his sins wherewith he made Is'-ra-el to sin, to provoke Je-ho'-

vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, to anger with their vanities.

27 Now the rest of the acts of Om'-ri which he did, and his might that he showed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Is'-ra-el?

28 So Om'-ri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Sa-ma'-ri-a; and A'-hab his son reigned in his stead.

29 And in the thirty and eighth year of A'-sa king of Ju'-dah began A'-hab the son of Om'-ri to reign over Is'-ra-el: and A'-hab the son of Om'-ri reigned over Is'-ra-el in Sa-ma'-ri-a twenty and two years.

30 And A'-hab the son of Om'-ri

did that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah above all that were before him.

31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jer-o-bo'-am the son of Ne'-bat, that he took to wife Jez-e-bel the daughter of Eth'-ba-al king of the Si-do'-ni-ans, and went and served Ba'-al, and worshipped him.

32 And he reared up an altar for Ba'-al in the house of Ba'-al, which he had built in Sa-ma'-ri-a.

33 And A'-hab made the A-she-rah; and A'-hab did yet more to provoke Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, to anger than all the kings of Is'-ra-el that were before him.

Golden Text.—“*Sin is a reproach to any people*” (Prov. 14: 34.)  
Devotional Reading.—1 Kings 15: 16-24.

### Daily Bible Readings

October 15.	M.	Jeroboam Persists in Wickedness (1 Kings 13: 1-34)
October 16.	T.	Jeroboam Condemned (1 Kings 14: 1-11)
October 17.	W.	Wicked Kings Follow (1 Kings 15: 1-34)
October 18.	T.	Wisdom's Warning (Prov. 1: 20-26)
October 19.	F.	Israel Wicked (2 Kings 7: 13-18)
October 20.	S.	God's Warnings to Spiritual Israel (Rom. 11: 1-22)
October 21.	S.	Israel's Overthrow Prophesied (Amos 4: 6-13)

TIME.—915-878 B.C.

PLACES.—Tirzah and Samaria.

PERSONS.—Nadab, Baasha, Zimri, Omri, and Ahab.

### Introduction

The rival kingdoms of Israel and Judah continued together for approximately two hundred and fifty years, the first fifty of which being spent in almost continuous war with each other. Israel (the northern kingdom) was much larger, both as to the number of tribes and the area covered. In his *History of the Bible*, Smith says that the areas of the two kingdoms were as follows: Israel, about 9375 square miles, or about the size of New Hampshire; while Judah included about 3435 square miles, and was about half the size of New Jersey. The entire area of Palestine was approximately equal to the combined size of Maryland and Rhode Island. The kingdom of Judah continued to exist for about one hundred and thirty-five years after the fall of Israel to the Assyrians.

Both Israel and Judah had nineteen kings each. Judah had one queen, a usurper, who did not count. All of the kings of Judah were of

the house of David, while there were nine different dynasties in Israel. The southern kingdom (Judah) always had the same capital, while Israel had three different capitals—first, Shechem, then Tirzah, and finally Samaria. In addition to being more than three times as large as Judah, Israel had practically all of the advantages economically. They were better situated for trade with other countries, and their land, being more fertile, was better suited for livestock and agriculture. But there was another respect in which Judah was stronger: they had the city of Jerusalem which was the capital of the united kingdom and which continued as the capital of Judah, along with its magnificent buildings and glorious traditions. The temple, along with the Levitical priesthood, gave Judah a decided advantage religiously. This, as we have already seen, was recognized by Jeroboam, and led to his setting a new and sin-

ful standard for the northern kingdom.

The two books of Kings and those of Chronicles are chiefly concerned with the history of the two rival kingdoms; and since most of the prophets whose writings we have, lived during the period of the divided kingdoms and that of Judah after the fall of Israel, we have much information regarding them in the records they have left to posterity. When we read about the kings of

Judah, we learn that some of them were good, some were bad, and some were vacillating between the right and the wrong. But when we consider the kings of Israel, we soon learn that they all had one thing in common, namely, they did that which was evil in the eyes of Jehovah. There was not a single good king among them; they were all bad, but some decidedly worse than others, as we shall see further on in this lesson.

### The Golden Text

*"Sin is a reproach to any people"*  
Bible students are not all agreed as to the exact meaning and purpose of the passage from which the golden text is taken; and while it is always proper and right to try to understand a given passage in the light of the author's evident intent, it appears that no violence will be done the words now under consideration if they are used to show the effects of sin in the lives of any and all people. The full statement of the passage from which the golden text is taken implies "national" rather than "individual" responsibility, as may be seen when the whole verse is read: "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people."

The Bible plainly teaches that God still rules in the governments of men, and that is enough to show that even nations have a moral responsibility. (Rom. 13: 1ff; cf. Dan. 4: 17.) Moses, in one of his farewell addresses to Israel, discussed this very principle. (Deut. 26: 16-19.) In this passage the great law-giver explained to the people whom he had led from Egypt to their final stopping-place before

crossing the Jordan into Canaan how they as the nation of God could be raised above other nations by righteous conduct; and the implications is that sinful practices will have the opposite effect.

The lesson before us today is a forceful demonstration of the truthfulness of the statements just made; and the principle is still applicable alike both to nations and to individuals. The sins inaugurated by Jeroboam were continued by every succeeding monarch in that kingdom, until the patience of God was exhausted and permanent captivity became the lot of the people of the northern kingdom. (2 Kings 17: 7-23.) The last two verses say, "And the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; until Jehovah removed Israel out of his sight, as he spake by his servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day." Sin not only makes it hard on the sinner, whether nations or individuals; it also lowers them in the estimation of righteous people.

### The Text Explained

**Nadab, Baasha, and Zimri**

(1 Kings 15: 25-28; 16: 15)

*And Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah; and he reigned over Israel two years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin.* So far as we know, Jeroboam had only two sons—Abijah and Nadab. The former became ill and died during the reign of his father, and received

an honorable burial, being the only member of Jeroboam's household who was permitted to go to his grave, "because in him there is found some good thing toward Jehovah, the God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam." (1 Kings 14: 13.) All the kings of Israel whom we are considering in this lesson began their reigns during the time of Asa, king of Judah, and all ended their reigns during his time, except Ahab who survived him after some over three years of contemporary rule. Asa was one of the

good kings of Judah, and he reigned for forty-one years in Jerusalem.

*And Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him; and Baasha smote him at Gibbethon, which belongeth to the Philistines; for Nadab and all Israel were laying siege to Gibbethon. Even in the third year of Asa king of Judah did Baasha slay him, and reigned in his stead.* This is the only recorded action of Nadab during his reign. The city of Gibbethon was in the territory of Dan (Josh. 19: 44), and was later assigned to the Levites (Josh. 21: 23). The city had fallen into the hands of the Philistines, and Israel and the king were seeking to regain it. It was while the siege was in progress that the captain of Nadab's host conspired against the king and slew him. This ended the dynasty of Jeroboam I.

Upon the death of Nadab, Baasha occupied the throne of Israel, and completely wiped out the house of Jeroboam. "And it came to pass that, as soon as he was king, he smote all the house of Jeroboam: he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed him; according unto the saying of Jehovah, which he spake by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite; for the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and wherewith he made Israel to sin, because of his provocation wherewith he provoked Jehovah, the God of Israel, to anger." (Verses 29, 30.)

With the extinction of the house of Jeroboam, the crown of Israel passed from the tribe of Ephraim to that of Issachar; but the second dynasty, like the first, lasted for only two generations. Although Jehovah had used Baasha to punish the house of Jeroboam, the new king followed the same path which was made by the first king of Israel, and met with the same fate. This is an impressive illustration of the truthfulness of the statement that the wages of sin is death, as we shall see presently.

*In the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah did Zimri reign seven days in Tirzah. Now the people were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines.* This was about twenty-five years after the siege of Gibbethon which resulted in the death of Na-

dab, and the events at this second encampment are almost identical with those of a quarter of a century earlier. This time it was the prophet Jehu who spoke against the house of Baasha. "And the word of Jehovah came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying, Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel, and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins; behold, I will utterly sweep away Baasha and his house; and I will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Him that dieth of Baasha in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth of his in the field shall the birds of the heavens eat." (1 Kings 16: 1-4.)

Baasha died a natural death, and was buried in Tirzah the capital city. He was succeeded on the throne by his son Elah, who reigned less than two full years. Elah was killed by his servant Zimri, the captain of half his chariots, who conspired against him while he was "drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza" in Tirzah. No sooner had Zimri begun to reign than he utterly destroyed the house of Baasha, according to the word which Jehovah spoke by Jehu, just as Baasha had done to the house of Jeroboam. (Verses 8-13.) But the reign of Zimri did not last long, just seven days. When the people knew of his act of murdering the king, they elected Omri the captain of the host king "that day in the camp"; and when they marched against the capital, Zimri saw the handwriting on the wall. "And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the castle of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died, for his sins which he sinned in doing that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin." (Verses 18, 19.) It should be observed that each of these kings was held responsible for the sins of Jeroboam, that is, for following in them, and for their own personal sins. It is the same story throughout the entire history of Israel.

Omri

(1 Kings 16: 23-28)

*In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel, and reigned twelve years: six years reigned he in Tirzah. And he bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver; and he built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill, Samaria.*

Although Zimri removed himself from the kingship, the way was not clear for Omri to ascend the throne, following his election by the people; for not all the people sided with him. "Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king; and half followed Omri. But the people that followed Omri prevailed against the people that followed Tibni the son of Ginath: so Tibni died, and Omri reigned." (Verses 21, 22.) Omri was the sixth king of Israel and the founder of the third dynasty (the seven-day reign of Zimri can hardly be classified as a dynasty, although some Bible students do speak of him as the head of the third dynasty). Verses 15, 23 indicate that the civil struggle between the forces of Omri and Tibni continued for approximately four years. Omri appears to have been the strong man, with the army behind him; and that probably accounts for his victory. All of this reminds us of present-day struggles for political power in many parts of the world.

There were four kings in the dynasty which was founded by Omri, and it was surpassed in number only by the succeeding dynasty of Jehu, which had five. The best known king of the Omri dynasty was his son Ahab, although Omri seems to have been his equal in sagacity, ability, and accomplishment. His decision to remove the capital from Tirzah to Samaria is generally regarded as having been a very wise move on his part, and it was probably prompted by the fire which destroyed the castle of the king's house in Tirzah, and took the life of his predecessor on the throne. It also appears that Omri put an end to the bloody wars which had plagued Israel and Judah for a half century, and his

country entered upon an era of great prosperity.

*And Omri did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and dealt wickedly above all that were before him. For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sins wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke Jehovah, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities.*

In commenting on the character of Omri, Errett says, "While Omri was prudent and skillful in promoting the peace and material prosperity of his kingdom, he was reckless as to the religious character of the people and the high religious mission of the nation. With him, heathenism was as good as the religion taught by Jehovah, if only it would advance the prosperity and security of his kingdom. He looked upon religion with the eye of a politician, valuing it according to its power to serve the royal welfare. His alliance with Tyre opened the way for the return of the corrupt and licentious worship of Astarte, and even the calf-worship at Beth-el and Dan, established by Jeroboam, seems no longer to have been favored at court. That worship was the worship of Jehovah under sacred symbols; but now the worship of Jehovah was to be entirely supplanted by the worship of Baal."

This attitude toward worship, and especially as it related to the worship of Jehovah, which was continued and expanded by Ahab, no doubt accounted for the statement, "And Omri did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and dealt wickedly above all that were before him." It appears that up to the time of Omri the people *pretended* to worship Jehovah symbolically; but with the inauguration of the new regime, even the simulated worship of the true God was replaced by devotion to Baal. This influence was felt for years to come, as may be seen by considering the testimony of prophets who spoke after Omri's day. "For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab." (Mic. 6: 16; cf. Amos 2: 6-8.)

*Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he showed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Omri slept with his*



*fathers, and was buried in Samaria; and Ahab his son reigned in his stead.* Omri apparently was the first king of Israel to be buried in Samaria. He reigned twelve years, and laid the foundation for the Phoenicia-Israel brotherhood. (Amos 1: 9.)

### Ahab

(1 Kings 16: 29-33)

*And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years. And Ahab the son of Omri did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah above all that were before him.*

Ahab was one of the most outstanding kings of Israel, but his record is infamous rather than famous. If we look at him purely from the standpoint of the world, he achieved great success. "Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he built, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?" (1 Kings 22:

39.) Hastings points out that if we look at Ahab from the political point of view, he stands out very prominently among kings. Few were greater, more successful, and grander than he. When he came to the kingdom, it was surrounded by enemies, but when he left it, it was enjoying a state of considerable prosperity. He was a conqueror, as well as a builder: and in his national life he was magnificent, his ivory palace being one of the wonders of the world. And so, according to the judgment of men, he was a great man, a wise king, and a hero to be had in remembrance.

But it is morality rather than worldly accomplishments which counts in the rightful appraisal of one's character. Therefore, when we look at Ahab's life, rather than his achievements, the picture is entirely different. He was brought up without God, and lived in open rebellion against him all the days of his life. When one considers the influence of

Elijah around him, he will have to conclude that Ahab knew what he should do; but the sacred historian says that "there was none like unto Ahab, who did sell himself to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites did, whom Jehovah cast out before the children of Israel." (1 Kings 21: 25, 26.)

*And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made the Asherah; and Ahab did yet more to provoke Jehovah, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.*

The fate of Ahab, in the words of Smith's History of the Bible, was decided when he married Jezebel. When he took her to be his wife, he was probably thinking primarily of his Sidonian alliance and the strength which it would give him against his Syrian foes; but she made him the participator of crimes which drew down on his house the curse of extermination, and poisoned the happiness of his remaining time upon the earth. Thus, the very means which he sought to use to secure the glory of his kingdom and the permanence of his dynasty proved to be the ruin of both. In spite of his courage and genius, Ahab was pre-eminently a weak man, vacillating between his fear of Elijah the prophet and the all but complete domination of his strong-willed wife.

Of as I act, or think, or speak,

Comes battle of two Wills within,

This like an infant poor and weak,

That like a demon strong for sin.

This labors, flutteringly alive,

As if a cold spark went and came

That other doth against it drive

Red torrents of devouring flame.

—Worsley.

## Questions

What is the subject for today?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

## for Discussion

Introduction

Give some of the principal facts regarding the rival kings of Israel and Judah.

How many kings did each have?  
 How many different dynasties did each have?  
 What advantages did each kingdom possess?  
 From what source do we learn the principal facts regarding those kings?  
 What can you say of their general character?

#### The Golden Text

Why is there a difference of opinion among Bible students regarding the purpose of the passage from which our golden text for today is taken?  
 Discuss the question of "national" versus "individual" responsibility.  
 How do we know that nations as such have moral responsibility?  
 How do the facts of the lesson for today illustrate the principle contained in the golden text?

#### Nadab, Naasha, and Zimri

What is known of the family of Jeroboam I and who succeeded him on the throne?  
 How were all the kings of this lesson related to Asa king of Judah?  
 What is known of Nadab's reign?  
 How did Baasha come to be king and why did he destroy the house of Jeroboam?  
 What change was made in dynasty when Baasha came to the throne?  
 What kind of king did Baasha make? Give reasons for your answer.  
 What prophecy was spoken against the house of Baasha? and why?

Under what circumstances did Zimri become king?  
 Why did his reign end so abruptly?  
 What sins did all of these kings commit?

#### Omri

Who was Omri and how did he come to be king over Israel?  
 What do we know of the dynasty which he founded?  
 What change did he make in the capital and for what probable reason?  
 What kind of king did he make?  
 Discuss the general character of Omri.  
 What significance is noted in connection with his alliance with Tyre?  
 How long did Omri reign and where was he buried?

#### Ahab

What paradox is seen in the reign of Ahab?  
 How did he compare with his father?  
 What really counts in judging the character of anyone?  
 What do we learn when this principle is applied to Ahab?  
 What did the sacred historian have to say about the life of this king?  
 What really decided the fate of Ahab?  
 What lesson should we learn from this? Give reasons for your answer.  
 Discuss the effect which Jezebel had on Ahab.  
 How did he regard the prophet Elijah? Give reasons for your answer.

### Lesson IV — October 28, 1962

## ELIJAH AND HIS CONTEST WITH BAAL

### Lesson Text

#### 1 Kings 18: 19-29, 36-39

19 Now therefore send, and gather to me all Is'-ra-el unto mount Car'-mel, and the prophets of Ba'-al four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the A-she'-rah four hundred, that eat at Jez'-e-bel's table.

20 So A'-hab sent unto all the children of Is'-ra-el, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Car'-mel.

21 And E-li'-jah came near unto all the people, and said, How long go ye limping between the two sides? if Je-ho'-vah be God, follow him; but if Ba'-al, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

22 Then said E-li'-jah unto the people, I, even I only, am left a prophet of Je-ho'-vah; but Ba'-al's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.

23 Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under; and I will dress

the other bullock, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under.

24 And call ye on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of Je-ho'-vah: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

25 And E-li'-jah said unto the prophets of Ba'-al. Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under.

26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Ba'-al from morning even until noon, saying, O Ba'-al, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped about the altar which was made.

27 And it came to pass at noon, that E-li-jah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he

is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked.

28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lances, till the blood gushed out upon them.

29 And it was so. when midday was past, that they prophesied until the time of the offering of the *evening* oblation; but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

36 And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the *evening* oblation, that E-li'-jah the prophet came near, and said, O Je-ho'-vah, the God of Abraham, of I-saac, and of Is'-

ra-el, let it be known this day that thou art God in Is'-ra-el, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

37 Hear me, O Je-ho'-vah, hear me, that this people may know that thou, Je-ho'-vah, art God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again.

38 Then the fire of Je-ho'-vah fell, and consumed the burnt-offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, Je-ho'-vah. he is God; Je-ho'-vah, he is God.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“No man can serve two masters”(Matt. 6: 24.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalms 15.

## Daily Bible Readings

October 22. M.....	God Cares for Elijah (1 Kings 17: 1-7)
October 23. ....	T. Elijah Eats and Is Strengthened (1 Kings 19: 1-8)
October 24. W.....	Elijah at Zarephath (1 Kings 17: 8-18)
October 25. T.....	Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18: 30-39)
October 26. ....	F. Elijah “a Troubler in Israel” (1 Kings 18: 17-24)
October 27. S.. ..	.....“A Still Small Voice” (1 Kings 19: 9-16)
October 28. S. ....	.....Elijah’s Translation (2 Kings 2: 1-11)

TIME.—Probably about 910 B.C.

PLACE.—Carmel, an elevated section of northwest Samaria.

PERSONS.—Elijah, Ahab, the people of Israel, and the prophets of Baal.

## Introduction

The prophet Elijah, known as *Eli-jah the Tishbite*, has been referred to as “the grandest and the most romantic character that Israel ever produced.” It is doubtful if any prophet of God ever began his work with the suddenness which characterized Elijah. His appearance in Israel was as startling as that of John the Baptist when he began to preach repentance in the wilderness of Judaea. The only thing we know of his origin is expressed in these words: “And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the sojourners of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.” (1 Kings 17: 1.) Jehovah then told the prophet to leave there at once and hide himself by the brook Cherith which was before the Jordan. He apparently remained there until the brook dried up. He was told to drink from the brook and that the ravens would bring him food.

Idol a t r y had been among the Lord’s people since the day that Abram was called out of Ur of the Chaldees, but it had reached a new low following the coming of Jezebel to the kingdom. She was a devotee of Baal, and she was determined to make her religion supreme in Israel. This meant that the religion of Jehovah would have to go, and it appears that for the first time in history religious persecution became the means to an end. The prophets of Jehovah were mercilessly slain with the sword; and it looked as if nothing could arrest the wave of moral corruption which swept over the land.

But the religious crisis produced its hero, and Elijah, inspired and sustained by God, met the whole ungodly situation head-on. Rugged, stern, solitary, with no commission to reveal new truth, he became the great reformer and the restorer of God’s order. So far as the record goes, he wrote, predicted, and taught

almost nothing; and it seems proper to say that his value to Israel was not so much in what he said, but in what he did; not because he created, but because he destroyed. As some one has said, His task was to reform and restore, not to advance; and his endowments of "spirit and power" corresponded to his work. It appears that his only clothing was a girdle

of leather around his loins (2 Kings 1: 8), and the "mantle," or cloak (1 Kings 19: 19), the descent of which upon Elisha passed into and has continued as a proverb. Protected from the wrath of Jezebel's persecution in the solitudes of the Trans-Jordanic Cherith, he had been prepared by Jehovah for his mission to the apostate king and people of Israel.

## The Golden Text

**"No man can serve two masters"**

This is the statement of a general principle which is applicable whenever and wherever there are two masters whose interests are different, and who seek for the allegiance of a servant. Jesus applied the principle to God and mammon, the god of riches; but one has only to read the history of Ahab in order to see that the principle is just as applicable to the conflicting interests of God and Baal, as it is to the opposing interests of God and mammon. Man, left to himself, cannot direct his own paths (cf. Jer. 10. 23), and this means that he must have someone to lead him, someone whom he must call his master.

When Jesus spoke the words which make up our golden text for today, he assumed that man was created to serve, and that he must therefore have a master; but that is not the end of the matter. Man was also endowed with the power of choice, and that means that he has the ability to choose his own master. This places a tremendous responsibility upon

every accountable human being, and all such people should learn that it is utterly impossible for them to be loyal to more than one master.

The force of the lesson, so far as we are concerned, is seen in the contrast between God and all other masters who crave the loyalty of those who should and must follow the Lord, if they are to be saved. The Bible makes it plain over and over again that Jehovah will not tolerate any rival for the affections of any person who professes to follow after righteousness. Anyone who is acceptable to God must love him, and him only. This was the first lesson that those who received the Ten Commandments had to learn (Ex. 20: 3), and it is still the first condition of Christian discipleship. "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." (Matt. 16: 24.) When one "denies" himself, he gives up his own personality, as it were, and conducts himself solely as his Master directs.

