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

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# Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary

ON  
UNIFORM BIBLE LESSONS  
FOR THE  
CHURCHES OF CHRIST

1965

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

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## PREFACE

We begin our studies for 1965 with "Selections from the Minor Prophets." These men were among the great preachers of the Old Testament. It has always been necessary for God to send his spokesmen to the peoples of the earth, both those who are in covenant relationship with him, and those who are not. If one is willing to take the time to consider the history of God's dealings with human beings, he will soon see that, although the law which he gave to them was and is relatively easy to understand, it was and is essential that the law be explained and its recipients exhorted and urged to obey it. This is the great purpose in sending prophets and preachers among them.

Those who study the writings of the prophets will be greatly benefited, and their work will be much more interesting, if they will endeavor to keep in mind the time and circumstances during which and under which the prophets spoke. There was always a vital reason for their messages, as well as particular people to whom they were delivered. It will also be well to keep in mind that many of the things which the prophets spoke contain truths which are always important to the children of God in any age. It is also well to observe the different types of men whom God chose to take his message to the people; and the more we consider the characteristics of the minor prophets, the more we will be impressed with the fact of their likeness to gospel preachers of our day.

The second quarter lessons are based on the Epistles of John and Jude. If we are diligent in our consideration of them, we will be made to wonder why we do not study these short letters more often. Both John and Jude had to deal with conditions which were brought about by the unfaithfulness and wickedness of people who at one time apparently had been members of the body of Christ. But when brethren depart from the way of the Lord, there is no end to the mischief which they can cause the church of the Lord.

The poetical portion of the Old Testament, that is, the books which are generally looked upon as containing that type of literature, are among the neglected books of the Bible. It is true that we often quote from the Psalms, and otherwise refer to them; but there is relatively little real use made of them by the average Christian. These lessons, though few in number, can mean much to us, if we are willing to apply ourselves to the task in hand.

Biography has always been one of the most valuable means of learning and retaining the truth which we have. The characters which we are to consider in the closing quarter of the year were at one time people who lived and walked among men; and we can, if we try, see ourselves in them.

This is the forty-fourth annual volume which the Gospel Advocate Company has published for use by churches of Christ; and it is the twentieth 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

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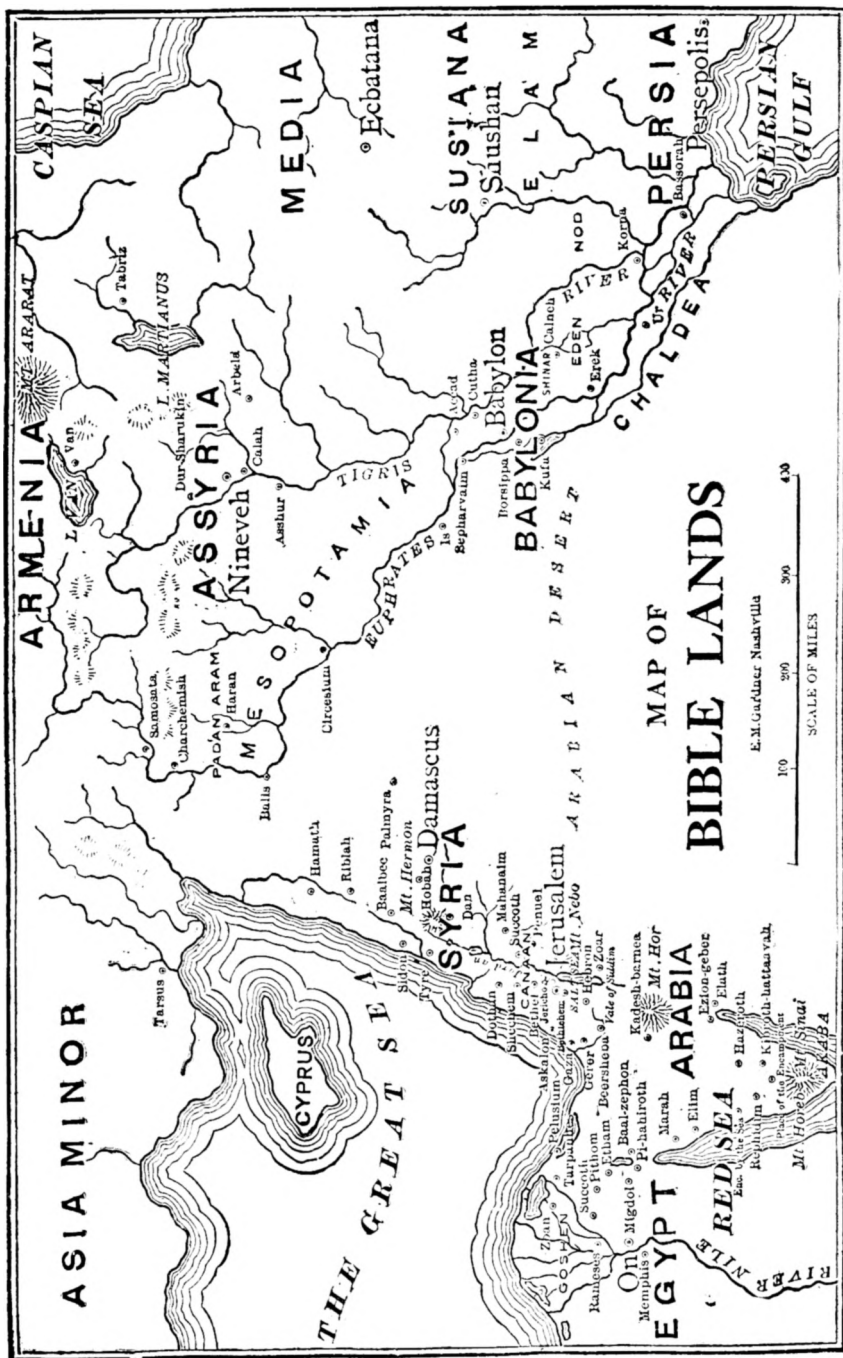
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## FIRST QUARTER