## The Text Explained

### An Appeal to the Undecided

(1 Kings 18: 19-24)

*Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the Asherah four hundred, that eat at Jezebel's table.* It was three years and six months between the time when Elijah first spoke to Ahab, and the time of this lesson. (See 1 Kings 17: 1; James 5: 17, 18.) The drought had become so severe that Ahab and Obadiah, who was over the king's household, went throughout the land, each in different parts of it, in search of water for the horses and mules. It was while they were conducting this search that Elijah appeared to Obadiah,

who "feared Jehovah greatly," and told him to inform Ahab that he was there. This was in obedience to Jehovah's command to the prophet. "And it came to pass after many days, that the word of Jehovah came to Elijah, in the third years, saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth." (1 Kings 18: 1.) Obadiah was greatly disturbed at this request by Elijah, because Ahab blamed the prophet for the prolonged drought, and had sought for him in every "kingdom and nation," evidently intending, if he found Elijah, to kill him. Obadiah was afraid that if he told the king that Elijah was there, that the Spirit of Jehovah would take the

prophet away before Ahab could get to him; and, failing to find him, Obadiah would himself become the object of the king's wrath. But Elijah said, "As Jehovah of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself unto him today." (Verse 15.)

Obadiah then went to meet Ahab, and told him that which Elijah had said, and the prophet himself went to meet the king. "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?" But the prophet answered, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of Jehovah, and thou hast followed the Baalim." (See verses 16-18.) It was at this point that Elijah set the stage for the great contest between Jehovah and Baal, with the avowed purpose of bringing the people back to God. Baal and the Asherah were the male and female gods whom Jezebel served, and which she had, along with Ahab, sought to impose upon the people as a replacement for the worship and service of Jehovah. It appears that all of the eight hundred and fifty false prophets referred to here ate at Jezebel's table, that is, they were supported by her.

*So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.* This location was between the plain of Esdraelon and the Mediterranean sea, and has been described as the finest and most beautiful mountain in Palestine. It was indeed an ideal place for this great contest. The scene which is pictured here is one of the most striking and memorable in all history. It represents one of those great culminating points when life suddenly becomes dramatic, when, as it were, the confused people on the stage of life suddenly shift themselves into position and place, and the curtain rises on the acts of a great tragedy. Not only do such culminations occur in national life: they also occur in the lives of individuals. It is in such moments as these that the character of coming centuries is determined, and the destiny of individuals is fixed.

*And Elijah came near unto all the people, and said, How long go ye*

*limping between the two sides? if Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.* It was here that both the king and the people heard proclaimed for the first time the vital principle of true religion, namely, there cannot be any compromise with truth. The stern prophet, as he spoke for God, brought them squarely to the issue with a single sentence; and the shot which he aimed at them hit them squarely in the heart. It is true that the people did not speak a word in reply to the prophet's question; but it is evident from that which followed that Baal was defeated then and there. All that came after the proposed test and the altar of Jehovah "are but the successive steps of the victor pursuing his vanquished and demoralized foe."

*Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, am left a prophet of Jehovah; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of Jehovah: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.*

Although "Baal" is referred to in many relations in the Bible, it appears quite certain that the Baal which these people served was the original sun god, and he was therefore the *god of fire*, as Adam Clarke points out, and had only to work in his own element. This was the point of the proposal which Elijah made. The followers of Baal believed that their god had peculiar power over fire; and since that was true, as they viewed the matter, the proposal which Elijah placed before them struck at the very heart of their religion. This was indeed a bold offer, and there is no reason for believing that the prophet would have made it, had he not been authorized by Jehovah to do so. The people, however, felt that it was eminently fair, candid, and honest.

### Baal's Failure to Meet the Test

(1 Kings 18: 25-29)

*And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped about the altar which was made.*

Taylor thinks that the prophets of Baal would rather have declined to accept Elijah's proposition, if they had been able to frame a feasible pretext for doing so; for they were wholly unprepared for an emergency like this. Their natural magic, their skill in sleight of hand performances, and their dexterity in deceit, were completely useless in such a predicament; but the prophet of God knew what he was doing. He had, in fact, counted on all this, and had committed them before the multitude, so that they would at once have no opportunity to deceive, and no good reason for asking for a delay.

Elijah knew, of course, that success would be on his side, and it was for this reason that he requested the prophets of Baal to make their sacrifice first. If Elijah had offered his sacrifice first, there would have been no trial of Baal; but, as it was, his purpose was not only to demonstrate the power of Jehovah, but also to expose the utter weakness of Baal. It was therefore both easy and natural for the prophet of Jehovah to give preference to the "many" and the advantage of being first to appeal to their god. When once the offering was ready, the prophets of Baal spent the entire morning in an effort to get their god to hear them.

*And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lances, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it was so, when midday was past, that they prophesied until the time of the offering of the eve-*

*ning oblation; but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.*

The prayers and the leaping around the altar on the part of the prophets of Baal from morning till noon failed signally; and it was then that the prophet of Jehovah broke forth in a strain of biting irony. Stung by Elijah's withering sarcasm, and as if they half believed his statement that perhaps Baal was asleep and needed to be awakened, they demonstrated their desperation by cutting their flesh until the blood gushed out upon their bodies. These frantic rites were continued until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice which was ordained by the law of Moses for Israel. (Cf. Ex. 29: 39; Acts 3: 1; Luke 1: 8-11.)

Elijah was evidently satisfied that his aim had been accomplished, and it only remained for him to demonstrate the superiority of Jehovah. "And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me; and all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of Jehovah that was thrown down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of Jehovah came, saying, Israel shall be thy name. And with the stones he built an altar in the name of Jehovah; and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood. And he said, Fill four jars with water, and pour it on the burnt-offering, and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time; and they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time; and they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water." (Verses 30-35.)

### Elijah's Prayer and Jehovah's Answer

(1 Kings 18: 36-39)

*And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening oblation, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, O Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all*

*these things at thy word. Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that thou, Jehovah, art God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.*

Here is an example of prayer for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, rather than for one's own desires. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask a miss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures." (James 4: 3.) Before Elijah prayed, he called the people he was trying to reach to him, made sure that everything was done according to the law of the Lord, and then called upon Jehovah in such a way as to let it be known

(1) that he alone was God in Israel, (2) that Elijah was his servant, (3) that all things which he had done were at God's word, and (4) that it was Jehovah who had turned the people's heart back again. James also cites Elijah as an example of the supplication of a righteous man whose prayer avails much in its working. "Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." (See James 5: 17, 18.)

*Then the fire of Jehovah fell, and consumed the burnt-offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God.* This was the result which Elijah confidently expected: the worship of Baal was overthrown, and the faith of Israel was restored.

But the offenders must be punished. (See verse 40.) The swift and terrible slaughter of the prophets of Baal may be regarded as a solemn act of judgment. Those men were not only priests of a false and degrading religion; they were sinners against the theocracy of Jehovah. Israel was still a theocracy in principle: Jehovah was still directing the affairs of state; and the deeds of those false prophets were no doubt judged as acts of rebellion against the sovereign power, a crime for which the death penalty is written in the law<sup>7</sup> of every civilized nation on earth today.

The practical benefit of this lesson to us is that it furnishes a means for searching our own hearts. If we had been on mount Carmel when those events transpired, on which side would we have stood? We can answer this question only by taking stock of our own conduct. The gods of those days have largely perished from the earth, but there are others who claim our devotion—selfishness, material wealth, worldly pleasures—to name only a few. Do we really serve Jehovah, or do we flirt with and honor the gods of our day. We have seen how foolish Israel was, but are we any better? The same manner of making known one's allegiance is available today. People now are permitted (1) to offer a sacrifice; (2) the Lord even permits them to sacrifice to other gods first (cf. Luke 15: 11-24); but (3) people will not be permitted to continue to limp between the two sides: they must make a decision. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." (Matt. 12: 30.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What is the earliest information we have regarding Elijah?  
Under what circumstances did he begin his work as a prophet in Israel?  
Discuss the part which idolatry played during the history of God's people.  
Who apparently first introduced religious persecution? and why?  
Show that the religious crisis of Israel produced its hero.  
Discuss the type of man Elijah was and the task which was before him.

### The Golden Text

What is the nature of the statement which serves as our golden text for today?  
Why can't a man serve two masters?  
Why must all responsible men have a master?  
What great burden is always placed upon the individual as it respects his master?  
What is the force of this lesson for us?  
What is the first condition of discipleship?  
Give reasons for your answer.

### An Appeal to the Undecided

Under what circumstances did Elijah ask Ahab to gather the people unto mount Carmel?  
Describe the meeting of the prophet and the king.

What charge did Ahab make against Elijah? and why?

What was the prophet's reply?

How were the prophets of Baal and the Asherah supported?

Tell where Carmel was located and something of its fitness for such a contest as Elijah proposed.

What application does the scene which the lesson presents have for us?

What vital truth did Elijah proclaim as he prepared for the contest?

What was the significance of the people's silence?

What proposal did the prophet then offer?

What was its chief significance?

Why did Elijah propose the plan?

#### Baal's Failure to Meet the Test

How did the prophets of Baal probably feel about Elijah's proposal?

Why were they in such a predicament?

Why did Elijah want the prophets of Baal to call upon their god first?

Describe their activities.

Why did the prophet of Jehovah taunt the prophets of Baal?

What effect did his sarcasm apparently have on them?

After the failure of the false prophets, what did Elijah then do?

Why did he make such minute preparations?

Elijah's Prayer and Jehovah's Answer

Discuss the prayer which Elijah offered.

What use did James make of him and his prayer?

What was Jehovah's response to the petition of Elijah?

Why were the false prophets killed?

What practical application does this lesson have for us?

How can we determine our standing before the Lord?

## Lesson V—November 4, 1962

### ELIJAH'S FLIGHT AND RETURN

#### Lesson Text

#### 1 Kings 19: 8-18

8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto Hó-reb the mount of God.

9 And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of Je-ho'-vah came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, E-li'-jah?

10 And he said, I have been very jealous for Je-ho'-vah, the God of hosts; for the children of Is'-ra-el have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

11 And he said, Go forth,, and stand upon the mount before Je-ho'-vah. And, behold, Je-ho'-vah passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before Je-ho'-vah; but Je-ho'-vah was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but Je-ho'-vah was not in the earthquake:

12 And after the earthquake a fire; but Je-ho'-vah was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

13 And it was so, when E-li'-jah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and

stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, E-li'-jah?

14 And he said, I have been very jealous for Je-ho'-vah, the God of hosts; for the children of Is'-ra-el have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

15 And Je-ho'-vah said unto him. Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Da-mas'-cus: and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Haz'-a-el to be king over Syr'-i-a;

16 And Je'-hu the son of Nim'-shi shalt thou anoint to be king over Is'-ra-el; and E-li-sha the son of Sha'-phat of A'-bel-me-ho'-lah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

17 And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth from the sword of Haz'-a-el shall Je'-hu slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Je'-hu shall E-li'-sha slay.

18 Yet will I leave *me* seven thousand in Is'-ra-el all the knees which have not bowed unto Ba'-al, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"In my distress I cried unto Jehovah, and he answered me"*(Psalm 120: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Matt. 11: 2-6.



## Daily Bible Readings

October 29. M.	.....	Elijah's Discouragement (1 Kings 19: 1-8)
October 30. T.	.....	God Hears Elijah's Voice (1 Kings 19: 9-18)
October 31. W.	.....	Unappreciated Effort (Ezek. 2: 3-7)
November 1. T.	.....	Trust in God (Psalm 27: 1-14)
November 2. F.	.....	A Prayer for Deliverance (Psalm 57: 1-11)
November 3. S.	.....	Security Promised Paul (Acts 18: 1-11)
November 4. S.	.....	Elijah Condemns Ahab (1 Kings 21: 17-26)

TIME.—Probably about 910 B.C.

PLACES.—The wilderness south of Judah and the cave in mount Horeb.

PERSONS.—Jehovah and Elijah.

## Introduction

Our last lesson closed with the great triumph of Elijah on mount Carmel, and this one begins with the exact opposite—the sense of utter defeat. But no one should be surprised at this sudden change in attitude on the part of the prophet; for that is one of the common experiences of life. If one should read John 1: 29 and Matt. 11: 2, 3 (the latter passage is a part of our devotional reading for today), without knowing the identity of the person in question, he could hardly believe that the same individual was the speaker in both instances. Both Elijah and John the Baptist were inspired prophets, but their inspiration was for the purpose of making known God's will, and not to enable them to live acceptable lives before him. That responsibility was theirs individually. But not only did Elijah and John have these contradictory experiences within a relatively short time; the same is true of the average person today, as anyone knows who takes a close look at his own life.

While these contradictory experiences which have just been mentioned are the common lot of most people, that does not mean that the Lord is pleased that such is the case. As long as people keep their faces toward the sun, it is impossible for them to be in the shadows; and in the same manner, as long as people center their minds on the Lord and put their trust in him, they, too, will remain in the sunshine of his love. Peter was able to walk upon the water, as long as he looked toward Jesus; but when he looked at the wind and the waves, he began to sink. Again, this impetuous apostle could, on one occasion, rise to sublime heights in confessing his faith

in Christ; and then, as he stood among the enemies of the Lord, he could deny him, even with cursing and swearing, and saying that he did not even know what they were talking about when they said that he was one of his disciples.

But as long as we remain in the flesh, we will have to be on guard against periods of distrust and depression. It is evident from the history of the case and the constitution of man that Elijah's despondency was partly physical—the reaction of his bodily weariness and discomfort upon his spirit. Taylor sums up the situation in these words: In the heat of a man's enthusiastic devotion to some pursuit, he is not conscious of his physical fatigue; but when the work has been finished, and the weight of responsibility has been removed, both the body and the mind sink into a state of weakness which makes every thought of exertion a distress. And so, while such conditions are present, any kind of opposition will rasp upon the nervous system with an agony, the intensity of which can be understood only by those who have felt it. The natural equipoise of the system has been disturbed; and when the task in hand has been accomplished, there will come a rebound into a state of weakness which is as far below the usual condition of his system as the strength he had just exerted was above it. This is pretty much the same manner in which a balance reacts when a weight is taken out of one of the scales—the other sinks at once to a depth corresponding to the height to which the first rises. Elijah's reaction was natural, but we all need to try to rise above nature in our trust in God.

## The Golden Text

"In my distress I cried unto Jehovah, and he answered me" This text is the first verse of one of the "Songs of Ascent" (Psalms 120-134) which the children of Israel probably sang or chanted as they were "going up" to Jerusalem for the annual feasts authorized by the law of Moses, or which they may have used ritually as they *ascended* one of the stairways in or near the temple. We should understand that the psalms which were used by devout Jews of that day affected them in pretty much the same way that the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs influence faithful Christians today. There is a power in poetry, and especially when it is set to music, which is not found in simple prose. Hebrew poetry did not rhyme in the same manner that ours does, but it had a moving effect on those who read or sang it. The full psalm from which the golden text for today is taken is as follows:

In my distress I cried unto Jehovah,  
And he answered me.

Deliver my soul, O Jehovah, from lying lips,

And from a deceitful tongue.

What shall be given unto thee, and  
what shall be done more unto thee,

Thou deceitful tongue?

Sharp arrows of the mighty,  
With coals of juniper.

Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech,

That I dwell in the tents of Kedar!

My soul hath long had her dwelling

With him that hateth peace.

I am for peace:

But when I speak, they are for war.

The author of this psalm must have suffered from the wrongdoing of others, but instead of fighting back, he put his trust in Jehovah. He cried unto his God, and his God responded to his cry; and what was true of the psalmist then, is just as true of us today. "Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need." (Heb. 4: 14-16.) Jehovah came to the aid of Elijah, and he will do the same for us, if we will be true to him. (Cf. Rom. 12: 17- 21.)

## The Text Explained

Strength for the Journey

(1 Kings 19: 8)

*And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.* The three year and six months' drought came to an end following Elijah's triumph over idolatry on mount Carmel, although there was not a cloud in sight when the prophet began his prayer for rain. After telling Ahab to go up and eat and drink; "for there is the sound of abundance of rain," Elijah went to the top of the mountain and began his prayer for the drought to be broken. After bowing himself upon the earth, with his face between his knees, he asked his servant to go and look toward the sea; but he saw no sign of rain. He then told him to go again seven times; and it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, "Behold, there ariseth a cloud out of the sea,

as small as a man's hand." The prophet then told his servant to go up, and say unto Ahab, "Make ready thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in a little while, that the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain." (Read 1 Kings 18: 41-46.)

Jezebel, apparently, did not attend the meeting on Carmel, and did not know that Elijah had slain the prophets of Baal; and so, when Ahab returned to where she was, he told her what had happened; and it was then that she sent a messenger to the prophet, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." Upon hearing this, Elijah, in company with his servant, fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, in the southern part of Judah: but even there he did not trust the protection which the good king of Judah, Jehoshaphat, might

provide for him, but, leaving his servant in Beer-sheba, the prophet went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper-tree: and he requested for himself that he might die. He then laid down under the tree, and fell asleep. But an angel touched him, and when he awoke, behold, "there was at his head a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water." After he had eaten, he laid himself down again; and the angel of Jehovah touched him again, and said, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee." (Read 1 Kings 19: 1-7.) This was the food which sufficed the prophet for the next forty days and forty nights.

Insofar as Elijah was concerned at the moment, he was fleeing from the wrath of Jezebel; but God had other plans for him, as we shall see further on in this lesson. But for the time being Elijah was given time and the opportunity to regain his composure, and at length his strength. Thus, far away his steps were guided into the midst of the desert of Sinai; and, so far as we know, this was the first time that a prophet broke the silence of Horeb since the days of Moses.

### How God Deals with Despondency

(1 Kings 19: 9-14)

*And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of Jehovah came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.*

Some Bible students think that the question which Jehovah asked Elijah may have been intended as a reproach, because he fled from the presence of Jezebel; but that is doubtful. The wicked queen had already slain some of God's prophets (1 Kings 18: 4), and she almost certainly would have slain Elijah, if he had remained near her, unless God had miraculously prevented it. His flight, therefore, and the divine assistance which he received along the way, may have been God's plan for

taking care of him for the time being. And if this was true, the question was probably intended to aid the prophet in getting the proper view of himself, and to get him in the proper frame of mind for further instruction by the Lord.

But regardless of what may have been the intention of the question, there are some valuable suggestions in it for us. For example, how often have we heard, sounding in our secret ears, the same words of searching inquiry, "What doest thou here, a professed Christian, among those who are seeking for worldly pleasure, when you should be in the service of the Lord? What doest thou here, one who claims to be a child of God, among those who show no interest in the cause for which our Saviour gave his life? What doest thou here, a leader in the church of the Lord, among those who habitually absent themselves from the Lord's day evening and mid-week meetings of the church? A few simple questions like these should help all of us to see just where we stand; and, if we are at all sincere in the profession we make, to fit us for further instruction from the word of the Lord.

Elijah had showed that he was really jealous for Jehovah, but now it appears that because of his own situation and because right did not continue to prevail, he had grown discouraged. That which he said about the children of Israel was a terrible indictment against them, and no doubt was largely true, except that Elijah was not the only faithful person left; but Jehovah did not permit him to give up the fight. Even today, we are often too ready to abandon an individual or a group of individuals to hopeless ruin, without making any serious effort to help them to a better life. There are still all too many professing righteous people who have fled to the cave of self-contentment.

*And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before Jehovah. And, behold, Jehovah passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before Jehovah: but Jehovah was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but Jehovah was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but Jehovah*

*was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.*

It has already been pointed out that Elijah was probably the first prophet of the Lord who went to mount Horeb since the days of Moses; and since the former was the great restorer of God's order, it is perhaps not out of place to observe that Jehovah was treating him in a way similar to that which Moses experienced when he was there. Indeed, as Clarke notes, it is not at all unlikely that Elijah stood at the same place where Moses stood when Jehovah revealed himself to him in the giving of the law. (See Ex. 19: 1-25.)

The verses which have just been quoted, as Hastings points out, contain a revelation, a magnificent drama of nature in which the elements strove for the mastery. If we look at the spiritual implications, the narrative is one of the most profound in all the Old Testament. Jehovah represented to his discouraged prophet, by a magnificent acted parable, the contrast between law and grace, judgment and mercy. As a prophet of Jehovah, Elijah had been using the weapon of force; he apparently never thought of its being possible to defeat the enemies of Jehovah by any other means. He had "magnified God's strictness with a zeal he will not own"; and he had failed. Force had left man hard and indifferent.

*And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.*

As already pointed out, Jehovah had made experiment upon Elijah with his own weapon—that of force; he visited the mountains with a violent storm, an earthquake, and a fire. But the prophet's wounded spirit was not moved by any of them; for Jehovah was not in them. However, in the calm which followed the tumult the prophet heard a still small voice,

or, as the margin has it, *a sound of gentle stillness*, which deeply impressed him; for it was then that he wrapped his face in his mantle, in self-abasement, and waited for the Divine communication. It was in this way that he was taught the meaning of his failure. The prophets of Baal had all been slain with the sword (1 Kings 18: 40), but Jezebel was still on the throne, as strong as ever and much more determined. Force had only aroused force; compulsion begets only compulsion; and it ever remains true, especially under Christ, that they who use the sword must perish by the sword.

Elijah could kill, but so could Jezebel, even the prophet himself. The storms do their work, and the earthquakes and fire have their mission in the progress of the universe; but mind is the master of the body, the soul is superior to the flesh, while God is over all. And although the Lord sometimes answers by fire, that is not the best answer he gives to the questions of the spirit of man; his best answer is found in the quiet of the inward life, which he supplies by his gentle patience and forbearance, forgiving mercy and comforting love. The blessings of God come, not so much by startling deeds, but rather through quiet human agencies and in the slow movements of history. (Cf. Luke 17:20, 21; 2 Pet. 3: 8.)