### SELECTIONS FROM THE MINOR PROPHETS

AIM.—*To acquaint ourselves with the teaching and spirit of the great prophets in the days of Israel's decline—Amos, Hosea, and Micah, and their denunciations of the sins of Israel; and the faithful prophets of the last days of Judah—Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and others who delivered Jehovah's message so courageously.*

Lesson I—January 3, 1965

### JEHOVAH'S LOVE FOR HIS WAYWARD PEOPLE

#### 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 Ze-boi'-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.—*"I will ransom them from the power of Sheol; I will redeem them from death."* (Hos. 13: 14.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Hos. 10: 1-8.

#### Daily Bible Readings

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Dec. 31. T. ....	The Manner in Which God's Love Is Manifested (1 John 4: 7-21)
Jan. 1. ....	F. The Fate of Those Who Do Not Love the Brethren (1 John 3: 13-18)
Jan. 2. S. ....	Love Is the Crowning Christian Grace (2 Pet. 1: 5-11)
Jan. 3. S. ....	And the Greatest of These Is Love (1 Cor. 13: 1-13)

TIME.—Probably between 750 and 725 B.C.

PLACE.—Probably in Samaria.

PERSONS.—Hosea, the rulers, and the people of Samaria.

## Introduction

The last twelve books of the Old Testament are called the *Minor Prophets*. This title is applied to this group of prophecies, not because of their relative unimportance, but because of their brevity. They are much shorter in their content than the *Major Prophets* which precede them, with the exception of Daniel. The Minor Prophets are not listed in the Bible in their chronological order, as may be seen by observing the order of the kings under whom they prophesied. Farrar notes that "Hosea is placed first in the order of the Minor Prophets both in the Hebrew and the LXX [the Seventy, that is, the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament] because his work was the longest and was therefore regarded as the most important, just as the Epistle to the Romans is placed first in order of St. Paul's Epistles." (*The Minor Prophets*, p. 69.)