The probable reason Elijah had for wrapping his face in his mantle was to keep him from looking upon the face of God; and his reverent demeanor should serve as an example to all who hear the voice of God through his word. The voice which had spoken to him came again the second time, with the same question, and to it the prophet gave the same reply. Amazed and overwhelmed as he was, he apparently had not yet realized the meaning of the vision. The gentle voice no doubt breathed something of hope for his despair and peace for his troubled heart, but he still was able to answer only as he had before.

#### More Work for Elijah to Do (1 Kings 19: 15-18)

*And Jehovah said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hazeel to be king over Syria; and Jehu the son of Nim-*

*shi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet will I leave me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.*

Whatever the vision which Elijah had seen had taught him, we see from this section of our lesson that Jehovah, in tender forbearance, unfolded before him its practical issue; the prophet is to be inactive no longer. He is to learn that man is not to abandon his duties, even when

they seem hopeless, intolerable, and full of peril. He must learn that it is only when men have finished their day's work that Jehovah sends them to sleep, and that his own work had not yet been finished. Elijah must no longer linger in the wilderness, even at the mount of God, apart from the ways of guilty and suffering men. He is one with them; and he may not separate his destiny from theirs. He must understand that God still works in the kingdoms of men, that he is no respecter of persons, but that there is something for all to do for the glory of God and the good of all. He must also learn that he is not the only righteous and indispensable man in Israel. What a lesson there is in all of this for us!

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

Discuss the change which came over Elijah following his experience on mount Carmel.

Show by the case of John the Baptist and others that such was not unusual.

Why would such a disposition be found in an inspired man?

What is essential in order to avoid such unhappy experiences?

What effect does one's physical condition have on his general outlook on life?

### The Golden Text

Discuss the setting of the golden text for today.

What is the general purpose of singing on the part of God's people?

What encouragement does the thought of the golden text offer to God's people today?

### Strength for the Journey

Relate the circumstances regarding the end of the long drought of Elijah's day.

What was the reaction of Jezebel when she heard that Elijah had slain the prophets of Baal?

What did Elijah do when he received her message?

Tell how the prophet received strength for his journey.

What can you say of the providence of God in connection with all this?

### How God Deals with Despondency

What was the probable purpose Jehovah had in asking Elijah why he was at the mount?

What are some of the lessons which we may learn from it for our day?

What benefits would come to us if we would frequently ask why we are where we are?

Discuss some cases in which this lesson applies.

What was Elijah's reply to Jehovah's question?

Why wasn't the prophet allowed to give up his fight for the right?

What lesson should we learn from that?

What can you say of the significance of Elijah's presence at mount Horeb?

What great parable of nature was unfolded before him there?

What was the spiritual implication of it?

Show that the same principles involved in it are applicable to us today.

What effect did the still small voice have on the prophet?

Why did he wrap his face in his mantle?

Why is the still small voice more important to us than great physical demonstrations?

Why are many people so slow in learning this lesson?

What should be the attitude of people when they read or listen to God's word?

Give reasons for your answer.

### More Work for Elijah to Do

What commandment did Jehovah give Elijah following the vision?

Name some of the lessons which he had to learn.

What application do these things have in our lives today?

State some of the benefits which you have received from the study of Elijah's experience in this lesson.

## Lesson VI—November 11, 1962

## DEFEAT THROUGH DRUNKENNESS

## Lesson Text

## 1 Kings 20: 10-21

10 And Ben-ha'-dad sent unto him, and said, The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Sa-ma'-ri-a shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me.

11 And the king of Is'-ra-el answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on *his armor* boast himself as he that putteth it off.

12 And it came to pass, when *Ben-ha'-dad* heard this message, as he was drinking, he and the kings, in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants, Set *yourselves in array*. And they set *themselves in array* against the city.

13 And, behold, a prophet came near unto A'-hab king of Is'-ra-el, and said, Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold. I will deliver it into thy hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am Je-ho'-vah.

14 And A'-hab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, By the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall begin the battle? And he answered. Thou.

15 Then he mustered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and

thirty-two: and after them he mustered all the people, even all the children of Is'-ra-el, being seven thousand.

16 And they went out at noon. But Ben-ha'-dad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him.

17 And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Ben-ha'-dad sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out from Sa-ma'-ri-a.

18 And he said, Whether they are come out for peace, take them alive: or whether they are come out for war, take them alive.

19 So these went out of the city, the young men of the princes of the provinces, and the army which followed them.

20 And they slew every one his man; and the Syr'-i-ans fled, and Is'-ra-el pursued them: and Ben-ha'-dad the king of Syr'-i-a escaped on a horse with horsemen.

21 And the king of is'-ra-el went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syr'-i-ans with a great slaughter.

**Golden Text.**—*"Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, ... it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder"* (Prov. 23: 31, 32.)

**Devotional Heading.**—Isa. 28: 1-13.

## Daily Bible Readings

November 5.	M.	..... Amos Warns Israel (Amos 6: 1-8)
November 6.	T.	..... Brutality Because of Drunkenness (Amos 5: 1-15)
November 7.	W.	..... A Drunken Feast (Dan. 5: 1-4)
November 8.	T.	..... Temperance for Ourselves (Prov. 23: 29-35)
November 9.	F.	..... Temperance for Others (1 Cor. 8: 1-13)
November 10.	S.	..... Temperance for God (1 Cor. 3: 16-23)
November 11.	S.	..... Prophecy of a Fall Because of Drunkenness (Jer. 51: 39-57)

**Time.**—901 B.C.

**Place.**—Samaria.

**Persons.**—Jehovah, Ahab, Ben-hadad, and their servants.

## Introduction

Intemperance has been one of the major sins of the ages, and it still continues so. If temperance implies habitual moderation and the exer-

cise of judgment in all things, then intemperance is the lack of those traits of character. Webster defines intemperance as any immoderate in-

dulgence of the appetite and passion; and the term has come to have a special application with reference to the excessive use of intoxicant beverages. It is with reference to this last use that our lesson for today is concerned. And while it is well to place the emphasis on this phase of the general subject of intemperance at this time, we should not lose sight of the fact that the lack of moderation and the failure to exercise judgment in any area of one's life will cause a person to be guilty of the sin of intemperance in the sight of the Lord.

"Stimulant" is another term which is often used to indicate the effect of alcoholic beverages (and certain drugs), such as a seeming increase of vitality and a temporary excitation to activity (Webster); but anyone who is acquainted with the facts in the case is aware of the truth that such stimuli never bring out the best that is possible for people who use them. Paul is dealing with this very problem when he says, "And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit." (Eph. 5: 18; cf. Acts 2: 38.) The practical meaning is, do not try to accomplish by one means that which can be attained only by another. Or, to state the same thing in other words, do not seek the stimulus of life primarily through the senses, but through the heart. As someone has said, "The fundamental need of life is not a sen-

sation, but an inspiration." The real man is the soul or spirit, while the body is only the house in which he dwells; and it is folly to seek to spur the essential powers of life by a stimulus of the flesh. The principal moving power must be within, and must be given by the Holy Spirit. See Eph. 3: 14-19, "I bow my knees unto the Father: That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man."

Therefore, if a man wants buoyancy, power to deal with a "sea of troubles," and the ability to keep his head above the water; and if he would be light-hearted, and be able to resist the awful weight of urgent care, and to deal with "the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to"; if he would be optimistic regarding the near and frowning horizon, and look forward with hope to the golden morrow beyond, the secret must be sought, not in seeking to satisfy the fleshly desires, but in the deep recesses of the soul. And herein lies the force of the contrast which Paul set forth in Eph. 5: 18. And so, as Paul also wrote to the Romans, "Let us walk becomingly, as in the day; not in revelling drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife ad jealousy. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." (Rom. 13: 13, 14.)

### The Golden Text

*"Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, ... it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder"* One of the principal reasons for this wise counsel on the part of Solomon was also stated by him in these words: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whosoever erreth thereby is not wise." (Prov. 20: 1.) In the words of Adam Clarke, wine deceives by its fragrance, intoxicates by its strength, and renders the victims ridiculous. "When wine comes in, mind goes out." Wine promises satisfaction which it can never give. Instead, it swallows up the reason, and stirs up the passions. One of the sad scenes of life is that of a deceived person; and one of the contributing factors to his plight is that the deceived person does not realize

that he is being deceived until the act has been accomplished. (Cf. Heb. 3: 13.)

Isaiah warns, "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that tarry late into the night, till wine inflame them." (Isa. 5: 11.) The Scriptures, however, are not alone in condemning the excessive use of alcoholic beverages; men of our times who speak from ripest experience and highest human authority also join in the condemnation. Dr. Howard Kelly, of Johns Hopkins University fame, has this to say: "There is no disease in the world for which alcohol is a cure. ... Its use is ruinous to the kidneys, liver, heart, and smaller blood vessels, and give rise to that most common fatality, high blood

pressure." He observes further "All this has been proved by innumerable tests. Two men play tennis or chess equally well. Give one of them a single glass of beer and he will be easily defeated by the one who abstains."

Of all the evils which oppress, outrage, and destroy mankind, there is none greater, according to J. W. Shepherd, than intemperance. The proof of this may easily be seen by turning to our jails, asylums, police courts, lodginghouses, newspapers,

streets, and highways. It is an evil very great, very common, very real, and very ruinous—equally so to the individual, society, and the nation. It is an evil which produces untold misery, poverty, and wretchedness which no figures can possibly set forth. It injures the body, blunts the finer feelings of the soul, clouds the intellect, ruins the health, and unfits for daily life. But most of all, it destroys all prospects for heaven for those who continue to follow its course.

## The Text Explained

### A Boastful Threat and a Wise Reply

(1 Kings 20: 10-12)

*And Ben-hadad sent unto him, and said, The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me. And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his armor boast himself as he that putteth it off. And it came to pass, when Ben-hadad heard this message, as he was drinking, he and the kings, in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants, Set yourselves in array. And they set themselves in array against the city.*

The occasion for the remarks in this section of the lesson is set forth in the preceding part of the chapter from which it is taken. Ben-hadad was king of Syria, and he had with him thirty-two kings, and horses and chariots, when he went up to besiege Samaria and fight against it. Just why the king of Syria felt that he was justified in making the attack is not stated, but he sent this message to the king of Israel: "Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine." Ahab's reply to him was, "It is according to thy saying, my lord, O king; I am thine, and all that I have." This must have encouraged Ben-hadad: for he returned this message: "Thus speaketh Ben-hadad, saying, I sent indeed unto thee, saying, Thou shalt deliver me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children; but I will send my servants unto thee to-morrow about this time, and they shall search thy house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be, that whatsoever is pleasant

in thine eyes, they shall put it in their hand, and take it away."

In the first demand which Ben-hadad made upon Ahab, the latter was left free to turn over the things which belonged to him personally; but in the second, the people of the city were also involved. It is difficult to understand why a king, such as Ahab, would agree to such a disgraceful and humiliating demand, unless he thought that by doing so he would be choosing the lessor of two evils; but even if he had succeeded in getting the siege lifted, he would have been powerless and subject to the whims of the Syrian king. But when the second demand came, Ahab called to him all the elders of the land, and said to them, "Mark, I pray you, and see how this man seeketh mischief: for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold; and I denied him not." Although "all the elders and all the people said unto him, Hearken thou not, neither consent," it appears from Ahab's reply to Ben-hadad that they may have had reference to the second demand only; for the king of Israel plainly told the king of Syria that he would comply with the first demand, but of the second I "may" not do, that is. he did not have the consent of the other people involved to allow the Syrian soldiers to search their houses and take their property.

The messengers returned this answer to Ben-hadad, and when he heard it, he made his boastful threat: "The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me." Whatever may have been Ben-hadad's meaning regarding



the dust of Samaria, the obvious reference was to the size of the army he would bring against the city. This brought forth a timely remark from Ahab, which Matthew Henry thinks was one of the wisest words the king ever spoke, and "is a good item or memento to us all." But not only was the king of Israel employing common sense, he was stating a truth which the Bible has recorded and preserved for all ages. (See Prov. 27: 1; James 4: 13-17.)

The king of Syria was not prepared for wise action when he received Ahab's reply; for the text says that he and the kings who were with him were drinking. No one who is under the influence of strong drink is in a condition to act wisely about any important matter. Had the king been sober, he might have been impressed with the wisdom of the remark which the king of Israel had made, and that might have caused him to count the cost before attempting to carry out his threat. But as it was, he ordered the attack on the city to be made, which resulted in the complete defeat of the Syrians.

### **Divine Aid for the People of Israel**

(1 Kings 20: 13-15)

*And, behold, a prophet came near unto Ahab king of Israel, and said, Thus saith Jehovah, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thy hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah. And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith Jehovah, By the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall begin the battle? And he answered, Thou. Then he mustered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two: and after them he mustered all the people, even all the children of Israel, being seven thousand.*

There is no way for us to know who this unnamed prophet was. Some have thought he may have been Micaiah (1 Kings 22:8), others, Elijah or Elisha; but the question is not important, or his name would have been given. The principal thing to keep in mind is that the merciful Jehovah was willing to give his help to such a wicked king as Ahab. But we may be sure that it was not for Ahab personally, but for the people

over whom he ruled. These people had been called back from Baal worship by Elijah, and the Lord was willing to encourage them; and, furthermore, there were among the people seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and whose mouth had not kissed him. (See 1 Kings 19: 18.)

It appears that the principal reason for Jehovah's intervention at this time is found in the fact that he wanted Ahab to know that he is Jehovah. This principle is seen running throughout God's dealings with his people, and even those who totally reject him. It is not his will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Pet. 3: 9.) This is the reason why punishment for sin is not always direct and immediate. "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation." (2 Pet. 3: 15.) If people were fully punished for their sins immediately, no one would be saved; for there would be no time for repentance. Hence, the lesson which we should learn is to deal even with sinful men in such a way to make them realize something of who God is, and of his attitude toward all men. No one will ever make a mistake in manifesting the spirit of Christ toward any person.

Another principle of God's dealing with his people is also seen in this lesson—that of giving them the victory in the absence of a great army. This has been powerfully demonstrated time and again in the history of the Bible. (Cf. Gideon, Samson, and others.) Ben-hadad had threatened to attack Samaria with an army of multiplied thousands, but all that Ahab needed to achieve the victory was an advanced force of two hundred and thirty-two young men probably from the militia of the provinces, or, as some Bible students think, they may have been totally unacquainted with war, and a rear guard of seven thousand men, which seems to have been all who were available, and which he may not have been authorized to muster.

### **The Syrians Defeated with a Great Slaughter**

(1 Kings 20: 16-21)

*And they went out at noon. But Ben-hadad was drinking himself*

*drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him. And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Ben-hadad sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out from Samaria. And he said, Whether they are come for peace, take them alive; or whether they are come out for war, take them alive. So these went out of the city, the young men of the princes of the provinces, and the army which followed them. And they slew every one his man; and the Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them: and Ben-hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with horsemen. And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter.*

If only verse 12 of our lesson text for today were read, there might be some question as to whether or not Ben-hadad and his dependent kings were drinking alcohol liquors or only some harmless beverages; but when verse 16 is considered, there is no doubt about the matter. This only illustrates the necessity of taking into account all the facts pertaining to any subject, before reaching a conclusion regarding it. If this principle had always been followed, the condition of the religious world would be entirely different from what it is today.

Ben-hadad was not the last ruler who was drinking himself drunk when he ought to have been giving attention to other matters. Read the fifth chapter of Daniel. It is said that Alexander the Great wept because there were no more worlds for him to conquer. But there was one thing which would have been a greater conquest, but which he failed to realize—the conquest of himself. (Cf. Prov. 16: 32b.) We are told that one night, after an orgy of drinking, Alexander called for the "Hercules Cup," which contained an incredible amount, and drank it all. Then he repeated the act, only to fall to the floor and soon thereafter died. Thus, this hero of a thousand conquests had failed in the most important one of all—himself; and of him Seneca said, "Here he lies subdued by his intemperance, struck to the earth by the fatal cup of Hercules."

It is said that General Robert E.

Lee never promoted a man who drank. He said, "I cannot consent to place in control of others one who cannot control himself." General John J. Pershing who commanded the United States Expeditionary Forces in World War I, and the only man in American history to wear the title, General of the Armies (plural), said, "Banish the entire liquor industry from the United States; close every saloon, every brewery, suppress drinking by severe punishment to the drinker, and if necessary, death to the seller or maker, or both, as traitors, and the nation will suddenly find itself amazed at its efficiency and startled at the increase in its labor supply. I shall not go slow on prohibition, for I know what is the greatest foe to my men, greater even than the bullets of the enemy."

In an address to a group of boys, Dr. Charles H. Mayo said, "Keep yourselves from all entangling habits, boys. If there ever was any great man who accomplished anything through the use of alcohol, I would like to have the fact pointed out. Through alcoholic stimulation a man loses his co-ordination. That is why liquor has no advantage to the brain.

"You hear people tell how they had their wits quickened for the first half hour by liquor, but they don't tell you how, later, their body could not act in co-ordination with their brain.

"A man who has to drag around a habit that is a danger and a menace to society ought to go to the woods and live. We don't tolerate the obvious use of morphine or cocaine or opium, and we should not tolerate intoxicating liquor because, I tell you, these things are what break down the command of the individual over his own life and his own destiny.

"You can get along with a wooden leg, but you can't get along with a wooden head. The physical value of a man is not so much. Man as analyzed in our laboratories is worth about 98 cents. Seven bars of soap, lime enough to whitewash a chicken coop, phosphorus to tip the heads of a thousand matches, is not so much, you see.

"It is the brain that counts, but in order that your brain may be kept

clear, you must keep your body fit and well. That cannot be done if one drinks liquor."

Ben-hadad was defeated and his army either killed or completely routed while in a drunken state; and even if Jehovah had not been with the forces of Israel, the Syrian king

was in no condition to direct his own army to victory. Let us then always remember the wise words of Solomon, in spite of the fact that he himself failed in his latter days to live up to them, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whosoever ereth thereby is not wise."

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What is intemperance and how wide an area does it cover?

Why is alcoholic beverage sometimes referred to as a stimulant?

What does Paul say regarding the stimulation of Christians?

What is essential in this respect if we want to accomplish the greatest good in life?

### The Golden Text

Discuss the effect of strong drink on people.

In what ways does alcoholic beverages affect one's health?

In view of these indisputable conditions, why do people continue to drink?

### A Boastful Threat and a Wise Reply

Outline the background which led up to the events of our lesson for today.

What were the two demands which Ben-hadad made upon Ahab?

In what way did the king of Israel react to them?

Why did he agree to one and not to the other?

What threat then did Ben-hadad make?

What was Ahab's reply?

Discuss the wisdom of this reply.

What lesson does it contain for us?

Why didn't Ben-hadad show an interest in what was said by Ahab?

### Divine Aid for the People of Israel

What prophetic message was given to the king of Israel?

What was the divine purpose behind it? that is, what did Jehovah want the king to know?

Why did God intervene in the dispute between the two kings?

What is the motive behind God's long-suffering?

What lesson should we learn from this?

Why was such a small army chosen for such a great task?

What meaning should this have for us?

### The Syrians Defeated with a Great Slaughter

What principle for Bible study is illustrated in this lesson?

Why are so many people so slow in recognizing it?

How do you account for a man of great responsibility, such as Ben-hadad, giving himself to drinking?

Discuss other instances of this nature.

What was Alexander the Great's most outstanding failure?

In what way did he meet his death?

How did General Robert E. Lee feel about responsibility and drink?

What did General Pershing propose to do about the question?

Discuss in detail Dr. Mayo's advice regarding the use of alcoholic beverages.

What was the result of the conflict between the forces of Israel and those of Syria?

## Lesson VII—November 18, 1962

# COVETOUSNESS OF AHAB

## Lesson Text

### 1 Kings 21: 1-16

1 And it came to pass after these things, that Na'-both the Jez'-re-ē-ite had a vineyard, which was in Jez'-re-el, hard by the palace of A'-hab king of Sa-mā'-ri-a.

2 And A'-hab spake unto Na'-both, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house; and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it: or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.

3 And Na'-both said to A'-hab, Jeho'-vah forbid it me, that I should

give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

4 And A'-hab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Na'-both the Jez'-re-ē-ite had spoken to him; for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

5 But Jez'-e-bel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?

6 And he said unto her, Because I

spake unto Na'-both the Jez'-re-el-ite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee *another* vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.

7 And Jez'-e-bel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Is'-ra-el? arise, and eat bread, and let thy heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Na'-both the Jez'-re-el-ite.

8 So she wrote letters in A'-hab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, *and* that dwelt with Na'-both.

9 And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Na'-both on high among the people:

10 And set two men, base fellows, before him, and let them bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst curse God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him to death.

11 And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who dwelt in his city, did as Jez'-e-bel had sent unto them, according as it was

written in the letters which she had sent unto them.

12 They proclaimed a fast, and set Na'-both on high among the people.

13 And the two men, the base fellows, came in and sat before him: and the base fellows bare witness against him, even against Na'-both, in the presence of the people, saying, Na'-both did curse God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him to death with stones.

14 Then they sent to Jez'-e-bel, saying, Na'-both is stoned, and is dead.

15 And it came to pass, when Jez'-e-bel heard that Na'-both was stoned, and was dead, that Jez'-e-bel said to A'-hab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Na'-both the Jez'-re-el-ite, which he refused to give thee for money; for Na'-both is not alive, but dead.

16 And it came to pass, when A'-hab heard that Na'-both was dead, that A'-hab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Na'-both the Jez'-re-el-ite, to take possession of it.

**Golden Text.**—"Be sure your sin will find you out " (Num. 32: 23.)

**Devotional Reading.**—1 Kings 21: 17-29.

## Daily Bible Readings

November 12. M.  
November 13. T.  
November 14. W.  
November 15. T.  
November 16. F.  
November 17. S.  
November 18. S.