We shall see further on in this lesson that the work of Hosea covered a long period of time; and it is therefore not necessary that we think of that which was written concerning his message as one continuous discourse. The Book of Hosea is evidently representative of his work and teaching throughout his long career. But regardless of the time or times during which the contents of the prophecy of Hosea were spoken and later reduced to writing, we should keep in mind the fact that all of the prophets whose messages we are to study during this quarter were inspired by the Holy Spirit. (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 21.) George A. F. Knight notes that we possess sufficient material from Hosea's hand to recognize

that here we are meeting with one of the great personalities of history. Mr. Knight continues: "We see in him a man of sensitive nature, obviously courageous, a man of vision, who could expound the purposes of Almighty God for the future from the basis of his knowledge of God's actions in Israel's past. He is both an intellectual and a man of profound faith. Those two qualities together enable him to think through and thus interpret to himself and to the world the bitter disappointment which he suffered in his wife. But they also enable him to wrestle through to a triumphant outcome in his own thought and experience such as has opened doors for all mankind upon great and deep vistas of the love of God."

The thirteen lessons of this quarter contain one each from nine of the twelve prophets (Obadiah is omitted), and two each from Hosea and Jonah. It is a noticeable and interesting fact that the messages of the last two named books have long been a center of controversy among Bible students. It has, for instance, been very difficult for some people to understand how the record of Hosea's family relationship could have been as the text represents it. But if it is kept in mind that the whole purpose was to teach Israel a lesson, it will be much easier to see that the prophet's experiences with his wife were intended to dramatize by analogy God's dealings with unfaithful Israel. This, in the providence of God, was best done by an object lesson; and it appears that Hosea was entirely willing to do as Jehovah commanded him to do.

## The Golden Text

"I will ransom them from the power of Sheol; I will redeem them from death." This passage is the one from which Paul quotes when he reaches the climax in his discussion of the resurrection, and breaks forth into a song of triumph over death. (See 1 Cor. 15: 54-58; of. Hos. 13: 9-14.) The theme of Hosea's strain was the rapturous anticipation of Israel's resurrection from national death. Those who are familiar with the commentaries are aware of the fact that many students feel that

verse 14 is a call for death to destroy (cf. George Adam Smith, *The Twelve Prophets*), but in view of the teaching set forth by Ezekiel (the valley of dry bones) and Paul (the resurrection from the dead), that idea seems most improbable. If one will read various translations of the passage now before us, he will easily see why some Bible students adopt the view expressed by George Adam Smith (cf. the Revised Standard Version, Moffatt, *The Complete Bible—American Translation*); but the



American Standard Version, the one used in these studies, puts the matter in the form of a promise, and raises the hope of deliverance.

The full context reads as follows: "It is thy destruction, O Israel, that thou art against me, against thy help. Where now is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? I have given thee a king in mine anger, and have taken him away in my wrath. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is laid up in store. The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for it is time he should not tarry in the place of the breaking forth of children. I will ransom them from the power of Sheol; I will redeem them from death: O death, where are thy plagues? O Sheol, where is thy destruction? repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." (Hos. 13: 9-14.)

The whole idea seems to be this: Israel had sinned, and punishment was inevitable; but Jehovah is merciful, and the restoration of the penitent is certain. In commenting on this text, Knight notes that when "Israel shall have suffered the full the penalty of her rebellion and disloyalty to God's purpose for her, God

himself will declare: I will ransom them from the power of Sheol, I will redeem them, as their champion, from death. The word ransom emphasizes the cost of God's saving action; the word redeem emphasizes its grace. Then God will rebuke, will declare war upon this servant of his, that is, death, and will finally destroy death and Sheol themselves. . . . Thus Hosea declares his faith that *Yahweh* is Lord even of death. Thus if *Yahweh's* redeemed people can be called *sons of the living God* (1: 10), then in some sense God must raise them up to live even as he, their Father, lives." The term *Yahweh* is the same as Jehovah. No one actually knows the true pronunciation of the Hebrew "combination" from which we have Jehovah or *Yahweh*, but many scholars think that the latter term comes nearer to being the real pronunciation, then the former. In saying that repentance shall be hid from mine eyes, Jehovah apparently was saying, "I shall certainly not change my mind about this." "Sheol" in the Old Testament is, generally speaking, the same as "*Hades*" in the New Testament, that is, the abode of disembodied spirits.

## 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.*

Ed. F. Vallowe calls this chapter "The Grandeur of God's Grace," and he thinks that no one is sufficient to describe the divine appeal which it sets forth. The first part of the passage just quoted refers to the early history of Israel as a nation, along with the time when Jehovah led them out of the land of Egypt

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 the latter sought to kill him. (See Matt. 2: 15.) Jehovah was always ready and willing to do for his people that which they could not do for themselves; but it is a recorded fact that they did not appreciate that which he did for them. 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 same sad situation seems to prevail today, as any observer can easily confirm. Instead of following after the way of the Lord, the Israelites gave themselves over to idolatry; and the same thing is largely true in principle with many professed Christians now.

Just before Paul reached the end of his life here upon the earth, he

wrote the following words to his beloved son in the gospel, 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 sufficient to show that the same attitude still prevails on the part of the Lord's professed followers, as was seen among the Israelites; but the faithful teacher of the truth 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 Creator of all things. He who professes to believe in the one and only true God and Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, but who at the same time is more interested in the honors, profits, and friendships of the world, than he is in the pure religion of the New Testament, is as much an idolater in spirit, as the people of Hosea's day were. (Cf. Col. 3: 5: 1 John 5: 21.)

The prophet Hosea 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, Jehovah was apparently reminding the Israelites that he did not treat them with the rough treatment of men in dealing with animals, but that he employed humane methods, such as men employ when they are dealing with people. (Cf., for example, a father's leading his children 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.)

### Threatening 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, and none at all will exalt him.*

Bible students have advanced several ideas as to the meaning of Israel's not returning into the land of Egypt, any one of which might be correct. One is that their backsliding practices entitled them to return to their former state of bondage: another is that they would not be permitted to return there for assistance, as king Hoshea (2 Kings 17: 4) had sought to do; while another, and which could very well 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, Jereboam II slept with his fathers, and was succeeded by his son Zachariah, who only reigned six months before he was slain by Shal-lum, who reigned in his stead. Shal-lum'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, moved a contingent of the Israelites to his country. (See 2 Kings 15: 29.)

One of the sorry pictures which is scattered throughout the Bible is that of "backsliding," 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 commandment 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: of. Prov. 26: 11.)

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 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, the people were completely unaware of their real condition. The prophets called them to Jehovah, but there was none who would hearken to them and exalt the Lord. There are people today whose names are on church rolls, and who are in good standing with the congregation in

which they have their membership, who are totally unaware of their 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 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.*

It is often pointed out in the Scriptures that justice demands punishment, but mercy pleads for restoration: and so, in this section of the lesson text, Jehovah, as it were, gives way to mercy, and thereby manifests 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 triumphed 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, 11 seem to indicate that some of the people, at least,

would 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 an-

swered, 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 mountains—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. And so Hosea closes his prophecy with these words: "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."

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Why are the last twelve books of the Old Testament called the *Minor Prophets*?  
What do we know regarding their chronological order?  
What are some of the pertinent facts regarding the prophecy of Hosea?  
What wide difference of opinion exists concerning the prophet we are now studying?

### The Golden Text

What use did Paul make of the passage from which the golden text is taken?  
Under what circumstances were they originally spoken?  
What message did Hosea mean for them to convey?  
What is the meaning of "Sheol"?

### God's Great Goodness toward His People

What has the chapter from which this lesson is taken been called and why?  
What can you say of the divine appeal which it sets forth?  
To what does the first part of this section of the lesson text refer?  
What use did Matthew make of it?  
How did the Israelites regard God's goodness to them?

In what way is the same situation continued?

What lesson does Paul have for the Lord's people along this same line?

What effect should this have on the preachers and teachers of the word of the Lord?

What is idolatry and what of its prevalence today?

How did Jehovah deal with his people of old?

In what ways did he illustrate his kindness to them?

How did the Israelites deal with Jehovah's great blessings to them?

### Threatenings of Punishment for Their Evil Conduct

What is the probable meaning of the reference to their return to Egypt?

Where did they go instead and with what result?

How do we know that the sword literally came upon the kingdom of Israel?

What does the Bible teach regarding the backsliding of God's people?

Why is it that so few people understand that condition?

What is necessary for redeemed people to understand and do, if their freedom from sin continues?

Cite and discuss some examples which show that many people do not realize their true condition.