Covetousness Leads to Murder (1 Kings 21: 1-4)

Jezebel's Wicked Plan (1 Kings 21: 5-16)

Elijah Condemns Ahab (1 Kings 21: 17-26)

Covetousness Described (Amos 8: 4-10)

Covetousness Punished (2 Kings 5: 20-27)

..... Sin of Covetousness (Rom. 7: 7-25)

Covetousness Repudiated (1 Tim. 6: 1-11)

**Time.**—899 B.C.

**Place.**—Jezreel.

**Persons.**—Naboth, Ahab, Jezebel, the elders and nobles, and two base fellows.

## Introduction

One of the great sins of our age, and apparently of practically all ages, is that of covetousness. The basic meaning of the term is the unlawful or inordinate desire for that which belongs to another. The tenth commandment of the Decalogue was this, "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 neighbors." (Ex. 20: 17.) So grave is the sin of covetousness that Paul

calls it idolatry. "Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." (Col. 3: 5.) It should be remembered that when the desire for that which belongs to another is unlawful or inordinate that it become covetousness.

The psalmist says, "For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and the covetous renounceth, yea, condemneth Jehovah." (Psalm 10: 3.) This is strong language to use with

reference to any sin, and one may be surprised that it is applied to the sin now under consideration. Those who are unacquainted with the nature of this malady may not consider it a serious fault, but if they will take into account the fact that there is no other sin in the Old Testament record to which the stigma employed by the psalmist is attached, he will have no difficulty in seeing that it is totally foreign to the will of God. Indeed, a greater mark of infamy could not characterize any sin. Even a blasphemer who denounces God in his rash moments would not say as much when he is under the influence of his sober mind. But for one to denounce and revile God, as the Bible says the covetous does, is to be guilty of the very acme of antagonism—to have a mind which is the very opposite of the mind of God.

Someone has asked this question, and has given the following answer. Why has covetousness incurred this deadly imputation? It is because the spirit of covetousness is the extreme opposite of the Spirit of God. It is more extreme than atheism. Atheism only fails to see a Divine Being; covetousness sees him quite well, but

does not admire his beauty. That which the covetous man admires is God's opposite. God is love, and the essence of love is giving; covetousness is self, and the essence of self is retaining. God is the converse of avarice. God dispenses his bounty to the needy, while avarice gathers gold for itself. God lavishes his treasures, while avarice hoards its gains. God lives not to himself, but avarice has no life for another. God seeks out the destitute, while avarice hides himself so that he will not meet the poor. God has many mansions, but avarice covets and has but a single room. God scatters sunbeams, while avarice picks up pins. God shed his blood to give life for the needy, while avarice sheds the blood of the needy to give life to itself. Is there any wonder, therefore, that the psalmist selected as the reverse of godliness, not atheism, but avarice: "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness." (Psalm 119: 36.) Those who know something about the nature of this sin can well understand why Jesus said, "Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." (Luke 12: 15.)

### The Golden Text

*"Be sure your sin will find you out"* Sometime prior to his death in 1944, the late Irvin S. Cobb, the well known American humorist, wrote a letter to be released to the public following his death, in which he set forth some of his views regarding God, religion, and the hereafter. Among other things, he said this, "When a man dies with his sins, let the sins die with the man. That's what I say and it sums up such speculations as I might ever have had touching on the future state, if any." That, of course, is "a consummation devoutly to be wished" by many; but according to the statement by Moses, of which the passage which serves as our golden text is a part, our sins will not be done with us when we are done with them. If the philosophy set forth by Mr. Cobb were true, it would bring to those who die without God the greatest blessing imaginable; for then they would be spared all future sufferings for their wrongdoings; but as it is, man has

an eternal spirit, and, being a moral creature, he must either accept the mercy offered by the Lord, or suffer for his sins. One of the benevolent purposes of the Bible is to teach men that their sins do not and cannot die with them. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 10; Matt. 11: 20-24.)

One of the first lessons we should learn regarding this golden text is that sin itself is the detector. The passage does not say that people will find out our sins, but that sin will find out the sinner. A hypocrite may conduct himself so that he will not be suspected of wrongdoing, but his sin is always on his trail. J. H. Newman expresses the matter in this way: A man goes on, perhaps for years, and no one ever discovers his particular failings, nor does he realize them himself; till at length he is brought into certain circumstances which brings them out—it may be power, riches, or some change in his life. And so, we discover that we do not really know the man, even

though we have been acquainted with him for years. We are disappointed, or maybe startled, as if he had lost his identity; whereas, perchance, it is but the coming to light of sins committed long before we knew him.

The name which is usually given to this detective power of sin is *Conscience*. Some sinners are never found out in this world by their contemporaries, but they do not escape the detection of conscience. . Conscience finds them out, and how it worries them with remorse! Some of the methods by which this detector works are (1) *shameful memories*. The past cannot be altered; it must stand as it was made, and there is no forgetting. If you have done wrong, there is no power that can erase that fact. Compare Paul's experience be-

fore and after he became a Christian. Although his past sins had been forgiven as he endeavored to live the Christian life, yet they were always before him in his memory. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 12-16.) (2) *An unhappy and ineffective present*. Sin cripples and incapacitates us for present duties and enjoyments. This is true because our present is rooted in our past, and they are never free from each other. No one at will can leave his past and leap immediately into a wise, virtuous, refined, and godly character. The person who permits himself to engage in sinful practices will find that much of his later spiritual strength must be consumed in repressing those pitiful vices. The consequences of our sins will appear in both our lives and our characters. (Cf. Hezekiah Butterworth's poem, *The Broken Pinion*.)

## The Text Explained

### The Root of the Trouble Which Involved Ahab

(1 Kings 21: 1-4)

*And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it: or, if it seem good unto thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money. And Naboth said to Ahab, Jehovah forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. And Ahab came unto his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.*

These things evidently refer to the events of the preceding chapter, although chapters twenty and twenty-one are transposed in the Septuagint Version and in Josephus' account. That, however, is a question for the textual critics, and we shall simply regard the narrative as being accurately set forth in our versions of the Bible. The Jezreel mentioned in

the text now before us was a city or town in which Ahab maintained a home, probably a summer home, and which may have been the ivory palace which he built. (1 Kings 22: 39.) His principal capital was in Samaria. The vineyard of Naboth was "hard by the palace of Ahab," and the king wanted it for an herb garden.

The proposition which Ahab presented to Naboth regarding the latter's vineyard appears on the face of it to be fair and legitimate in every way. The vineyard was "next door" to the king's property, and he offered to give Naboth "for it a better vineyard than it: or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money." As one views the matter from our point of view, he fails to see that the king sought any advantage over his neighbor; but when all the facts are considered it will be seen that we are not justified in looking at the question merely from our viewpoint. When the land was distributed to the people of Israel they were put under strict laws regarding sale and ownership. (See Lev. 25: 23; Num. 36: 7.) Later on, the prophet Ezekiel would say, "Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance, to thrust them out of their possession; . . . that my people be not scattered every man from his possession." (Ezek. 46: 18; cf. Mic. 2: 1, 2.)

Thus, when Naboth said, "Jehovah forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee," he was but showing that he feared God, and that it was his duty to obey God rather than man. While we have no direct information on the subject, it is quite possible that Naboth was one of the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. And while these facts give some insight into the character of Naboth, the reaction of the king to his neighbor's refusal to give up the inheritance of his fathers also shows something of the type of man Ahab was. He was like a spoiled child, who having been used to having his way in everything and not knowing the meaning of refusal, lies down on the floor and refuses to eat, or even to look at anyone, until he gets his way. There is, however, this difference: It appears that Ahab did not expect to get Naboth's vineyard. But this was not the first time that the king had gone to his house "heavy and displeased." (See 1 Kings 20: 43 and the context.)

### Jezebel Enters the Picture and Shows Her Hand

(1 Kings 21: 5-10)

*But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad that thou eatest no bread? And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard. And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thy heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, and that dwelt with Naboth. And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: and set two men, base fellows, before him, and let them bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst curse God and the king. And then carry him out and stone him to death.*

We gather from 1 Kings 21: 27-29 that Ahab still had some feeling left

within him, but if Jezebel had any conscience at all, there is no evidence of it in her record. She apparently, was completely without fear of either God or man; and she did not hesitate to do anything, regardless of what effect it might have on others, if only her desires could be realized. As all Bible readers know, Jezebel was a heathen princess, the daughter of Ethbaal the king of the Sidonians. After stating that Ahab did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah above all that were before him, the sacred historian added this comment, "And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him." (1 Kings 16: 31.)

Jezebel, as Hastings points out, has been the type of female wickedness through the ages; but she is especially the type of wickedness which irrevocably ruins the morally weak, and, while they are hesitating on the brink of sin, gives the fatal impulse which hurls them into the abyss. This masterful princess had come from a land where royalty was all-powerful, and had no restraints of conscience. Her character was strong, firm, and unchangeable; a heart of flint, cold, passionless, cruel, and as sharp as a dagger's edge. There apparently was no lapse of time between the words which Ahab spoke regarding the refusal of Naboth and her announced plan for dealing with the situation. The contrast between Jezebel and her husband was similar to that between Macbeth and his wife where the feeble resolution of the man was urged to the crime by the bolder and more relentless spirit of the woman.

The proposal which was set forth by Jezebel was made in the name of the king, and was sent to the subservient elders and nobles of the city, who doubtless had long since learned what it meant to show any kind of opposition to the queen. She knew, of course, the kind of charge to bring against Naboth to insure his instant death, and which none of the people would dare to question. (Cf. Deut. 17: 2-7.) Jezebel cared nothing for the law of Moses; she only

wanted a suitable means to an end—the death of a man who had dared to deny the wicked request of the king.

### The Plot Executed

(1 Kings 21: 11-16)

*And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who dwelt in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, according as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them. They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. And the two men, the base fellows, came in and sat before him: and the base fellows bare witness against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did curse God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him to death with stones. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead. And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead. And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.*

In the words of Matthew Henry, "never were more wicked orders given by any prince than those which Jezebel issued, and never were they more wickedly and slavishly obeyed by the agents who carried them out. There is not the slightest indication that they so much as questioned a single thing the queen said, to say nothing of offering any remonstrance." These weaklings promptly obeyed their orders, and just as promptly notified Jezebel that her wishes had been carried out to the letter. And from all indications, Jezebel received the news of Naboth's death with undisguised satisfaction. It was no concern of hers that Jehovah's name had been profaned, that religion had been dishonored, that justice had been outraged, or that innocent blood had been shed. (We gather from 2 Kings 9: 26 that the sons of Naboth were also slain.) She had obtained her object, and so informed her husband.

Taylor notes that one might have

thought that Ahab would have expressed some disapproval of this awful conspiracy which ended in such a tragic horror. But no! Like many in modern times, though his conscience would not allow him to commit the foul deed himself, yet he did not scruple to avail himself of the results of such a crime when it was planned and carried out by another. He probably felt that though he had had no part in Naboth's death, he might as well be benefited by it; and so he immediately prepared "to go at once and take possession of it. But as he did so, Elijah struck terror into his heart by the message which had been given to him by Jehovah. (See verses 17-29.)

It is both interesting and profitable to observe that the murder of Naboth by Jezebel and Ahab did more to undermine the throne of these two wicked people, than even the worship of Baal. The very names of Ahab and Jezebel suggest the very acme of sin. The name and character of Jezebel were used by Jesus to express his supreme opposition to certain practices in the church in Thyatira. (See Rev. 2: 20-23.) The manner in which this wicked woman died should be a constant reminder that death is the wages of sin. (Read 2 Kings 9: 30-37.)

When people are possessed with an insatiable desire for that to which they have no right, they will not rest until they get it; and with that kind of spirit actuating them, it will be easier than they think for them to commit almost any kind of crime to reach their goal. Paul tells us that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil; and the same thing is true of many of the things which money will buy, when the urge for them is strong enough. In discussing the seven deadly sins, Stalker says, "Avarice substitutes for God an even more amazing deity, something outside of ourselves, earthly and material. We disdain the folly of the heathen, who bend the knee to graven images; but there are many men whose money is their god." This may seem only a figure of speech, but it is the sober truth. What does it mean for one to have a god? It is to have an object to which the heart turns with supreme affection and to which the mind looks as a refuge



and defence in all the changes and chances of time.

There are those who feel that the money which they possess is a far safer assurance against possible calamity than faith or prayer, and who feel that the loss of the opportunities of worshipping God afforded by the Lord's day and the assembly of the saints is a far less calamity than the loss of their money. This unconscious idolatry sits deep in many hearts in the form of that which our Lord calls

anxiety or "carefulness," that is, the continual indulgence in a lifelong dread of poverty, which amounts to a feeling that without money they have no protection and no hope. Avarice therefore is not confined to the wealthy: the poor may also be victims of it. Excessive elation in the possession of money, and excessive depression on account of the lack of it are, in fact stem from the same root, namely, an improper attitude toward money.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What is covetousness?

Discuss it as one of the great sins of the ages.

Why does Paul call it idolatry?

What did the psalmist say regarding the sin of covetousness?

Why has this sin come to have such a deadly reputation?

What did Jesus say regarding the subject?

### The Golden Text

What popular idea do many hold regarding a man and his sins?

Why can't a man's sins die when he dies?

In what sense will one's sins find him out?

Illustrate just how sin does its detective work.

What is the relation between the detective work of sin and the conscience?

Show some of the methods by which this work is done.

### The Root of the Trouble Which Involved Ahab

To what do "these things" refer?

What was "Jezebel" and what was probably located there?

What proposition did Ahab submit to Naboth?

What was wrong with this proposal?

What was Naboth's reaction to it?

What effect did Naboth's refusal have on Ahab?

What insight does this give into the character of the king?

What does it reveal regarding Naboth?

### Jezebel Enters the Picture and Shows Her Hand

Discuss the general characters of Ahab and Jezebel.

Why was Jezebel so wicked?

How long, apparently, did it take Jezebel to do something about the matter?

Why could she have so much influence over the king?

What plot did she devise? and why it?

### The Plot Executed

Why were the elders and the nobles so willing to follow Jezebel's directions?

How did the queen receive the news of Naboth's death?

Who else were slain along with him?

How was Ahab affected by this murder?

What effect did this crime have on the future of the kingdom?

What use is made of Jezebel's name in the New Testament?

Why is covetousness such a powerful sin?

Why do people have such a love for money?

Show that this is true of both the wealthy and the poor.

## Lesson VIII—November 25, 1962

## ELISHA, SUCCESSOR TO ELIJAH

### Lesson Text

#### 2 Kings 2: 1-12

1 And it came to pass, when Je-ho'-vah would take up E-li'-jah by a whirlwind into heaven, that E-li'-jah went with E-li-sha from Gil'-gal.

2 And E-li'-jah said unto E-li'-sha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for Je-ho'-vah hath sent me as far as Beth'-el. And E-li'-sha said, As Je-ho'-vah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Beth'-el.

3 And the sons of the prophets that were at Beth'-el came forth to E-li'-sha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that Je-ho'-vah will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

4 And E-li'-jah said unto him, E-li'-sha, tarry here, I pray thee; for Je-ho'-vah hath sent me to Jer'-i-cho. And he said, As Je-ho'-vah

liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jer'i-cho.

5 And the sons of the prophets that were at Jer'i-cho came near to E-li'-sha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that Je-ho'-vah will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

6 And E-li-jah said unto him, Tarry here, I pray thee; for Je-ho'-vah hath sent me to the Jordan. And he said, As Je-ho'-vah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.

7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood over against them afar off: and they two stood by the Jordan.

8 And E-li'-jah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

9 And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that E-li'-jah said unto E-li'-sha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I am taken from thee. And E-li'-sha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: *nevertheless*, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.

11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and E-li'-jah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

12 And E-li-sha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariots of Is'-ra-el and the horsemen thereof!

And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

**Golden Text.**—*"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."* (Rom. 12: 21.)

**Devotional Reading.**—1 Cor. 15: 53-57.

### Daily Bible Readings

November 19.	M.	.....	Elisha's Call (1 Kings 19: 19, 20)
November 20.	T.	.....	The Call of Abraham (Gen. 12: 1-9)
November 21.	W.	.....	The Call of Moses (Ex. 3: 1-12)
November 22.	T.	.....	The Call of Samuel (1 Sam. 3: 1-11)
November 23.	F.	.....	The Call of Saul (Acts 9: 1-9)
November 24.	S.	.....	The Call of Amos (Amos 7: 14, 15)
November 25.	S.	.....	Elisha and the Shunammite Woman (2 Kings 4: 9-37)

**Time.**—896 B.C.

**Places.**—Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho, and the Jordan.

**Persons.**—Elijah, Elisha, and the sons of the prophets.

### Introduction

The contrast between Elijah and Elisha is very great. The former apparently was reared in the wilds of Gilead, and his person and character partook of the ruggedness of his native mountains. Much of his time was spent in the solitude of the hills, and, conversely, little in the cities. His appearance was the signal of Divine judgment, and his words were often followed by terrible manifestations of Divine power and vengeance. Elisha, on the other hand, was brought up in the quiet, agricultural district of Abel-meholah. (1 Kings 19: 16.) One would gather from 2 Kings 2: 12 (cf. 2 Kings 1: 8) that he wore the con-

ventional clothing of the East, and we learn from 2 Kings 4: 29 that he carried a staff, which at times served as his proxy. Unlike his predecessor, Elisha was frequently in cities and towns (2 Kings 6: 13, 19), and he had his own house in Samaria (2 Kings 6: 32).

The contrast between the two prophets we are considering today is further seen in their respective tastes. While Elijah was content with the secluded areas, Elisha was cultivated to the point that he responded to the refinement of court music. (2 Kings 3: 15.) The sacred historian has recorded only a few grand, impressive scenes in the life

of Elijah; but the record is fairly filled with the undated daily ministries of human helpfulness on the part of Elisha. Consider, for example, his sweetening the water supply of Jericho (2 Kings 2: 19-22); the rehabilitation of the home which had been devastated by death, hunger, and debt, and threatened with slavery (2 Kings 4: 1-7); the miraculous restoration of the Shunammite's son (2 Kings 4: 8-37); provision of food for the people (2 Kings 4: 38-44); the cleansing of Naaman the leper (2 Kings 5: 1-14); the recovery of the axe-head (2 Kings 6: 1-7); and the miraculous feeding of the besieged city of Samaria (2 Kings 6: 24-7: 20).

The ministry of Elisha lasted for more than fifty years, and it was characterized by such wisdom and popularity that kings sought his counsel. At the solicitation of the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom, he outlined a plan for channeling and storing water, which not only supplied their needs, but also be-

came the occasion for the destruction of the hosts of Moab. (2 Kings 3: 4-27.) Elisha on several occasions warned the imperiled king of Israel in time for him to escape the plans of the Syrians to attack him, with the result that he took and ordered kind treatment for the army which was sent to take the prophet, after the Syrian king had heard what he had done. (2 Kings 6: 8-23.) The services which Elisha rendered were on such a high spiritual plane, and his ministries so favorably known throughout the surrounding countries, that when he visited Damascus the ailing Syrian king sent to inquire of him regarding his recovery. The answer, so far as the illness was concerned, was favorable, but the prophet informed the messenger that he knew that he would die, that is, be murdered by the man who had been sent to him. (See 2 Kings 8: 7-15.) The amazing account of the resurrection of a man who was cast into Elisha's tomb is found in 2 Kings 13: 20, 21.

## The Golden Text

*"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."* Anyone who reads the life of the prophet Elisha will have no trouble in seeing this principle exemplified in his daily activities; and if a man in that age of the world could manifest that philosophy, then certainly the Lord's people today should. The words of the golden text contain both a warning of danger, and an encouragement to resistance. They assume, as indeed the entire Bible does, that there is such a thing as evil, that contact with it is inevitable, and that ruin and defeat by it are not impossible. Evil is all about us, even within us; and the solemn truth is that we must overcome it, or be overcome by it. There is no such thing as peaceful coexistence with evil. Evil meets us every day, and it must be met and vanquished every day, or it will destroy us. Sometimes it comes suddenly and forcefully upon us, taking us by surprise; and sometimes it works steadily and persistently, wearying us into compliance. Sometimes it works through our passions and lusts, and sometimes through our constitutional infirmities: it varies its methods, and is different in

its working with different people—even different in the same people at different times and under different circumstances. But regardless of the time and manner of the attack, we know that the conflict with it is a struggle for life.

The particular point which Paul was discussing when he penned the words of the golden text for today was an exhortation not to give way to revenge. The full statement of the context is, "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 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; Cf. 2 Kings 6: 20-23.)

But the spirit of revenge is not the only evil which Paul warned against, and we do the text no violence when we extend the application to include

all forms of evil. The root meaning of evil is unregulated desire. Desire is that quality in men which corresponds to gravitation in physical bodies. If all is well with us, desire will keep us moving around our true center—God, but if it is concentrated upon some object apart from God, the result is sin. (Cf. James 1: 13-16.) What destruction would be wrought if the planets could get detached from their true orbit! The most powerful and successful opposition which we can register against evil is personal, positive, construc-

tive good. This enemy of all mankind cannot be overcome by legislation and talk, but by practical righteousness. It is difficult for evil to survive in the face of superior character, righteous action, and benevolent institutions. We should not hesitate to destroy a weed; but our motive should be to prevent it from smothering the golden grain. The destruction of evil alone is not enough; we must overcome evil with good. This is sometimes a slow, or even expensive, method; but it is the only effectual one.

## The Text Explained

### The Day of Elijah's Departure

(2 Kings 2: 1-8)

In commenting on the character of Elijah, F. W. Robertson says, that that prophet belongs to a class of men who are gifted for special purposes. Their weapon is not love, but truth. They are born not to win, but to coerce by will. They are self-conquerors, and therefore subduers of others. Such men—stern and inflexible—are qualified for reformers. These men have few loves, and few private affections; their lives are public, and their interests are national. This accounts for the fact that their characters are sad—they are separated from sympathy; but there is also a corresponding elevation of their influence among men. The less they have of a home here, the more they make themselves a home in the awful other world, and the more they find sympathy in God. Such a man was Elijah, and such was John the Baptist. (Cf. Mai. 4: 5, 6; Matt. 17: 10-13.)