Mercy Remembered In the Midst of Wrath  
 What do the Scriptures teach regarding the struggle between justice and mercy?  
 In what way did Habakkuk pray for God's mercy toward his people?  
 How did Jehovah seek to illustrate his love for and his loathsomeness of punishment his people?  
 Why was Hosea so able to understand the great mercy of Jehovah?

What great promise did the Lord make to his people who had sinned against him?  
 What had they evidently done which made such a promise possible?  
 Discuss the imagery which Hosea used in speaking of God's blessings to his people.  
 What was the last great lesson which the prophet set forth?

## Lesson II—January 10, 1965

# JEHOVAH'S GRACIOUS PROMISES

## Lesson Text

### Hos. 14: 1-9

1 O Is-ra-el, return unto Je-ho'-vah thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

2 Take with you words, and return unto Je-ho'-vah: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and accept that which is good: so will we render *as* bullocks *the offering of* our lips.

3 As-syr'-i-a shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are* our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

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

5 I will be as the dew unto Is'-ra-el; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Leb'-a-non.

6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Leb'-a-non.

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

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

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings."* (Hos. 6: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Hos. 10: 9-15.

## Daily Bible Readings

- Jan. 4. M..... The Promises of God As a Motive for Right Living (2 Cor. 6: 14-7: 1)  
 Jan. 5. T..... Good Tidings of the Promise (Acts 13 : 25-33)  
 Jan. 6. W..... The Lord Is Not Slack Concerning His Promises (2 Pet. 3: 8-13)  
 Jan. 7. T..... God Will Bless As He Has Promised (Deut. 1: 9-11)  
 Jan. 8. F..... We Must Be Patient to Inherit the Promises (Heb. 6: 9-12)  
 Jan. 9. S..... God Is Faithful Who Has Promised (Heb. 10: 19-25)  
 Jan. 10. S..... God Never Makes More Promises Than He Can Fulfill (2 Cor. 1: 15-22)

TIME.—Probably between 750 and 725 B.C.

PLACE.—Probably in Samaria.

PERSONS.—Hosea, the rulers, and the people of Samaria.

## Introduction

The entire Book of Hosea should be read so that the full connection between the two lessons which are taken from this portion of God's word can be better understood. Hosea has been called the prophet of divine love; and when the full account of his life and work has been considered, it will be easy to see that the designation is a happy one. There

were two major factors which contributed to the effectiveness of Hosea's message to Israel, namely, (1) his inspiration and (2) the bitter experience through which he passed as a result of the unfaithfulness of his wife. That bitter tragedy did something for the prophet which nothing but sorrow and suffering could do; and that no doubt was a

part of the preparation which God arranged for him, for we are told that Jehovah instructed him to "take unto thee a wife of whoredom."

It appears that Hosea's wife Gomer, in her downward pathway of sin, had reached the place where she had been put up for sale by her paramour as a common slave; but Hosea did not hesitate to buy her back, as may be seen by reading chapter 3 of his prophecy. The tragic experience through which Hosea was compelled to go enabled him to have a better understanding of God's great love for his people. It also made it possible for him to plead more effectively with Israel to return to Jehovah. The entire experience through which the prophet passed came to be a kind of analogy of God's relation of Israel. (See again chapter 3.) Just as Hosea had loved Gomer with his deepest devotion, so God loved Israel. Gomer's action in deserting Hosea was analogous to Israel's departure from God; and Hosea's buying Gomer back from the slave market symbolized God's redeeming love for Israel who had forsaken him for other gods. The message of Hosea has been described as the tenderest and most appealing of all the prophets; and for beauty and pathos it is unsurpassed.

In making a practical application of the message of Hosea for our day,

G. Campbell Morgan sees in it three vital truths, namely, (1) sin, (2) judgment, (3) love. Sin caused the downfall of both Israel and Judah, and sin is the cause of any failure which the church suffers today. The only possible way to keep away from sin is to make sure that God's will is carefully learned and obeyed. John says, "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." (1 John 3: 4.) The original word for "lawlessness" (*anomia*) is the same as the term rendered "iniquity" in Matt. 7: 23; 2 Cor. 6: 14; and the practical meaning is, according to Thayer, to act without authority, whether in ignorance or in direct disregard for the law. (Cf. 2 Thess. 2: 3, 4.) The judgment of Jehovah is and will be upon guilty people; and it is for that reason that immediate steps should be taken by every congregation and individual member of the body of Christ to secure the Lord's forgiveness. The love of God passes all understanding, and there never has been nor ever will be a single person who could not justly claim the love of God for himself, if his heart was right with him. In fact, God's love goes out to the sinner, and makes every effort possible to bring the transgressor back to him. (Cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9; Luke 15.)

### The Golden Text

*"For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings."* Jesus quoted this passage more than once during his personal ministry here upon the earth. (See Matt. 9: 13; 12: 7.) The evident purpose of the passage was and is to show the superiority of the inward life over the 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 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. For example, "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 an impressive lesson to us today. The Lord plainly told the people of Ephesus (Rev. 2: 1-7) that doctrinal purity and diligent activity

on the part of his people is not enough. They must always be motivated by love, which never fails to lead to a righteous life. (Cf. Gal. 5: 6; 1 John 5: 3; 1 Cor. 13: 1-8.) Other Old Testament prophets, along with Hosea and Amos, taught these same truths. (Cf. Isa. 1: 10-17; Mic. 6: 6-8.)

But there is another aspect of the principle stated by Hosea and quoted by Jesus which should be considered just here, 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 another way, 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 which demands mercy,

such as might be true in cases of illness and death, then, according to the principle of mercy rather than sacrifice, the requirements of the special occasion should be met, even though it means that the actual performance of the 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 excuses to absent themselves from the assembly of the saints, when there is no real need for their doing so. It frequently happens that most or all of the family neglects 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

### The Call to Repentance and the Attitude to Be Manifested

(Hos. 14: 1-3)

*O Israel, return unto Jehovah thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and return unto Jehovah: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and accept that which is good: so will we render as bullocks the offerings of our lips. Assyria shall not save us; and we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless find mercy.*

The first two verses of this section of the lesson text are rendered by Phillips in these words: "But come home, Israel, come home to the Lord your God! For it is your sins which have been your downfall. Take words of repentance with you as you return to the Lord; say to him, Clear us from all our evil, receive us in mercy, and we will repay with our praise and thanksgiving!" This is Hosea's stirring call to repentance. He had denounced Israel's sins in terms which were most severe, but he never intimated that God's judgment upon them would be their complete undoing. The people of Israel would have to suffer for their sins by going into Assyrian captivity; but that would not be their final end. God would indeed punish them; but

he would not destroy them completely.

The inspired prophet Hosea plainly taught that punishment is never an end within itself, but only a means to a higher end. Hosea, throughout his message to Israel, pictured the "Divine Lover" as looking forward to the day when discipline should have accomplished its purpose, and love would find perfect expression. The literature of the world does not contain a more stirring love-song than that which is found in Hos. 2: 14-20, in which God voices his affection for the people who had forsaken him for spiritual adultery.

It has been said, and correctly so, that Hosea was Israel's great moral and social diagnostician because, as a result of his inspiration and his own painful experience, he learned to look upon life and human society through the eyes of love. His feelings were shaped in the laboratory of life, and all the logic of his teaching implies that if a faithless companion seeks forgiveness through penitence and a determination to live a life of rectitude, that person should have the love and protection of the injured one. Divorce is the remedy for the most heinous of all social crimes, only when love and kindly discipline have been tested to the uttermost.

It should be noted that people who

confess their sins are usually the penitent ones. It is impossible to get a person to repent who will not confess that he has done wrong. The words which Hosea urged the Israelites to "take" were in anticipation of their release from captivity. The ten tribes as such did not return to their homeland, but it does appear that some of them did come back with their brethren of the southern kingdom. When people confess their sins and are penitent, they are then in position to ask for forgiveness. (Cf. 1 John 1: 8, 9; Acts 8: 22.) That has always been God's method of dealing with those who have gone astray. (Read Luke 15: 17-21.) There is no material sacrifice which can take the place of the true expression of the heart. This is the lesson which is summed up in the golden text. (Cf. Heb. 13: 15.)