After the spectacular happenings on Carmel and Horeb, the life of Elijah became less eventful. He came forth into public view as special circumstances demanded, but as a rule he lived in retirement, and, consequently, in a manner which is less romantic and exciting. But it would be a great mistake to suppose that he spent his twilight years in idleness. The truth is, his last years were probably his busiest. The time of persecution was largely over for that period, and schools of prophets were allowed to be carried on in various places; and it may have been that Elijah spent much of his time

during his latter years in the active superintendence of them.

Elijah had been taught at Horeb that evil in this world cannot be destroyed by outward destruction and direct assault. It is not a fortress which may be taken according to the worldly methods of warfare, but instead it is one which will be reduced only by long and laborious efforts at sapping and undermining. Elijah, when he began his ministry, apparently thought that the idolatry of his country could be overthrown by a stroke; but after his experience at Horeb, he was seen closing his life-work by organizing a system of means which required the co-operation of many men, and which took years to carry into effect. Someone has noted that the silent and secret influence of these men in Israel would be like the little leaven which was hidden in three measures of meal. They would keep alive the light of truth, transmit the knowledge of the true God to the next generation, and train the sons of the prophets to succeed them when they were called to their rest. Elijah was now content that his work should be slow and unobtrusive, knowing that in that way only it could be sure. He no longer trusted in the earthquake or the fire, but in the still small voice which convinces and inspires.

*And it came to pass, when Jehovah would take up Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. And Elijah said unto Elisha. Tarry here, I pray thee; for Jehovah hath sent me as far as Bethel. And Elisha said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth,*

*I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel. And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that Jehovah will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for Jehovah hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came near to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that Jehovah will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry here, I pray thee; for Jehovah hath sent me to the Jordan. And he said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood over against them afar off: and they two stood by the Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.*

The closing scene of Elijah's life was both mysterious and wonderful. It appears that he was informed by the Lord of his near departure, and also that the information was given to Elisha and the sons of the prophets. His life had been a hard battle, and he frequently had to stand alone in maintaining the great cause for which he fought; although he was mistaken in thinking that he was the only true servant of Jehovah who was left upon the earth. But his work had now been finished, and had been brought to a successful conclusion. He probably had longed for rest many times, but he had been strong, and brave, and fearless. He had been faithful to God, notwithstanding the fact that he had experienced his hours of weakness and reverses. But on the whole, his life had been characterized by unflinching faithfulness, untiring obedience, and unflinching adherence to duty and the call of God.

But the time had come for Elijah to leave the world in which he had tried to bring men back to God, to

restore the order which existed before idolatry wrecked it; and so, for the last time he surveyed the whole scene of his earthly career—the Great Sea, toward the going down of the sun, Carmel, and the distant hills of his native Gilead—and then went the round of the consecrated places at Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho. One faithful disciple, Elisha, was with him, who would not be persuaded to leave his side. It is not clear as to whether or not Elijah really wanted Elisha to remain where he was, but the probability is that he was testing his loyalty. The sons of the prophets at both Bethel and Jericho gathered around the two older men, and they asked Elisha if he knew that Jehovah would take his master from him that day. But each time they asked him about the matter, the prophet replied in the affirmative, but immediately silenced them by asking them to hold their peace.

When Elijah and Elisha reached the Jordan, the former smote the waters with his mantle; and, as in the days of Joshua (Josh. 3: 14-17), the waters were parted and the two prophets passed over on dry ground. Later on, Elijah's great antitype, John the Baptist, would play a prominent role in connection with the Jordan. When the two men now under consideration were on the eastern side of the Jordan, under the shadows of the mountains of Pisgah and Gilead, they were in the general area where Moses ended his earthly career; but Elijah, unlike the greater prophet who went before him, was to be spared the ordeal of death.

### **Elisha's Last Request**

(2 Kings 2: 9, 10)

*And it came to pass, when they had gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I am taken from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.*

When Elisha asked for "a double portion" of the spirit of Elijah, he was not requesting that he become a greater prophet than his master had been. Instead, he was using the

formula announced by Moses to denote the portion of the first-born son in the family (Deut. 21: 15-17); and as used by the prophet here, it is very much as if he had said, "There are other prophets associated with us in the work of Jehovah, especially the 'sons of the prophets' who may be looked upon as thy spiritual sons; but let me be the first-born among them." Or, to state the same thing in another way, "Let me be thy successor, the first-born inheritor of thy spirit, and the one who shall continue thy work."

In saying that Elisha had "asked a hard thing," Elijah meant that it was not in his power to grant such a request; only Jehovah could do that (cf. Matt. 20: 23); but inasmuch as Elisha had been divinely designated as Elijah's successor (1 Kings 19: 16, 19-21), it was probably revealed to the latter that if the one making the request met the test of faithfulness up to the prophet's departure, that which he asked for would be given to him by Jehovah. It is also possible that Elijah knew something of the manner of his going away, and his reply to the younger prophet may have had some reference to Elisha's attitude when he saw the means which would be used to remove the older prophet from the earth, that is, if he could look without fear upon the dread messengers of the invisible world, his request would be granted.

### **Elijah's Glorious Departure and Elisha's Favorable Reaction**

(2 Kings 2: 11, 12)

*And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof! It would be most interesting to know what was said by these two friends and fellow workers, as they continued to walk on while waiting for the signal from God; but that is something we can never know while here upon the earth. However, in due time the*

chariot and horses of fire appeared, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha saw the entire transaction, and gazed upon the strange and marvellous vision, apparently, with complete composure. In crying, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!," Elisha probably meant that Elijah himself had done more for the preservation and prosperity of Israel than all her chariots and horsemen together.

In commenting on this occurrence, Hastings says, "The fiery chariot and the horses were the emblem of Jehovah of Hosts. To behold this emblem was pledge of perceiving the manifestation of God, unseen by the world, and of being its herald and messenger, as Elijah had been. Beyond the fact that Elijah so went up to heaven, and that the symbolic manifestation of Jehovah of Hosts was visible to Elisha—Holy Scripture does not tell us anything. And it seems wiser and more reverent not to speculate further on questions connected with the removal of Elijah, the place whither, and the state to which he was "translated." If we put aside such inquiries—since we possess not the means of pursuing them to their conclusions—there is nothing in the simple Scriptural narrative, however miraculous, that transcends the general sphere of the miraculous, or that would mark this as so exceptional an instance that the ordinary principles for viewing the miracles of Scripture would not apply to it.

"Elijah's end was in keeping with his career. From his first abrupt appearance it had been fitly symbolized by the stormy wind and flaming fire which he heard and saw at Horeb. and now these were the vehicles which swept him into the heavens. He came like a whirlwind, he burned like a fire, and in fire and whirlwind he disappeared."

*And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.* In rending his own clothes in two pieces, Elisha was probably indicating how he felt in losing so great a master and so devoted a friend. (Cf. Luke 9: 30, 31.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

What can you say of the contrast between Elijah and Elisha?

Discuss the difference in the recorded scenes of their lives.

How long did the ministry of Elisha last?

What can you say of the influence which he exerted?

What unusual thing happened with reference to him after his death?

### The Golden Text

Why is this an appropriate text for the summary of the life of Elisha?

What encouragement should we receive from his example?

What are the principal contents of the golden text?

What is our relationship with evil?

How does it work with respect to us?

What particular point did Paul have in mind when he wrote the words of the golden text?

What can you say of its wider application?

What is our most effective means in overcoming evil?

### The Day of Elijah's Departure

What was the particular place which Elijah filled in the world?

Discuss his fitness for his mission.

How did Elijah probably spend the last years of his life?

What effect did the lesson he learned at Horeb probably have on his general attitude?

What was the value in maintaining the schools of the prophets?

What words best describe the closing scene of Elijah's life?

Discuss his faithfulness to God and duty

Trace the final steps of his earthly pilgrimage.

Why did he probably request Elisha to remain where he was while he went to another place?

What did the sons of the prophets say to Elisha and why?

How did the two prophets get across the Jordan?

Where were they when they reached the other side of the river?

### Elisha's Last Request

What did Elisha mean by a double portion of Elijah's spirit?

What did Elijah say in reply to him?

In what sense was it a hard thing?

What assurance was given Elisha regarding his request?

Why would such a condition be imposed with regard to Elisha's request?

### Elijah's Glorious Departure and Elisha's Favorable Reaction

Describe the final moments of Elisha's relationship with Elijah.

In what way was Elijah removed from this world?

How did Elisha react to the majestic scene?

What did he probably mean by the words he spoke as Elijah left him?

What lessons should we learn from this occurrence?

Discuss the manner in which Elijah's life ended as a fitting climax to his career.

Why did Elisha rend his clothes after Elijah's departure?

## Lesson IX—December 2, 1962

## JEHU THE REFORMER

### Lesson Text

2 Kings 9: 6-10, 24, 27, 30-35

6 And he arose, and went into the house; and he poured the oil on his head, and said unto him, Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, the God Is'-ra-el, I have anointed thee king over the people of Je-ho'-vah, even over Is'-ra-el.

7 And thou shalt smite the house of A'-hab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of Je-ho'-vah, at the hand of Jez'-e-bel.

8 For the whole house of A'-hab shall perish; and I will cut off from A'-hab every man-child, and him that is shut up and him that is left at large in Is'-ra-el.

9 And I will make the house of A'-hab like the house of Jer-o-

bo-am the son of Ne'-bat, and like the house of Ba'-a-sha the son of A'-hi'-jah.

10 And the dogs shall eat Jez'-e-bel in the portion of Jez'-re-el, and there shall be none to bury her. And he opened the door, and fled.

24 And Je'-hu drew his bow with his full strength, and smote Jo'-ram between his arms; and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot.

27 But when A-ha-zi'-ah the king of Ju'-dah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden-house. And Je'-hu followed after him, and said, Smite him also in the chariot: *and they*

**smote him** at the ascent of Gur which is by Ib'-le-am. And he fled to Me-gid-do, and died there.

30 And when Je'-hu was come to Jez'-re-el, Jez'-e-bel heard of it; and she painted her eyes, and attired her head, and looked out at the window.

31 And as Je'-hu entered in at the gate, she said, Is it peace, thou Zim'-ri, thy master's murderer?

32 And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my

side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs.

33 And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down; and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trod her under foot.

34 And when he was come in, he did eat and drink; and he said, See now to this cursed woman, and bury her; for she is a king's daughter.

35 And they went to bury her; but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands.

**Golden Text.**—"Deal courageously, and Jehovah be with the good" (2 Chron. 19: 11.)

**Devotional Reading.**—2 Kings 9: 1-5.

### Daily Bible Readings

November 26.	M.	Jehu Selected to Be King by Elisha (2 Kings 9: 1-3)
November 27.	T.	.....Jehu Anointed King (2 Kings 9: 4-6)
November 28.	W.	Jehu Smites the House of Ahab (2 Kings 9: 7-10)
November 29.	T.	Jehu and Joram (2 Kings 9: 16-21)
November 30.	F.	Jehu Kills Joram and Ahaziah (2 Kings 9: 22-27)
December 1.	S.	Jehu and Jezebel (2 Kings 9: 30-32)
December 2.	S.	Jehu Kills Jezebel (2 Kings 9: 33-37)

**Time.**—884 B.C.

**Places.**—Ramoth-gilead, Ibleam, and Jezreel.

**Persons.**—A young prophet. Jehu, Joram, Ahaziah, and others.

### Introduction

After his experience at Horeb, Jehovah gave Elijah this commission, "And Jehovah said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet will I leave me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." (1 Kings 19: 15-18.)

This was Jehovah's way of punishing the house of Ahab for the sins which he and Jezebel brought upon Israel. Some people have questioned the goodness of Jehovah in ordering such wholesale slaughter as was carried out in the case now under consideration; but such people forget (1) that sin must be adequately pun-

ished, and (2) that during the fleshly reign of the people of the Lord such punishment was direct and was apparently something of a type of the punishment which will be inflicted at the judgment day. David Lipscomb summed up the situation in this way: "Sin must be destroyed, and punishment, as we learn from the Old Testament, was graduated according to the condition of the sinner. If he was not hopeless, the chastisement of a Father was laid upon him to correct him: but if he was hardened to sin, joined to his idols, hopeless in his position, a fearful destruction and complete separation from God was visited upon him."

It is necessary to keep these two types of punishment in mind, if one is to understand the divine method of dealing with sin. The two types are distinct, and they were intended for two distinct classes of people—those not completely alienated from God and the hopeless. God never sends the punishment of final destruction upon his people, no matter



how weak and disobedient they may be, so long as there is hope of reformation; and in like manner, God never merely chastises the hopelessly disobedient. It is not God's will that any should perish; and anyone who will take the time and make the effort to see what the Bible says about

God's dealings with the human race, he can easily see that Jehovah never made it impossible for any sinner to turn from evil and follow the good. But when people follow the course of Ahab and Jezebel, there is absolutely no hope for them. (Cf. Rev. 2: 20-23.)

### The Golden Text

*"Deal courageously, and Jehovah be with the good"* Aside from its application to our lesson for today, the passage which serves as our golden text also has a wider aspect; and in order to understand it we must consider its background. In one of his farewell addresses to Israel, Moses said, "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, according to thy tribes; and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment." (Deut. 16: 18.) It was in obedience to this injunction that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah "set judges in the land throughout all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, and said to the judges, Consider what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for Jehovah; and he is with you in the judgment. Now therefore let the fear of Jehovah be upon you; take heed and do it; for there is no iniquity with Jehovah our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of bribes." (2 Chron. 19: 5-7.)

Jehoshaphat did this, following his return to Jerusalem from Ramoth-gilead where he had joined hands with Ahab in the battle which cost the latter's life. Upon his return to his capital, Jehoshaphat was rebuked by the prophet Jehu (not Jehu the king) for helping the wicked, and loving them that hate Jehovah: and he assured him that the wrath of Jehovah was upon him because of that which he had done. It appears that the king then set himself to seeing that justice was done in the case of all the people. (Read 2 Chron. 19: 8-11.) It should be noted that a distinction is made in verse 11 between the purely religious and the purely civil matters, between the things which pertained to God, and the

things which concerned the king. And in saying, "Deal courageously, and Jehovah be with the good," the king was encouraging those in authority to do their duty.

These "municipal courts" were tribunals composed of "seven men in the several cities of Palestine; as distinguished from the Sanhedrin," which had its seat at Jerusalem." (Thayer, see also Arndt-Gingrich; Josephus, Edersheim, et al.) These courts came to be known as "the judgment" (Matt. 5: 21); and if one will consider the context of this last passage, he will see that Jesus used the term (judgment) in contrast with the Sanhedrin (council). Instead of the Jews in the time of Jesus *dealing courageously*, as Jehoshaphat exhorted the judges of his day to do, they had lessened the force of the law to the point that the principal danger which confronted a man who killed another was that he would "be in danger of the judgment"—the council of seven! Here is the way Jehoshaphat stated the matter: "And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of Jehovah, faithfully, and with a perfect heart. And whensoever any controversy shall come to you from your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and ordinances, ye shall warn them, that they be not guilty towards Jehovah, and so wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not be guilty." (Verses 9, 10.) This was the background and significance of our golden text for today; and the application of the principle which it contains should have a vital place in our thinking and conduct.

### The Text Explained

#### Jehu Anointed King and Given a Commission

(2 Kings 9: 6-10)

*And he arose, and went into the*

*house; and he poured the oil on his head, and said unto him, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people*

*of Jehovah, even over Israel. And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of Jehovah, at the hand of Jezebel. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish; and I will cut off from Ahab every man-child, and him that is shut up and him that is left at large in Israel. And I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah. And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her. And he opened the door, and fled.*

It will be helpful to those who are studying this lesson if they will read the chapters in Second Kings which precede the chapter of this lesson. If this is done, it will be seen that Ahaziah succeeded his father Ahab as King over Israel. His reign, however, was cut short by an accident, and he was succeeded by his brother Jehoram, who reigned for twelve years. Like their father, both of these sons were extremely wicked. On one occasion when Jehoram sought to consult Elisha regarding an attack which he, along with the kings of Judah and Edom, was contemplating against the king of Moab, Elisha said to him, "What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay; for Jehovah hath called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab. And Elisha said, As Jehovah of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee." (2 Kings 3: 13, 14.)

The first five verses of the chapter from which our lesson for today is taken tell of the manner in which Jehu became king over Israel. These verses are the devotional reading, and they should be carefully considered just here. The purpose in making Jehu king was to avenge the servants of the Lord who had suffered at the hands of Ahab and Jezebel. The destruction of the house of Ahab was foretold by Elijah, following the murder of Naboth (1 Kings 21: 17-26); but because the king humbled himself before Jehovah, it

was revealed to the prophet that the destruction would be delayed until after the death of Ahab. (See 1 Kings 21: 27-29.) Jehovah has always been merciful, and has showed kindness wherever it was consistent with his righteous nature (cf. 2 Pet. 3: 9); but when people degrade themselves as Ahab did, the day of reckoning is certain to come.

Jehu had been among the horsemen who had ridden with Ahab when he went to Jezreel to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth, following the latter's death. He had also heard the terrible words of Elijah as he pronounced the awful doom of the king, and those words had made a tremendous impression upon the man who would later be used by Jehovah as the instrument for ending both the reign and the house of Ahab. (See 2 Kings 9: 25, 26.) But Jehu had apparently kept his thoughts regarding these matters to himself, and continued to enjoy the confidence of the king of Israel. In fact, he was one of the captains in Jehoram's army, and was at the time of this lesson engaged, along with others, at Ramoth-gilead. It is also well to remember that a short time before, Joram (a contraction of Jehoram) was wounded by the Syrians at Ramoth-gilead. (See 2 Kings 8: 28, 29.)

After the secret anointing of Jehu, his fellow soldiers became curious and wanted to know why this "mad fellow" came to him. Jehu tried to pass the matter off lightly; but when they insisted on knowing the truth, he told them that he had been anointed king over Israel. This apparently pleased them, and they immediately gave evidence of their loyalty to him. "And Jehu said, If this be your mind, then let none escape and go forth out of the city, to go to tell it in Jezreel." The reason why Jehu did not want the news of his being anointed king to reach Jezreel is stated in these words: "For Joram lay there." The king had gone to the summer palace to be healed of the wounds which the Syrians had given him at Ramah (Ramoth-gilead, see verse 28), when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. "And Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Joram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick." (See 2 Kings 8: 29.)

After taking the necessary precautions to see that no one made his way to the king to inform him of what was being done, Jehu mounted his chariot and rode headlong into the city of Jezreel where the king was recuperating from his wound. A watchman on the tower of the city reported the approaching company, and a messenger was promptly sent to meet them and to ascertain the nature of the mission. This messenger was ordered to fall in behind Jehu and those with him. When the first messenger failed to return to the city, a second one was sent, and he met with the same fate. The watchman, as he had done in the first instance, reported this; and then added, "And the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously." (Verse 20.)

### Two Kings Slain

(2 Kings 9: 24, 27)

*And Jehu drew his bow with his full strength, and smote Joram between his arms; and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot.* After the two messengers had failed to get a report concerning the approaching company, the ailing king Joram decided to take the matter in his own hands. "And Joram said, Make ready. And they made ready his chariot. And Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out to meet Jehu, and found him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite. And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered. What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many? And Joram turned his hands, and fled, and said to Ahaziah, There is treachery, O Ahaziah." (Verses 21-23.) It was then that Jehu shot Joram and told Bidkar his captain to cast him into the field of Naboth, as he reminded him of their experience when Elijah spoke the words of doom to Ahab. The indelible impression which the prophet's words made upon Jehu is expressed in the following words:

"Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite; for remember how that, when I and thou rode together after

Ahab his father, Jehovah laid this burden upon him: Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith Jehovah; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith Jehovah. Now therefore take and cast him into the plat of ground, according to the word of Jehovah." (Verses 25, 26.)

*But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden-house. And Jehu followed after him, and said, Smite him also in the chariot: and they smote him at the ascent of Gur, which is by Ibleam. And he fled to Megiddo, and died there.*

If anyone should wonder why Jehu slew Ahaziah, along with Joram, the answer is probably found in the fact that the king of Judah was himself a member of the house of Ahab. Ahaziah's father Jehoram was the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and his mother was Athaliah the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. (See 2 Kings 8: 16-18, 25-27.) The marginal reading for "daughter" of Omri in verse 26 is granddaughter. This, of course, made Ahaziah a member of the house of Ahab, as well as a member of the house of David. "And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, as did the house of Ahab; for he was son-in-law of the house of Ahab." (Verse 27.)

If one reads the account of the death of Ahaziah in 2 Kings 9: 27; and then turns to 2 Chron. 22: 8, 9 and reads that, he may be somewhat confused with the apparent discrepancies which he may observe. Hackett, in *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, suggests that the two passages may be fragmentary, with the result that neither passage, when taken alone, gives the full picture. But when the facts of both passages are put together, the result is something like the following: Ahaziah, after escaping "by the way of the garden-house," was able for the time being to elude Jehu's men, and was able to reach Samaria, where he hid himself for awhile. And "when Jehu was executing judgment upon the house of Ahab," he sought for Ahaziah, and "they caught him," while he was hiding in Samaria; and when they brought him to Jehu, he com-

manded them to smite him in the chariot: and they smote him at the ascent of Gur, which is by Ibleam. However, he was not killed, but fled to Megiddo, and died there.

### The Horrible Death of Jezebel

(2 Kings 9: 30-35)

*And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her eyes, and attired her head, and looked out at the window. And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Is it peace, thou Zimri, thy master's murderer? And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs. And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down; and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trod her under foot. And when he was come in, he did eat and drink; and he said, See now to this cursed woman, and bury her; for she is a king's daughter. And they went to bury her; but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands.*

Although the reigning kings who belonged to the house of Ahab were dead, and no doubt many others among the princes (cf. 2 Chron. 22: 8; 2 Kings 10: 1-28), there was one spirit in the house of Ahab which was not yet broken. The queen-mother Jezebel maintained her audacity to the very last. She probably felt that the supreme hour of her career was at hand: but not even the sudden and dreadful death of her son, or the nearness of her own fate, had any effect on her steely heart. She painted her eyes and attired her head, as if she was preparing for some state banquet; and then looked out the window of her palace, and hailed the triumphant usurper with the bitterest insult she could devise. She knew that her father-in-law Omri had more or less forced another usurper, Zimri who had also smote his master Elah the king, to commit suicide by burning the king's

house over him, after a reign of seven days (1 Kings 16: 8-18); and her evident purpose in bringing up the case of Zimri was to imply that the situation of Jehu was as precarious as that of her own.

The new king Jehu was probably stung by the implication contained in Jezebel's words, and he immediately demanded to know how those around her stood; and when he gave the command, as if to test their loyalty, they immediately hurled the queen-mother from the window. And it is doubtful if any queen has ever died so ignominious a death. It appears that Jehu hesitated only for an instant, while his horses tramped her body beneath their feet; and then went into the house to eat and drink that which may have even been prepared for the queen herself. But if so, it does not appear that a single servant of the household uttered a wail or thought of raising a finger in behalf of the royal family, although they had been under Jezebel's domination for some thirty odd years. They may even have felt as Solomon expressed the matter, "When the wicked perish, there is shouting." (Prov. 11: 10.)

Thus in ignominy and disgrace this wicked queen of Israel passed out of the picture, but her memory remains as a synonym of the worst kind of sins which plague God's people. (See Rev. 2: 20-23.) Even when Jehu, a little while later, thought of giving her a burial, because she was a king's daughter, those who had gone for that purpose found that the scavenger dogs had already eaten her body, except for her skull, hands, and feet; and when they returned to tell Jehu what had happened, he replied, "This is the word of Jehovah, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying. In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel; and the body of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel, so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel." (See verses 36, 37.)

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today?  
Repeat the golden text.  
Give time, places, and persons.

#### Introduction

What commission did Elijah receive after his experience at Horeb?

What was Jehovah's purpose in all of this?  
Why was it essential to punish the house of Ahab?  
What two types of punishment have been employed by Jehovah?  
Discuss the mercy and righteousness of God in all of this.

## The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?  
 Discuss the background against which the whole situation occurred.  
 Why was it necessary to have the judges in each city?  
 What reference did Jesus make to these municipal courts?

## Jehu Anointed King and Given a Commission

What benefit did you receive from reading the chapters in Second Kings which precede this lesson?  
 How was it that two of his sons succeeded Ahab as king?  
 What was Elisha's attitude toward them?  
 Under what circumstances was Jehu anointed king?  
 When and by whom was the destruction of the house of Ahab foretold?  
 Why wasn't the matter attended to during the lifetime of Ahab?  
 What lesson do we learn from that?  
 What had been Jehu's relationship to Ahab?  
 What kind of impression did the words of Elijah make upon him?  
 In what manner was Jehu regarded by king Jehoram?  
 What is the difference between the names "Jehoram" and "Joram"?  
 What happened after the secret anointing of Jehu?  
 How did his fellow soldiers receive the news of his being made king?  
 What command did the new king give and why?  
 Why was Jehoram in Jezreel?  
 How did it happen that king Ahaziah was also there?  
 Describe the approach of Jehu to the city.

## Two Kings Slain

What happened after the two messengers failed to return to Jezreel?  
 Under what circumstances did Joram meet his death?  
 What do we learn here regarding the relation of Jehu and his captain to Ahab?  
 Why did Jehu give orders to have Ahaziah slain too?  
 Discuss the relationship of Ahaziah to the house of Ahab.  
 What impression do some people receive from reading the two different accounts of Ahaziah's apprehension and death?  
 What do you think is the probable solution of the apparent differences between Second Kings and Second Chronicles in this respect?

## The Horrible Death of Jezebel

Why was it essential to put an end to Jezebel?  
 What spirit did she manifest following the deaths of the two kings?  
 How do you explain her attitude in the face of what she must have known was her certain death?  
 Why did she refer to Jehu as "Zimri"?  
 What effect did this reference apparently have on Jehu?  
 What did he then do in order to determine the attitude of those around the queen-mother?  
 Describe the ignominious death of Jezebel.  
 What did Jehu do following his triumph over her?  
 What was probably the attitude of the servants in the palace?  
 Discuss the memory of Jezebel as a reminder of sin.

## Lesson X—December 9, 1962

## WICKEDNESS IN HIGH PLACES

## Lesson Text

2 Kings 13: 1, 2, 10, 11; 14: 23, 24; 17: 1

1 In the three and twentieth year of Jo'-ash the son of A-ha-zi'-ah, king of Ju'-dah, Je-ho'-a-haz the son of Je'-hu began to reign over Is'-ra-el in Sa-ma'-ri-a, *and reigned* seventeen years.

2 And he did that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah, and followed the sins of Jer-o-bo'-am the son of Ne'-bat, wherewith he made Is'-ra-el to sin; he departed not therefrom.

10 In the thirty and seventh year of Jo'-ash king of Ju'-dah began Je-ho'-ash the son of Je-ho'-a-haz to reign over Is'-ra-el in Sa-ma'-ri-a, *and reigned* sixteen years.

11 And he did that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah; he de-

parted not from all the sins of Jer-o-bo'-am the son of Ne'-bat, wherewith he made Is'-ra-el to sin; but he walked therein.

23 In the fifteenth year of Am-a-zi'-ah the son of Jo'-ash king of Ju'-dah Jer-o-bo'-am the son of Jo'-ash king of Is'-ra-el began to reign in Sa-ma'-ri-a, *and reigned* forty and one years.

24 And he did that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah: he departed not from all the sins of Jer-o-bo'-am the son of Ne'-bat, wherewith he made Is'-ra-el to sin.

1 In the twelfth year of A'-haz king of Ju'-dah began Ho-she'-a the son of E'-lah to reign in Sa-ma'-ri-a over Is'-ra-el, *and reigned* nine years.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And they forsook all the commandments of Jehovah their God"* (2 Kings 17: 16.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Kings 14: 15, 16.

### Daily Bible Readings

December 3. M.  
December 4. T..  
December 5. W.  
December 6. T.  
December 7. F.  
December 8. S.  
December 9. S.

The Sin of Israel (Amos 2: 4-12)  
Judgment on Israel (Amos 3: 1-15)  
Wickedness of Israel (2 Kings 17: 1-12)  
Deception in Sin (Hos. 7: 1-10)  
Downfall Foretold (Isa. 8: 5-10)  
Way of the Righteous and Wicked (Psalm 1)  
Condemnation of Israel (2 Kings 17: 13-18)

TIME.—856-730 B.C.

PLACE.—Samaria.

PERSONS.—Jehoahaz, Jehoash, Jeroboam, and Hoshea, kings of Israel.

### Introduction

The kingdom of Israel continued for approximately two hundred and fifty years, and during that time there were nine different dynasties or separate houses which ruled the people, although some of them can hardly be called dynasties in the strictest meaning of that term. For example, Zimri lasted for only seven days, and Shallum one month; but each of those two men is listed as a king, with no family ties with the preceding or succeeding dynasties. We have already considered the better known, and probably the more able among the nineteen kings of Israel; but the study of the northern kingdom as a whole would not be complete without a consideration of the ones who are named in this lesson.

Jehu was the tenth king of Israel, as well as the founder of the dynasty which bears his name. It is interesting to observe that his dynasty had more kings than any other, and was the longest in the number of years. This prolongation was expressly granted to his house as the reward for his zeal against the dynasty of Ahab. "And Jehovah said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of

Ahab according to all that was in my heart, thy sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." (2 Kings 10: 30.) But this is only a part of the story, as may be seen by reading the verse before and the verse after the one just quoted:

"Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan. . . . But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of Jehovah, the God of Israel, with all his heart: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, wherewith he made Israel to sin." (2 Kings 10: 29, 31.) Later on, Jehovah caused Hosea to utter these words when he came to name his first-born son, "And Jehovah said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease." (Hos. 1: 4.) Jehu, like so many people today, had his opportunity to become a devoted instrument in the hands of Jehovah for the accomplishment of his will, but he was not willing to allow God to lead him in all things.

### The Golden Text

*"And they forsook all the commandments of Jehovah their God."*

This passage is taken from the inspired historian's account of the reason for bringing to an end the kingdom of Israel. (See 2 Kings 17: 7-18.) Their departure from the Lord's will had rendered them so

corrupt that he could no longer tolerate them in his sight. This is a lesson which we should learn well; for these things have been written for our learning. (Cf. Rom. 15: 4; 1 Cor. 10: 6, 11.) Human nature is substantially the same in all ages of the world, and, with that fact in mind.

we should remember that it is not impossible for us to walk in the same paths, and be lost eternally. God's aim in his dealings with his people is to help them develop the kind of character which can be with him forever. But that can be done only by taking heed to walk in all his ways. (Cf. Eccles. 12: 13, 14.)

Moral character is man's only possession: there is nothing else which he can, in strict truth, call his own. His very being, with all of its manifestations, belongs to his Creator (Ezek. 18: 4), as well as all of his material possessions (Luke 12: 15-20; 16: 1-12). Jehovah claims the right over man's existence upon the earth, and can terminate it when it pleases him; but he allows man to have the rule over his own character. If it is bad, he holds him responsible for it; but if it is good, he permits him to have the praise for it. And not only is moral character man's only real possession in this life: it is the only earthly product which he can take out of the world. (Cf. Job 1:21; Eccles. 5: 15; 1 Tim. 6: 7.) Humbolt understood this truth when he said, "Only what we have wrought into our character during life can we take away with us." And furthermore, moral character will determine our moral destiny. It will not be *who* we are, but rather *what*, that will count in the last great day.

David Thomas has pointed out that the primary element of a man's character is his *controlling disposition*, and he further emphasizes the fact that this principle of character is like the sap of a tree—it runs into every branch of life, and produces, shapes, and colors every part. How true this was in the life of every single king of Israel! If this controlling disposition, principle, or dominating factor is sensual, the result is sensuality; if it is selfish, covetousness will follow; but if it is characterized by a sincere and earnest desire to please the Lord, a righteous life will ensue. That which has just been said is enough to show the importance of making the proper choices in life; and this, in turn, will depend upon the motive of the one making the choices. (Cf. Heb. 11: 24-26; Dan. 1: 8; Heb. 12: 2; 2 Cor. 5: 9.) In the words of John Oxenham,

To every man there openeth  
A Way, and Ways, and a Way.  
And the High Soul climbs the High  
Way,  
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,  
And in between, on the misty flats,  
The rest drift to and fro.  
But to every man there openeth  
A High Way, and a Low.  
And every man decideth  
The way his soul shall go.

## The Text Explained

### Jehoahaz and Jehoash

(2 Kings 13: 1, 2, 10, 11)

*In the three and twentieth year of Joash the son of Ahaziah, king of Judah, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned seventeen years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.*

Jehoahaz was the first of Jehu's four descendants who reigned as kings of Israel, according to Jehovah's promise in 2 Kings 10: 30, as we have already seen. And in keeping with all the kings of the northern kingdom before him, he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah by walking in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. The sacred historian tells us that because of these

sins, Jehovah was angry with Israel and delivered them into the hands of the kings of Syria, "continually," or, according to the marginal reading, *all the days*. Something of the plight of Israel during this period may be seen from the fact that the Syrians allowed Jehoahaz and his people to have only fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria destroyed them, and made them like the dust in the threshing." (Verse 7.)

But when the king of Israel besought Jehovah, the Lord heard him; for he saw the oppression of Israel, how the king of Syria oppressed them. And then the historian adds this parenthetical note: "And Jehovah gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians; and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents as be-

foretime. Nevertheless they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, wherewith he made Israel to sin, but walked therein: and there remained the Asherah also in Samaria." Were it not for the fact that we see this attitude manifested every day, it would be difficult to understand why the people of Israel continued in their sins, when they saw that they were the cause of all of their suffering. But that has always been the story of the human race. Jehovah has demonstrated over and over again that he is both willing and able to bless his people, and to protect them from the evil one; but still they reject him and the goodness which he offers them. There is perhaps no greater picture of this human trait and God's attitude toward it in all the Old Testament, than in Nehemiah's confession of the national sin of Israel. (See Neh. 9: 26-31.)

But the same picture, with even greater pathos, is seen in the New Testament. In his lament over Jerusalem, Jesus gave voice to the same principle—rejected love. It is not God's will that the great evils which fall upon the world should happen at all. Such things always come as a climax to a long series of disobediences to God's laws. If Adam and Eve had been content to listen to and obey God, paradise never would have been lost; but even after men were compelled to live in a sinful world, Jehovah still manifested his willingness to bless them, if they would only listen to him. God's feelings toward sinful Israel were voiced by Hosea:

"When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. The more the prophets called them, the more they went from them: they sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. Yet I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them on my arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that lift up the yoke on their jaws: and I laid food before them. . . . How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I cast thee off, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboiim? my heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together." (Hos. 11: 1-8.)

Notwithstanding the fact that Jesus has been rejected, not only by Jerusalem, but in many instances by his own people, he is still the same loving Saviour, and continues to plead with the disobedient to reciprocate his love. And, too, his providential goodness will not allow them to relax in peace. "As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3: 19, 20.)

*In the thirty and seventh year of Joash king of Judah began Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned sixteen years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah; he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin; but he walked therein.*

It appears that Jehoash was as great a devotee to Jeroboam's form of calf-worship, as his father had been, but it seems that he and the people fared much better with respect to the Syrians than they did in the previous administration. The new king also appeared to be in much greater favor with Elisha the prophet than some of his predecessors. (Cf. 2 Kings 3: 13, 14.) It was during the the prophet's fatal illness that Joash (a contraction of Jehoash) called on him, "and wept over him, and said. My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" These were the words which Elisha had spoken when Elijah was taken from him; and it is probable that Joash was in effect saying, "What shall we do now, seeing that thou art dying; because thou art our only defence."

Elisha then told Joash to take "bow and arrows," and he took them; and he then told him to lay his hand upon the bow, which he did. The prophet then laid is hand upon the king's hand, and said "Open the window eastward; and he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot; and he shot. And he said, Jehovah's arrow of victory over Syria; for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them." The prophet next told the king to take arrows and smite the



ground, which he did only three times. "And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times: then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it; whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." (See verses 14-19.) The whole idea seems to have been that it was essential that human effort must always co-operate in conjunction with divine counsel. In other words, if one does not intend to obey the Lord, there is no profit in acknowledging him and his word. This lesson cannot be too greatly emphasized. (Cf. 2 Kings 6: 8-13, and especially verse 10.)

#### Jeroboam II

(2 Kings 14: 23, 24)

*In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah Jeroboam the son Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin.*

The Jeroboam of this lesson was the thirteenth monarch of the northern kingdom, and he is usually referred to as Jeroboam II in order to distinguish him from the first king of Israel who bore the same name. Both of the Jeroboams were exceptionally able rulers, so far as accomplishments were concerned; but it appears that conditions were very favorable for the latter one to move forward toward great military achievements and prosperity. Jeroboam II's reign was by far the longest of any king of Israel, and no other ruler of that kingdom was able to show the results which he showed. The great Assyrian empire was at the height of its power, and the constant attacks which it made on Syria weakened the latter to the point that Jeroboam's victories were made easier by comparison.

Inasmuch as the time and conditions when Jeroboam II came to the throne were auspicious, he was able to regain practically all the territory which had previously belonged to the united kingdom, with the exception of Judah. (Read verses 25-28.) These new conquests resulted in added revenues in tribute and trade,

so that his reign was characterized by almost unparalleled prosperity and military glory. But, as is so often the case, material blessings turned the minds and hearts of the people away from God. It was not long therefore before moral corruption and spiritual decay set in, with the result that the people became guilty of almost every sin imaginable—drunkenness, immorality, social injustice, disregard for the poor, defrauding the helpless, and oppression in general, as may be seen by reading the books of Amos and Hosea.

Both Amos and Hosea prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II, and it is thought by many Bible students that, with the exception of Jonah, Amos was the earliest of the so-called "writing prophets" whose works have come down to us. It is fair to assume from the mention made of Jonah in 2 Kings 14: 25 that he was prophesying before the times of Amos and Hosea. Adam Clarke notes that Jonah "was the first of the prophets, after Samuel, whose writings are preserved." There is, however, no record of the prophecy referred to in Second Kings, other than what is said there. All that which is contained in the Book of Jonah relates to Nineveh.

#### Hoshea

(2 Kings 17: 1)

*In the twelfth year of Ahaz, king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel, and reigned nine years.* Hoshea was the nineteenth and last king of the northern kingdom, that is, of Israel. The manner in which he came to the throne is expressed in these words: "In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maacah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria. And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah." (2 Kings 15: 29, 30.)

Although Hoshea was a wicked ruler, it appears that he was the best king which Israel had, from Jeroboam I and onward. "And he did

that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, yet not as the kings of Israel that were before him." (2 Kings 17: 2.) Sometime after he began his reign, Shalmaneser king of Assyria made Hoshea a vassal of his empire, and required him to pay tribute. Sometime later Hoshea rebelled against the Assyrians, and appealed to the Egyptians for help. This resulted in Hoshea's imprisonment by the king of Assyria, and a three year siege against Samaria. "In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away unto Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of

the Medes." (See 2 Kings 17: 3-6.) The record further states that this was done, "because they obeyed not the voice of Jehovah their God, but transgressed his covenant, even all that Moses the servant of Jehovah commanded, and would not hear it, nor do it." (See 2 Kings 18: 9-12.) Some Bible students have endeavored to show that Hoshea tried to reform Israel, but the Bible gives no evidence of it. Josephus, on the other hand, says that he "was a wicked man, and a despiser of the Divine worship." At any rate, the kingdom fell in the ninth year of the reign of Hoshea, never to rise again.

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

How long did the kingdom of Israel last?

How many dynasties and kings were there?

Which dynasty was the longest and why?

What was the general attitude of Jehu toward Jehovah and his law?

#### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of the golden text spoken?

What lesson should we learn from these facts?

What is and always has been God's aim in his dealings with his people?

Why is moral character so important to the individual? Give reasons for your answer.

What is the primary element of one's character?

Illustrate how the principle works.

What ways are open to every man?

#### Jehoahaz and Jehoash

Who was Jehu's immediate successor?

What was the general character of his reign?

What humiliating experience did he and his people suffer at the hands of the kings of Syria?

What was the Lord's attitude toward them?

What was Israel's response to his mercy and kindness?

How do you account for such an attitude on the part of people?

How did Jehovah express himself regarding Israel?

What is still God's attitude toward his people, even now? Give reasons for your answer.

What change was seen in the reign of Jehoash?

Under what circumstance did he visit Elisha?

What lesson did the prophet teach him, and how?

What lesson should we learn from this?

#### Jeroboam II

Give some of the facts regarding the reign of this king.

How did he compare with Jeroboam I?

What were some of Jeroboam II's accomplishments?

What result did this have on the people?

What prophets prophesied during his reign?

What reference was made to Jonah at the time of this lesson?

#### Hoshea

Under what circumstances did Hoshea come to the throne?

How did he compare with the other kings of Israel?

Give the highlights of his reign.

Under what circumstances did the kingdom of Israel fall?

Discuss the character of Hoshea and the people at this time.

## Lesson XI—December 16, 1962

### CAPTIVITY OF ISRAEL

#### Lesson Text

2 Kings 17: 3-6; 18: 9-12

3 Against him came up Shal-ma-ne'-ser king of As-syr'-i-a; and Hó-she'-a became his servant, and brought him tribute.

4 And the king of As-syr'-i-a found conspiracy in Hó-she'-a; for he had sent messengers to So king of E'-gypt, and offered no tribute to

the king of As-syr'-i-a, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of As-syr'-i-a shut him up, and bound him in prison.

5 Then the king of As-syr'-i-a came up throughout all the land, and went up to Sa-ma'-ri-a and besieged it three years.

6 In the ninth year of Ho-she'-a the king of As-syr'-i-a took Sa-ma'-ri-a, and carried Is'-ra-el away unto As-syr'-i-a, and placed them in Ha'-lah, and on the Ha'-bor, the river of Go'-zan, and in the cities of the Medes.

9 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hez-e-ki'-ah, which was the seventh year of Ho-she'-a son of E'-lah king of Is'-ra-el, that Shal-

ma-ne'-ser king of As-syr'-i-a came up against Sa-ma'-ri-a, and besieged it.

10 And at the end of three years they took it: in the sixth year of Hez-e-ki'-ah, which was the ninth year of Ho-she'-a king of Is'-ra-el, Sa-ma'-ri-a was taken.

11 And the king of As-syr'-i-a carried Is'-ra-el away unto As-syr'-i-a, and put them in Ha'-lah, and on the Ha'-bor, the river of Go'-zan, and in the cities of the Medes,

12 Because they obeyed not the voice of Je-ho'-vah their God, but transgressed his covenant, even all that Mo'-ses the servant of Je-ho'-vah commanded, and would not hear it, nor do it.

Golden Text.—*"For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, . . . but the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil"* (1 Pet. 3: 12.)

Devotional Reading.—Isa. 19: 23-25.

### Daily Bible Readings

December 10. M.....	Israel's Reproach (Prov. 14: 21-35)
December 11. T.....	Judah Condemned (Isa. 3: 1-15)
December 12. W.....	Remnant Saved (Isa. 4: 2-6)
December 13. T.....	Gathering of Nations (Isa. 2: 1-14)
December 14. F.....	Deliverance through Christ (Isa. 9: 1-7)
December 15. S.....	God, Our Refuge (Psalm 46: 1-11)
December 16. S.....	Isaiah Preaches Repentance (Isa. 1: 10-20)

Time.—725-721 B.C.

Places.—Samaria, and the several places of the captivity.

Persons.—Hoshea, Shalmaneser, and their respective peoples.

### Introduction

It appears not only necessary, but even advantageous, to make some repetitions as we come to the end of the kingdom of Israel. The original, that is, the united kingdom, continued for about one hundred and twenty years, from 1095 to 975 B.C., and then came the division. The northern kingdom, known as the kingdom of Israel, was made up of ten tribes; while the southern kingdom—the kingdom of Judah—had only two tribes. These two rival kingdoms continued together for a little more than two hundred fifty years (about two hundred fifty-four), before the northern kingdom was taken into captivity. The southern kingdom lasted for another one hundred thirty-four years when it came to an end—also taken into captivity.

These two rival kingdoms each had nineteen kings, but with this difference: all of the kings of Judah

were of the family of David, and the succession was generally from father to son. After the death of Ahaziah, who was slain by Jehu, along with Jehoram king of Israel, his mother Athaliah the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel murdered all the seed royal, except Joash who was stolen away, and usurped the throne herself for some six or seven years, when she herself was slain. Her reign is not usually counted when the kings of Judah are listed. But the situation with Israel was far different: there were nine different dynasties or houses to occupy the throne, if we count the reigns of Zimri who committed suicide after one week—the Bible says he "reigned seven days in Tirzah"—, and Shallum who was slain after occupying the throne for one month. Thus, with the same number of kings, Judah was able to extend the reign of her kings one

hundred thirty-four years longer than did Israel. Or, to state the matter in another way, the first twelve kings of Judah continued several years longer than all of the nineteen kings of Israel.

But looking at another phase in the comparison and contrast of the two kingdoms, it is easy to see that the moral superiority of Judah is equally striking, not only in the preservation of the true worship of Jehovah in Jerusalem, while Israel sank into and continued in gross idolatry, but also, although of less importance, in the personal character of their kings. It is true that the house of David was deeply corrupted,

especially in its relation with the wicked house of Ahab; but there were several good kings, such as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah. But when we turn to the other kingdom, there is not a single king listed who was free from the blot of foul wickedness. The best one was apparently the last one, but the Bible says that he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, yet not as the kings of Israel that were before him. Both kingdoms ended in captivity, though not at the same time, but Judah was allowed to return to the homeland, while Israel was lost in perpetual oblivion.

### The Golden Text

*"For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, . . . but the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil."*

This is a quotation from Psalm 34, which should be carefully read. The part of the psalm from which the quotation was made by Peter reads as follows.

What man is he that desireth life,

And loveth many days, that he  
may see good?

Keep thy tongue from evil,

And thy lips from speaking guile.

Depart from evil, and do good;

Seek peace, and pursue it.

The eyes of Jehovah are toward  
the righteous,

And his ears are open unto their  
cry.

The face of Jehovah is against  
them that do evil,

To cut off the remembrance of  
them from the earth.

In saying that the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, the evident meaning is that he looks with favor upon them. Those who conduct themselves according to the rules set forth in verses 8-11 will almost certainly invite and encourage their evil-minded enemies to take advantage of them and say and do things, because they see that no resentment or opposition is offered; but the righteous have the assurance that God will avenge them in due time. They have the right to expect his providential care to be exercised over them, and he has plainly said that his ears are opened unto their supplication. There is no greater

blessing that can come to anyone than to know that Jehovah looks with favor upon him. If that is true, then all other needed blessings will come in their natural and providential order.

But how different it is when the face of Jehovah is against them that do evil! that is, when his countenance or expression indicates that he is opposed to those in question. There can be little doubt about the attitude which many people have regarding the "face" of God, that is, his countenance or expression. We think about his name, nature, purpose, and method; but how little do we consider his countenance, flashing with intelligence, clouding with sorrow, beaming with love, and frowning with disapproval, as it looks upon us through nature (cf. Rom. 1: 20) and providence, to say nothing of his revealed word. The face of God is not veiled to those who believe in him; and it is still against them that do evil. This was true in the case of Israel, and it is still true of people today. Let a single example of how the principle works suffice:

The face of the Lord is seen in the gathering glooms of death. A man may have been hardened in sin as he walked through life, crying, Where is the Lord? in impious defiance or presumptuous scorn; but let death come upon him, and the face of God is clearly seen. The whole scroll of life unrolls before him; and every thought, passion, incident, and experience, stands out with startling vividness. There is no mist and con-

fusion; and he fully realizes that he is before God, and that forever. He no longer has any desire to delude himself. (Cf. Luke 16: 19-31.) The face of God flashes out over his entire life as the soul passes to meet the realities of its destiny. In the words of another, the "vain show" vanishes, and the illusion is forever ended. Death places a man forever, and consciously, before the face of

God. Edward Young, in *Night Thoughts*, expressed the matter in these words:

A death-bed's a detector of the heart:  
Truth is deposited with man's last hour,  
An honest hour and faithful to her trust;  
Men may live like fools, but fools they cannot die.

## The Text Explained

### The Mighty Assyrian Scourge

(2 Kings 17: 3, 4)

*Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and brought him tribute. And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison.*

Those who are familiar with the Scriptures are aware of the fact that Jehovah frequently used wicked nations to punish his sinful people. Isaiah, prophesying *a gainst* the wicked rulers of Judah, a few years after the downfall of Israel, spoke of the Assyrian king as the instrument of Jehovah's wrath in these words: "Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few. For he saith. Are not my princes all of them kings? Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and Samaria; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?" (Isa. 10: 5-11.)

This was an example of Jehovah's using the wrath of man to praise him. The Assyrians had no intention of pleasing God, but he used them, nevertheless, to accomplish his purpose. This is an example of the

providential working of Jehovah—the accomplishment of his will through the use of natural means. Habakkuk, nearly thirty years after the fall of Israel, was unable to see the consistency in using a wicked nation to punish one which was less wicked; and he reverently asked Jehovah to explain the matter to him. The Lord did explain the matter thusly, that the sending of the wicked nation (this time the Chaldeans against Judah) was for a purpose, and that they would themselves be overthrown; for their power was only temporary. (Read the first two chapters of Habakkuk.)

The first mention of an Assyrian king in the Bible is in 2 Kings 15: 19. "There came against the land Pul the king of Assyria; and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand. And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land." (2 Kings 15: 19, 20.) "Pul" is the same as Tiglath-pileser. (See 1 Chron. 5: 25, 26; 2 Kings 15: 29.) When Pekah and Rezin, kings of Israel and Syria, respectively, went up to fight against Jerusalem, Ahaz, who was then king of Judah, panicked and called on Tiglath-pileser for help, notwithstanding the fact that Isaiah assured him of divine aid. "Then said Jehovah unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, . . . and say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither let thy heart be faint, because of these two tails of smoking firebrands. . . . thus saith the Lord Jehovah, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head

of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken to pieces, so that it shall not be a people. . . . Then saith Jehovah unto me, . . . the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried away before the king of Assyria." (See Isa. 7: 1-8; 8: 4.)

Tiglath-pileser was succeeded on the throne of Assyria by Shalmaneser, and the latter came up against the king of Israel, "and Hoshea became his servant, and brought him tribute." Something happened which led Hoshea to think that he could throw off the heavy yoke which the Assyrians had placed upon him, and he, accordingly, tried to form an alliance with So the king of Egypt. This attempt failed, however, and the king of Assyria shut Hoshea up, and bound him in prison. There is no further word as to what became of the king of Israel. He, as has already been pointed out, was the last king of the northern realm.

### **The Siege of Samaria and the Captivity Accomplished**

(2 Kings 17: 5, 6; 18: 9-11)

*Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away unto Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.*

*And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which teas the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it. And at the end of three years they took it: in the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. And the king of Assyria carried Israel away unto Assyria, and put them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.*

It is thought by many students of the Bible and of secular history that Sargon (cf. Isa. 20: 1) came to the throne of Assyria in 722 B.C., and that it was he who actually took Israel into captivity. Harper's Bible Dictionary says that the palace of Sargon, which was unearthed at Dur-

Sharrukin by the Oriental Institute, reveals the names of thousands of the leading citizens of Israel which were inscribed there; and that these, along with the treasures which were found there, offer a vivid commentary on 2 Kings 17.

It appears from 2 Kings 15: 29 that this was at least the second deportation of Israel from their homeland; and it is possible, in the light of 2 Kings 23: 15-20, that the final "carrying away" which broke Israel as a people (Isa. 7: 8) did not come, according to Isaiah's prediction of sixty-five years, until Esar-haddon king of Assyria completed the task, at the time he removed some from Judah. (See Ezra 4: 2; 2 Kings 17: 24; 2 Chron. 33: 10, 11. Smith's History of the Bible says, "Esar-haddon is the only Assyrian monarch whom we find to have actually reigned at Babylon, where he built himself a palace, bricks from which have been recently recovered bearing his name. This fact accounts for Manasseh being taken to Babylon, and not to Nineveh. To that city he carried Manasseh captive on a charge of rebellion; and it would seem that Jerusalem was taken at the same time. The date of this event is placed by a Jewish tradition at the twenty-second year of Manasseh (677 B.C.), which agrees very well with the account of the new colonization of the country of Samaria by settlers whom Esar-haddon (or Asnapper) sent from Babylon and other places." This, of course, was not the final destruction of Jerusalem; for following his repentance in Babylon, Manasseh was returned to his kingdom in Jerusalem. (2 Chron. 33: 12, 13.)

The practice of moving a captive people from their homeland was in keeping with the heartless cruelty of the Assyrians. Other conquerors might deal severely with their victims, but, as J. H. Morrison observes, to fall into the clutches of the Assyrian king was to endure all that devilish lust and cruelty could devise. He tore the people from their homes and countries, and mixed them together indiscriminately; so that all patriotism might be quenched. When the land of Samaria had been depopulated, people from other regions were brought in to occupy that territory. (2 Kings 17: 24-41.) It is

supposed that the poorest of the Israelites were left in the land, as was done in the case of Judah (see 2 Kings 24: 14; 25: 12; Jer. 40: 7; 52: 16), and that they intermarried with those who were brought in, with the result that the people who were later known as the *Samaritans* came into being. Josephus denies this, and says that the people who were brought into the country were "then called *Samaritans*, by taking the name of the country to which they were removed." (See page 313; cf. pages 298, 345.)

### The Reason for the Captivity Stated

(2 Kings 18: 12)

*Because they obeyed not the voice of Jehovah their God, but transgressed his covenant, even all that Moses the servant of Jehovah commanded, and would not hear it, nor do it.* No better commentary on this section of our lesson can be found than that which is given by the inspired historian in 2 Kings 17: 7-18, which should be carefully read. They had sowed the wind, and had reaped the whirlwind (Hos. 8: 7), and their influence was extended beyond their border. "Also Judah kept not the commandments of Jehovah their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. And Jehovah rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight. For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drove Is-

rael from following Jehovah, and made them sin a great sin. And the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; until Jehovah removed Israel out of his sight, as he spake by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day." (2 Kings 17: 19-23.)

Some of prophets who warned Israel were Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea, but their preaching had little effect upon the people; for they were joined to their idols. (Hos. 4: 17.) This should be a powerful lesson to us; for Israel was not the only nation which fell because of its sins. (Cf. Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Rome, and others. Gibbon, in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, lists the following five reasons for the fall of that great nation: (1) "An alarming increase in divorce and the breaking up of the Roman home." (2) "Higher and higher taxes, until the load became unbearable, while the officials of the empire continued to spend public funds with reckless indifference." (3) "A mad desire for excitement which led to all sorts of moral extravagances, which finally engulfed the empire and destroyed it." (4) "Increased political pressure for armaments, but with blind disregard for destructive elements building up inside the empire." (5) "A decline in religion and a withholding of support from character-building institutions." How do these facts compare with conditions here today?

### Questions for Discussion

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

#### Introduction

Why is it important to reconsider some of the incidents we have already covered in this quarter?  
How did there come to be two rival kingdoms of the people of Israel?  
How many rulers did each of the kingdoms have?  
How long did each of the kingdoms last?  
How did they compare with reference to moral character?  
How do you account for this difference?

#### The Golden Text

Discuss the setting of the golden text.  
What is meant by saying the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous?  
Why is this so?  
In what sense is the face of the Lord upon them that do evil?

Why is this such a neglected subject?

Give a practical illustration of the meaning of the face of the Lord upon the wicked.

#### The Mighty Assyrian Scourge

Discuss the question of the Lord's use of wicked nations to punish his people.  
What was the difference between the purpose of Jehovah and the aim of the wicked nation?  
How did this practice fit into the over-all teaching of providential direction?  
Under what circumstance did the first Assyrian king go into the kingdom of Israel?  
Who was the next Assyrian king to come in contact with the Israelites, and what did he do?

#### The Siege of Samaria and the Captivity Accomplished

How long did the siege of Samaria last?  
Who actually took Israel into captivity?

How many deportations of the Israelites do we read about in the record? Identify them.  
What was the purpose which Assyria had in moving captive people from their homeland?  
What is thought to have been the origin of the Samaritans?  
The Reason for the Captivity Stated  
What was the inspired reason for the captivity?  
Discuss the historical statement of this as found in 2 Kings 17: 7-18.

To what other people did the evil influence of Israel extend?  
Who were the principal prophets who warned Israel?  
What other great nations fell because of their sins?  
What apparently were the principal causes of the fall of Rome?  
How does that situation compare with conditions in our country today?  
What lesson should we learn from all of this?  
What should be our attitude toward faithful gospel preaching?

Lesson XII—December 23, 1962

PROPHECIES REGARDING ISRAEL

Lesson Text

Amos 6: 1-6; Hos. 6: 1-6

1 Woe to them that are at ease in Zi'-on, and to them that are secure in the mountain of Sa-ma'-ri-a, the notable men of the chief of the nations, to whom the house of Is'-ra-el come!  
2 Pass ye unto Cal'-neh, and see; and from thence go ye to Ha'-math the great; then go down to Gath of the Phi-lis'-tines: are they better than these kingdoms? or is their border greater than your border?  
3 —Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;  
4 That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;  
5 That sing idle songs to the sound of the viol; that invent for themselves instruments of music, like David;  
6 That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief oils; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

1 Come, and let us return unto Je-ho'-vah; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.  
2 After two days will he revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him.  
3 And let us know, let us follow on to know Je-ho'-vah: his going forth is sure as the morning; and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth.  
4 O E'-phra-im, what shall I do unto thee? O Ju'-dah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the dew that goeth early away.  
5 Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth.  
6 For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.

Golden Text.—“He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully” (Jer. 23: 28).  
Devotional Reading.—Isa. 55: 6-13.

Daily Bible Readings

December 17.	M. ....	Amos Pleads for Justice (Amos 5: 1-15)
December 18.	T. ....	Assyrian Exile (2 Kings 17: 6-12)
December 19.	W. ....	Israel's Overthrow Predicted (Amos 4: 6-13)
December 20.	T. ....	Rebellious Israel (2 Kings 7: 13-18)
December 21.	F. ....	Promise to Spiritual Israel (Isa. 2: 1-4)
December 22.	S. ....	David's Kingdom Re-established (Acts 2: 1-47)
December 23.	S. ....	King to Come Out of Judah (Micah 2: 1-4)

Time.—Amos, 760 B.C.; Hosea, 750 B.C.  
Places.—Amos, Bethel; Hosea, Samaria.  
Persons.—Amos, Hosea, the rulers, and people of Israel.



## Introduction

When Amos appeared on the scene, a new era in the history of the prophets began; for he was the first of the so-called "writing prophets." Or, to state the same thing in other words, Amos was the first prophet to leave a written record of his service in the prophetic field. Something of the life of Amos, prior to his preaching in Israel, may be learned from Amos 1: 1 and 7: 14. The entire book which bears his name naturally falls into three divisions, namely, (1) Jehovah's Indictment of Several Nations, chapters 1, 2; (2) The Prediction of Israel's Doom, chapters 3-6; (3) A Series of Visions of Judgments and a Historical Appendix, chapters 7-9. Amos has been called the uncompromising prophet of righteousness, and something of his courage as a messenger of Jehovah may be learned from Amos 7: 10-17.

Although Amos and Hosea are thought of as contemporary prophets, the beginnings of their work were probably some ten years apart; and one is probably not very far wrong when he says that the mantle of Amos fell on Hosea. But it would be difficult to imagine a greater contrast than that which existed between the two men. Amos was not a citizen of the northern kingdom, while Hosea apparently was; Amos left his country to deliver his message to a sinful people, while Hosea seemingly spent a lifetime trying to call his people back to God; Amos was the inflexible preacher of righteousness, which he clearly defined, while Hosea was the tender-hearted prophet of outraged love. While

Amos prophesied before Hosea, the latter's book is the first in the list of the twelve to which both of their books belong; Amos is number three. The Book of Hosea is longer than that of Amos, and it has two principal divisions, namely, (1) The Tragic Domestic Life of Hosea and Its Allegorical Significance, chapters 1-3; (2) A Series of Addresses in Which the Prophet Denounced the Sins of Israel, Pled with Them to Repent; Appealed to Their Earlier History; and Otherwise Tried to Bring Them Back to God.

When Amos uttered his prophecy against Israel the nation was at the height of its national prosperity. Military victories and abundant wealth were regarded as convincing proof that they were enjoying a unique degree of Jehovah's approval. Lavish gifts and elaborate ritual at the national sanctuary satisfied the national conscience, and furnished the insecure basis for the prevailing optimism which they enjoyed. This false sense of security so blinded the eyes of the leaders that they failed to observe the significance of the approach of the invincible Assyrian armies. And when Hosea began his work the social evils which Amos denounced had increased, rather than diminished. Both public and private honor were lost, and immorality was openly practiced and was unrebuked. The nation had lost faith in both God and itself, and had begun to seek support in foreign alliances. But notwithstanding all this, God was not willing to give his people up without further efforts to save them.

## The Golden Text

*"He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully"* These words are taken from a paragraph in which Jehovah, through Jeremiah, denounced the false prophets of Judah and Samaria. These false prophets were pretending to receive revelations by means of dreams, but Jehovah told them that they could not hide such falsehoods from him. "I have heard what the prophets have said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies, even the prophets of the de-

ceit of their own heart? that think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers forgot my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully." He then went on to show something of the power of his word, and of his complete opposition to any prophet who sought to change the message which he commanded. (See Jer. 23: 23-32.)

The same principles which are set forth in the passage just referred to

are just as applicable now, as they were in the days of Jeremiah. "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ." (Gal. 1: 6-10; cf. 2 Tim. 2: 2; 4: 1-5.)

George Adam Smith, in *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, has the right idea of our responsibility with reference to God's message when he says that to see the truth and tell it, to be

accurate and brave about the moral facts of our day—to this extent the Vision and the Voice are possible for every one of us. We will not be able to behold the visions which came to Isaiah and Ezekiel, yet we must remember that to see facts as they are, and to tell the truth about them—this also is to be a faithful messenger of the Lord. We may inhabit a sphere which does not prompt the imagination, but which may be as barren of the historical and traditional as the wilderness of Tekoa: but still there are facts to be observed. Every common day leads forth her duties as shining as the night leads forth her stars. The deeds and the fortunes of men are everywhere before us, and the word of God is applicable to them; and if we will only be loyal to that message, we also shall see God (by faith), and shall help to lead men in the way which he wants them to go. (Cf. Mark 16: 15; Matt. 28: 19, 20.)

## The Text Explained

### Israel's False Sense of Security

(Amos 6: 1-6)

*Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and to them that are secure in the mountain of Samaria, the "notable men of the chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come! If this does not actually refer to Judah (Zion), along with Israel (Samaria), then the reference is probably to the fact that the people of the northern kingdom considered themselves safe, in spite of their sins, for Zion's sake. We have already noted in the Introduction that several nations were indicted, along with Judah and Israel; and while chapter 3 begins with these words, "Hear this word that Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt," it is quite evident that the remainder of the section (chapters 3-6) was addressed primarily, if not exclusively, to the northern kingdom.*

The "notable men of the chief of the nations" were probably the leaders of Israel, "so eminent in influence that your names are celebrated among the chief nations," to whom the people came for judgment and protection, only to be trampled

beneath your feet. The prophet had just said to them, "They hate him that reproveth in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly. Forasmuch therefore as ye trample upon the poor, and take exactions from him of wheat: . . . For I know how manifold are your transgressions, and how mighty are your sins—ye that afflict the just, that take a bribe, and that turn aside the needy in the gate from their right." (See Amos 5: 10-12.) These leaders had grown rich in their oppression of the poor, and they felt that their religious connection with the God of Zion and the government of Samaria would save them.

*Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines: are they better than these kingdoms? or is their border greater than your border?* Calneh was a city located on the banks of the Tigris river, Hamath was a city on the Orontes river in Syria, while Gath was one of the five principal cities of the Philistines. They were all powerful cities, but they had all been punished for their sins; and if their gods could not save them—their own cities, how could Israel who

were trusting in those gods hope to fare any better? If one will consult the map, he will see that the three cities named in the passage now before us were to the east, north, and west of Israel; and it is as if the prophet had said, Look in all of those directions and see what has happened to the strongholds; and now with your sins greater than theirs, because of your knowledge of the true God, what reason do you have for thinking that you will receive more favorable treatment?

*Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that sing idle songs to the sound of the viol; that invent for themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief oils: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.*

If one will read the last two paragraphs of chapter 5, and then continue on, without a break, with the first paragraph of chapter 6, he will be going from the worship of the people to the banquets of the rich. It was utterly impossible for unrighteous people to worship God in righteousness; for with Amos righteousness meant both right relation to God in whole-souled loyalty and devotion, and right relation to their fellow men in social behavior. But these sinful people had allowed their national worship to engender in them a false political confidence; and therein lay its evil—it had not brought them close to God and to a dependence upon him. Instead, they had done two things, namely, (1) they had put far away the evil day, and (2) they had caused the seat of violence to come near. When people feel that there is no immediate prospects of their being punished or dying, those with a selfish disposition are not especially concerned about how they live, either with reference to God or their fellow men. Such people live well and imagine that they are clever and refined; they have a robust and exuberant patriotism, talk magnificently of the national welfare and destiny; but when it comes to the real woes and trou-

bles of the people—poverty, overwork, and dissoluteness, which affect a nation's welfare more than anything else, they have no pity and no care.

In the words of Bewer, it is astonishing how modern and timeless the Book of Amos is. When we read it today we perceive anew that the prophet of righteousness has a message for every age (cf. Rom. 15: 4). Notwithstanding the fact that civilizations change, certain evils persist as long as human selfishness prevails: luxury of the rich, pride and arrogance, indifference to the needs of others; oppression and exploitation of the poor; deceit in business; corruption in the courts; deterioration in religion. For a true diagnosis of the ills of the social order, the clear vision of Amos is of perennial value; and so is his remedy of righteousness, revealed in the character of God, along with his conviction that in spite of all appearances to the contrary, righteousness will prevail and unrighteousness, wherever it is found, will be punished.

### The Response to Jehovah's Rebuke

(Hos. 6: 1-3)

*Come, and let us return unto Jehovah; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him. And let us know, let us follow on to know Jehovah: his going forth is sure as the morning; and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth.*

This section of our lesson should be read in the light of the preceding two chapters, and especially the last two verses of chapter five. Chapters 4 and 5 are devoted to the condemnation of Israel, and also Judah, for their gross sins. Chapter 4 begins with these words, "Hear the word of Jehovah, ye children of Israel; for Jehovah hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor goodness nor knowledge of God in the land. There is nought but swearing and breaking faith, and killing and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out, and blood toucheth blood." And then in verse 6, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou

hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God. I also will forget thy children." Chapters 4 and 5 are filled with denunciations of similar import.

Thus, the pages of Hosea cast a lurid light upon the condition of Israel during the years immediately following the death of Jeroboam II. Following the lead of Amos, as we have already seen, Hosea continued to prophesy during the troublous times which began with the overthrow of the house of Jehu. The period which followed was characterized by corruption, conspiracies, and assassinations. Of the five kings who reigned between Jeroboam II and Hoshea, who was the last king of the nation, only one was permitted to die a natural death; and even the fate of Hoshea is shrouded in complete darkness. As has already been pointed out, the social evils which Amos denounced had grown worse instead of better. They had all but completely ceased to show any honor whatsoever to Jehovah: he was, in fact, little more than a heathen deity in their thinking.

Israel therefore, at the time of our lesson, presented the sad example of a nation in the state of moral, political, and religious collapse. But that was not all: the irresistible and insatiable foe, the mighty host of the Assyrians, was advancing to crush it. And so, after the denunciations of chapters 4 and 5, this picture of Jehovah was placed before the people: "For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will carry off, and there shall be none to deliver. I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me earnestly." (Hos. 5: 14, 15.)

It was in the light of Jehovah's comparing himself to a lion which went forth to attack, and then returned to his covert with his prey, that the response of this section of our lesson was made. This response, whether in the form of an exhortation by Hosea, or a resolution on the part of the people who realized their sin, sets forth the true method of restoration to God's favor. His pur-

pose in punishing sin is not the destruction of the sinner, but rather of his sin; he is always willing to heal the brokenhearted. (Cf. Isa. 66: 2; Hos. 14: 1-9.) The "two or three days" probably refer to the short period of Israel's revival, following their repentance. Some Bible students think that they also have a reference to the resurrection of Christ. The "knowing of Jehovah" may be regarded as the fruit of repentance and the joy of salvation. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.) The "early" rain fell in the autumn, to prepare the ground for the seed; while the "latter" rain fell in the spring, to fortify the crops against the heat of the early summer and to make possible the harvest.

### Disappointed Love

(Hos. 6: 4-6)

*O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the dew that goeth early away. Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth. For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice: and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.*

If verses 1-3 describe the response of the people, then it was only for the moment. They never fully realized the serious nature of their sin or the true nature of Jehovah whom they had provoked. Like so many people today, they regarded Jehovah as a deity who is easy to satisfy because he has no moral or ethical standard of righteousness. It is distressing to see people who have been redeemed by the Lord to manifest such ignorance regarding the deeper truths of revealed religion. And speaking after the manner of men, as Clarke observes, the *justice* and the *mercy* of Jehovah seem puzzled as to how to deal with them. When justice was about to destroy them because of their sin, it was kept from doing so by their repentance; and when mercy was about to pour its choicest blessings upon the penitents, it was prevented from doing so by their fickleness and relapse. These conditions caused the just and merciful Jehovah to exclaim, "O what shall I do unto you, Ephraim and Judah?"

These words are those of a noble lover who has been crushed by the ingratitude of those whom he loved, and they indicate the feeling of God as he considers his unfaithful people; and as he ponders the situation, from the human point of view, he does the only thing left for him to do, namely, hew them by the prophets, and slay them by his word. (Cf. Heb. 4: 12, 13.) And he again makes it plain to them that formal and outward worship can never take the place of inward goodness and righteous living. "Wherewith shall I come before Je-

hovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. 6: 6-8; see again Amos 5: 21-27.)

### Questions for Discussion

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

#### Introduction

What new thing regarding the prophets was introduced by Amos?  
Tell something of his life before his call to speak for Jehovah.  
Give a brief analysis of the book of his prophecies.  
What can you say of the courage which he displayed?  
When did Amos and Hosea prophesy?  
Compare and contrast their work, as well as their characters.  
Analyze the contents of the Book of Hosea.  
What was the condition of Israel when Amos began his prophecy?  
What kind of a situation did Hosea find when he began his work?

#### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?  
Why would any religious teacher want to deceive the people regarding God's will?  
How did Paul deal with this question in writing to the Galatians?  
Discuss the application of the golden text in our lives today.

#### Israel's False Sense of Security

To whom did Amos address the words of this section of our lesson? Give reasons for your answer.  
How did the leaders of Israel regard the people of their country?  
What object lesson did the prophet set before them?

What was the general attitude of the wealthy people to whom Amos spoke?  
In what sense had they put far away the evil day?  
How did they cause the seat of violence to come near?  
Discuss this section of our lesson in the light of our day.

#### The Response to Jehovah's Rebuke

Whose were the words of verses 1-3?  
Why were they spoken?  
How do the words of Hosea help us to understand the conditions following the death of Jeroboam II?  
Under what figure did Jehovah present himself to the people?  
Why is Jehovah always willing to forgive the sins of the penitent?  
Why is "knowing Jehovah" important in our lives?

#### Disappointed Love

In what way was Jehovah disappointed with his people?  
Why was their "reformation" so short lived?  
What was evidently the character of their thinking?  
In what way did Jehovah express his feeling toward them?  
What was the struggle between justice and mercy?  
What application does this truth have for us?  
Why does Jehovah desire goodness rather than sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than worship?  
Is this true today? Give reasons for your answer.

## Lesson XIII—December 30, 1962

### GOD'S LOVE FOR ISRAEL

#### Lesson Text

Hos. 11: 1-11

1 When Is'-ra-el was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of E'-gypt.

2 The more *the prophets* called them, the more they went from them:

they sacrificed unto the Ba'-al-im, and burned incense to graven images.

3 Yet I taught E'-phra-im to walk; I took them on my arms; but they knew not that I healed them.

4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that lift up the yoke on their jaws; and I laid food before them.

5 They shall not return into the land of E'-gypt; but the As-syr'-i-an shall be their king, because they refused to return *to me*.

6 And the sword shall fall upon their cities, and shall consume their bars, and devour *them*, because of their own counsels.

7 And my people are bent on backsliding from me: though they call them to *him that is* on high, none at all will exalt *him*.

8 How shall I give thee up, E'-phra-im? *how* shall I cast thee off, Is'-ra-el? how shall I make thee as

Ad'-mah? *how* shall I set thee as Zeboi'-im? my heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together.

9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy E'-phra-im: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee; and I will not come in wrath.

10 They shall walk after Je-ho'-vah, who will roar like a lion; for he will roar, and the children shall come trembling from the west.

11 They shall come trembling as a bird out of E'-gypt, and as a dove out of the land of As-syr'-i-a; and I will make them to dwell in their houses, saith Je-ho'-vah.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice*”

DEVOTIONAL READING.—AMOS 5: 10-17.

### Daily Bible Readings

December 24.	M.	. The Goodness of Jehovah (Hos. 6: 1-6)
December 25.	T.	.....Hosea's Warning (Hos. 4: 1-9)
December 26.	W.	.....Ingratitude of Israel (Hos. 11: 1-12)
December 27.	T.	.....God's Lovingkindness (Psalm 36: 5-11 >
December 28.	F.	.....Permanence of God's Love (1 John 2: 1-8)
December 29.	S.	.....Hosea's Prayer (Hos. 14: 1-9)
December 30.	S.	.....God's Love for Spiritual Israel (John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 8)

TIME.—750 to 725 B.C.

PLACE.—Samaria, or somewhere in the northern kingdom.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Hosea, and the people of Israel.

### Introduction

The historical facts which are found in the first three chapters of Hosea appear to be the basis for the teaching which that prophet proclaimed regarding Israel. At the command of Jehovah he married a woman who at least proved unfaithful to him; and it was through these domestic trials that he really learned the meaning of love, not only for his own wife, but also, and chiefly, God's love for his sinful people. Yates notes that the black domestic tragedy did something for Hosea which nothing else could have done: it crushed his heart, and in that way enabled him to understand something of deeper meaning of the matchless love of God. His own shattered romance made it possible to see and grasp the meaning of another romance—that which involved Jehovah and Israel.

After the birth of their three children, whose symbolic names were expressive of the message which he

was afterwards to deliver, the wife of Hosea deserted him and sank so low in whoredom as to be sold into slavery. But even then her husband did not abandon her; for at the command of Jehovah he redeemed her from bondage and took her back to her home. "So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and a homer of barley, and a half-homer of barley; and I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be any man's wife: so will I also be toward thee. For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without ephod or teraphim: afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king, and shall come with fear unto Jehovah and to his goodness in the latter days." (Hos. 3: 2-5.)

Hosea had to learn that which no prophet had learned before him, or at least in the manner in which he came to that realization, that the essence of the Divine nature was not merely justice, but love. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (1 John 4: 8.) A careful consideration of all the facts in the case seem to indicate that Gomer was not a harlot at the time Hosea married her; and if that is true, then her prime purity evidently symbolized Israel whom Jehovah found "like grapes in the wilderness" (Hos. 9: 10); her unnatural infidelity was a type of Israel's adultery with Baal

(Hos. 2: 8-13); and her gradual restoration to her place as the prophet's wife typified Israel's reception back into the loving favor of Jehovah. And it also appears that Hosea, in his mixed and harrowed feelings toward Gomer, was himself a type of Jehovah. His loathing abhorrence of sin, as someone has observed, his burning indignation at her infidelity, and, stronger than either, his tender compassion for her in her abject slavery and deep misery, are but a reflection of the feelings of Jehovah for his sinful people; and it was the work of Hosea to give expression to this newly-found truth.

### The Golden Text

*"For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice"* Jesus quoted this passage twice (Matt. 9: 13; 12: 7), and its evident purpose was to show the superiority of the inward life over outward form; for outward deeds mean nothing if the heart is not right. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." (Prov. 28: 9.) This is also the way that David felt about the matter, when he prayed to Jehovah for the forgiveness for his terrible sin in connection with Bathsheba:

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

(Psalm 51: 16, 17.)

There are classic examples of the application of this principle in both the Old and the New Testaments. "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." (Amos 5: 21-24.) There is no reason for doubting the correctness of the form of the worship of those people; but it was unacceptable to Jehovah because it was not offered by people who were righteous in

their conduct. This should be a powerful lesson to us today. The Lord's letter to the church in Ephesus (Rev. 2: 1-7) also shows that doctrinal purity and diligent activity on the part of his people is not enough; they must always be motivated by love which always leads to a righteous life. (Cf. 1 John 5: 3; 1 Cor. 13: 1-3.)

But there is another point in the application of this principle to acceptable living which should be considered, namely, ministrations of mercy, when performed as the Lord directs, are more pleasing to him than outward ceremonies. Or, to state the same thing in other words, a principle involving a higher law, if and when it conflicts with a lower one, suspends or limits the latter at the point of conflict. Thus, if a situation arises demanding mercy, such as might be true in cases of sickness and death, then, according to the principle of mercy rather than sacrifice, the requirements of the occasion should be met, even though that means that the actual performance of normal religious duties must, for the time being, be neglected. While this seems to be the plain teaching of Jesus on the subject now before us, it is unfortunate that many professed Christians take advantage of such occasions as the ones mentioned above, and use them as an excuse to absent themselves from the assembly of the saints, when there is no real need for doing so. It frequently happens that most or all of the family neglect the doing of those things which the Lord requires of his people, when one or two could do all that is necessary. (Cf. Ezek. 24: 18.)

## The Text Explained

### God's Great Goodness toward His People

(Hos. 11: 1-4)

*When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. The more the prophets called them, the more they went from them: they sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. Yet I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them on my arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that lift up the yoke on their jaws; and I laid food before them.*

The first part of this passage refers to the early history of Israel as a nation, and to the time when Jehovah led them out from Egyptian bondage by the hand of Moses. Matthew quotes this as a typical reference to the return of the child Jesus from Egypt, where Joseph and Mary had taken him from the wrath of Herod when he sought to kill him. (See Matt. 2: 15.) Jehovah was always willing and ready to do for his people that which they could not do for themselves; but they did not appreciate it. He also sent his prophets to teach them of his ways; but the more they taught them, the more they refused to accept their lessons. (Cf. 2 Kings 17: 13-15.) This sad situation seems to prevail today, as any observer can easily testify. Instead of following after the way of the Lord, they gave themselves over to idolatry.

Just before Paul reached the end of his life, he wrote these words to his beloved son "in the faith," whom he was about to leave in a wicked world: "I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables. But be thou sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil

thy ministry." (2 Tim. 4: 1-5.) This is enough to show that the same attitude on the part of the people prevails today, as it did in the days of Israel; but the faithful teacher must control himself, and do as the Lord has commanded him.

Idolatry is always wicked; but it is the thing, not the name, which is so. The essence of idolatry is to pay that adoration to a creature which is due only to the true God. He who professes to believe in the one and only God and Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, but who at the same time is more interested in the honors, profits, and friendship of the world, than he is in the pure religion of the New Testament, is as much an idolator in spirit as the people of Hosea's day were. (Cf. Col. 3: 5; 1 John 5: 21.)

The prophet next alludes to a mother's care for her children before they are old enough to understand—see verse 3. In saying that he drew them with the cords of a man and the bands of love, he was apparently reminding them that he did not treat them with the rough treatment of men in dealing with animals, but with humane methods, such as men employ when they are dealing with people. (Cf., for example, a father's leading his child by a cord or band. And, too, the humane master often pulled the yoke forward on the neck of his oxen, so that they might rest a little; and laid food before them, to refresh and strengthen them. But Israel did not realize that Jehovah gave her the grain, and the new wine, and the oil, and multiplied unto her silver and gold, which they used for Baal. (See Hos. 2: 8.) What a lesson there is in this for us! (See Luke 16: 9-13.)

### Threatings of Punishment for Their Evil Conduct

(Hos. 11: 5-7)

*They shall not return into the land of Egypt; but the Assyrian shall be their king, because they refused to return to me. And the sword shall fall upon their cities, and shall consume their bars, and devour them, because of their own counsels. And my people are bent on backsliding from me: though they call them to*



*him that is on high, none at all will exalt him.*

Several ideas as to the meaning of Israel's not returning into the land of Egypt have been advanced by Bible students, any one of which might be correct. One is that their backsliding practices entitled them to return to their former bondage; another is that they would not be permitted to return there for assistance as Hoshea (2 Kings 17: 4) had sought to do; while another, and which may have been the real reason, was that they would receive a far worse taskmaster in Assyria than they had had in Egypt. But whatever may have been the reason for the decree, Assyria, and not Egypt would be their next place of servitude, all because they refused to return to Jehovah from their idolatry.

One has only to read the record in Second Kings in order to see that it was literally true that the sword did come upon the house of Israel. After a reign of forty-one years, Jeroboam

II slept with his fathers, and was succeeded by his son Zechariah, who only reigned six months before he was slain by Shallum, who reigned in his stead. Shallum's reign lasted only one month, when he was slain by Menahem, who reigned ten years. Pekahiah succeeded his father on the throne at the latter's death, and continued for two years before he was slain by Pekah. Pekah remained on the throne for twenty years, at the close of which he was slain by Hoshea, who reigned for nine years, the last of which was spent in prison. And in addition to their internal strife, they were also harassed by nations from without. It was during the reign of Pekah that Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria removed a contingent of the Israelites to his country. (See 2 Kings 15: 29.)

"Backsliding" is one of the sorry pictures which are scattered throughout the Bible, and the unholy practice seems to be about as prevalent today as it has ever been. This terrible condition, the seriousness of which people seem never to realize, is described by Peter in these words: "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last

state is become worse with them than the first. For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandments delivered unto them. It has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog turning to his own vomit again, and the sow that had washed to wallowing in the mire." (2 Pet. 2: 20-22.)

When people are redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ, they are made free from the bondage of sin; but if they expect their freedom to be made permanent, they must be willing to follow the way of the Lord, as he also frees them from the power of sin. (Cf. Rom. 6: 1-11.) But if they turn their thoughts and longings in other directions, they may soon have an experience similar to that of Israel. "Ephraim, he mixeth himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not." (Hos. 7: 8, 9.) The symptoms of decay which were mentioned by the prophet should have been a warning to Israel, but they were not. Instead, they were completely unaware of their real condition. The prophets called them to Jehovah, but there was none who would hear and exalt Jehovah. There are people today whose names are on church rolls, and who are in good standing with the congregations in which they have their membership, who are totally unaware of their true spiritual condition. (Cf. the letters to the seven churches in Asia; James 1: 13-16; the prodigal's elder brother, and the five foolish virgins.)

### Mercy Remembered in the Midst of Wrath

(Hos. 11: 8-11)

*How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I cast thee off, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboiim? my heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee; and I will not come in wrath. They shall walk after Jehovah, who will roar like a*

*lion; for he will roar, and the children of Israel shall come trembling from the west. They shall come trembling as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria; and I will make them to dwell in their houses, saith Jehovah.*

As was pointed out in an earlier lesson, justice demands punishment, but mercy pleads for restoration; and so, in this paragraph Jehovah, as it were, gives way to mercy, thus manifesting his great love for his people and his loathsomeness to punish them. This reminds us of the prayer of Habakkuk:

O Jehovah, I have heard the report of thee, and am afraid:

O Jehovah, revive thy work in the midst of the years;

In the midst of the years make it known;

In wrath remember mercy. (Hab. 3: 2.)

Admah and Zeboiim were cities which were irretrievably overthrown because of their sins. (See Deut. 29: 23.) But, speaking after the manner of men, Jehovah showed how merciful, how compassionate he is, and how loath he is to punish the people whom he loves. Mercy therefore triumphs over justice, but only after the supreme effort was made to bring them to repentance, and their willingness to return to the Lord. Verses 10 and 11 seem to indicate that some of the people, at least, would return from their captivity. (Read chapter 14.)

Cadman notes that no prophet in Israel outranked Hosea in the appreciation of the eternal mercy. The perfect love which casts out fear involves mutual choice, mutual confidence, and mutual trust. It was in these ways that Hosea interpreted the unique message which came from his afflicted heart. Through purgatorial means he obtained his knowledge of the God who suffers because he loves his chosen ones, and who

will not cease to love them while hope remains that they may yet love him.

God's gracious promise to his penitent people is expressed in these words: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the grain, and blossom as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols I have answered, and will regard him: I am like a green fir-tree; from me is thy fruit found." (Hos. 14: 4-8.)

There is no wonder then, as George Adam Smith observes, that the northern prophet painted the blessed future in the poetry of the mountain —its air, its dew, its trees. (Cf. Isa. 60: 13.) But with Hosea's home in the north, and weary of all the pretensions of the people, and everything artificial, whether idols or puppet-kings, he turns to the glory of Lebanon as it lies, untouched by human tool or art, but fresh and full of peace from God's own hand. And like another prophet of Galilee, Hosea in his vision of the future saw no temple therein (Rev. 21: 22), but rather the open air, the mountain breeze, the dew, the vine, the lilies, and the pines; for what God asks of his people are not rites nor sacrifices, but life and health and fragrance and fruitfulness beneath the shadow and the dew of his presence.

"Who is wise, that he may understand these things? prudent, that he may know them? for the ways of Jehovah are right, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein." (Verse 9.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What are the facts of the first three chapters of Hosea and their purpose?

What effect did the prophet's experience have on his preaching?

What did all of this illustrate?

### The Golden Text

What use did Jesus make of the words of this text?

Give other instances of the application of this same principle.

How may the principle be applied to people today?

God's Great Goodness toward His People

What was indicated by the childhood of Israel?

Discuss its typical import in the life of Jesus.  
 Why do so many people disregard their early training?  
 How were the prophets to regard their obligation to preach to the sinful people?  
 What did Paul say about this same thing in this dispensation?  
 Why do so many want to turn away from the truth?  
 What is the essence of idolatry?  
 What are the dangers of idolatry for us?  
 How did Jehovah say that he dealt with his people in trying to get them to do right?  
 What lesson is there in this for us as teachers of the word?  
 Where did Israel get the things they devoted to Baal?  
 What should we learn from this, that is, where do we get the blessings we bestow on the world?

#### Threatenings of Punishment for Their Evil Conduct

What did Hosea mean by saying that Israel would not return to Egypt?

In what ways did the sword fall upon them?  
 Why is backsliding so prevalent among God's people?  
 What does the New Testament say about those who go back into the world?  
 Why don't they recognize the damage that backsliding does to those who do it?  
 Cite some examples which should encourage us not to go back into the ways of sin.

#### Mercy Remembered in the Midst of Wrath

Why did Jehovah promise not to destroy his people?  
 Discuss Habakkuk's prayer in this respect.  
 How does Hosea rank among the prophets of the Old Testament?  
 Discuss Jehovah's promise to his penitent people.  
 Why did Hosea picture their future in the light of the mountain?  
 What was the last great lesson that the prophet spoke?