Verse three of the section of the lesson text now under consideration is a confession of their besetting sins, that of depending upon others than Jehovah for help; and they were called upon to renounce that practice. They had turned to both Assyria and Egypt, and worshipped the idols of the land. (Head Hos. 5: 13, 14; 7: 11; 4: 12; 8: 6; 14: 2.) But when people give due consideration to God they will find a source of help which they can depend upon. Every worthwhile resolution, and all true action, must be properly motivated. The closing words of this section of the lesson text shows that the determination of the penitent Israelites, and their resultant deeds, came from the conviction that Jehovah is always merciful to the helpless. Hosea was foretelling what would happen when the captive people came to realize that they had become destitute as a result of their sins; and that they would indeed be comparable to the fatherless. (Cf. Hos. 2: 2-7.) The words of Hosea were spoken only a short time before Israel went into captivity.

#### God's Gracious Promise to the Penitents

(Hos. 14: 4-8)

*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 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.*

The prophecy of Hosea regarding the return of Israel from captivity is couched in language characteristic of that country, and gives that which will be God's gracious answer to their self-condemnation and their determination to live for him when they become a reality at the close of their exile. Their backsliding was their apostasy. They had deserted God for the idols of the nations about them; but when they turned back to him, he would love them freely. God's love for the truly penitent is always bestowed freely, as is so forcefully illustrated by the father of the prodigal son. (Read Luke 15: 22-24.) Man can do nothing to merit God's love, mercy, and forgiveness; but if he is willing to turn from evil and serve the Lord, the love of the Father will know no bounds. (Cf. Ezek. 16: 60-63; 1 John 4: 10.)

The metaphors of verse 5 were intended to show something of the blessings of God which would be bestowed upon penitent Israel. The copious dews which fell in the East served to refresh vegetation in the absence of the more frequent rains which fell in other sections of the country. (Cf. Job 29: 19; Prov. 19: 12.) The lily is said to have been one of the most productive plants of Bible lands, one root often producing as many as fifty bulbs; and some varieties grew to a height of three or four feet. Jesus referred to the glory of the lily, when he said, "And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." (Matt. 6: 28, 29.) God's blessings never fail. (Cf. Phil. 4: 19.)

The stately, fragrant, and long-lived cedars of Lebanon were the glory of that country. It has Deen said that their root went as far down



into the earth, as their trunk went upward. This gave tremendous strength to those trees. (Cf. Isa. 35: 2.) Judging from the number which was used, it appears that one metaphor was not sufficient to picture the redeemed state of Israel. The reviving influence of the dew; the beauty of the lily; the strength of Lebanon; the spreading beauty of the olive-tree, which never lost its verdure; and the ever-present fragrance of the trees and flowers of Lebanon. It is interesting to observe the different ideas which are expressed by the dew in the prophecy of Hosea. (1) The short-lived improvement in Israel's and Judah's conduct, 6:4; the swiftness of the approaching punishment for their idolatry, 13: 1-3; and (3) the kiss of Jehovah's forgiveness, which brought new hope and life to their troubled hearts, 14:5.

It is not certain whether "his" in verse 7 refers to Jehovah or restored Israel (see verse 6); but in either case the allusion is to the former glory which the people enjoyed before the apostasy. To dwell under one's shadow was to enjoy his protection. Grain, in the process of growth, sometimes looks wilted; but as the conditions for growth are increased, it is revived. The vine reaches the height of its beauty when its blossoms are full blown. The wine of Lebanon was celebrated for its aroma, flavor, and medicinal purposes. All of these metaphors were intended to indicate something of the blessings which would come with the restoration of Israel. They remind us of a remark by Jesus, when he said, "I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance." (Luke 15: 7.) The glorious metaphors of the closing parts of Revelation are meant to give us some idea of the joy which our salvation will bring, both to heaven and to ourselves.

It appears that the long captivity of Israel resulted in their complete punishment of idolatry. The conversion of Ephraim was as thorough, as it was sincere. The punishment which Jehovah sent upon the people for their sin was inflicted in love, and it resulted in their entire restoration from their apostasy. (Cf. Heb. 12:

5-13.) One has only to read the apocryphal books of Maccabees in order to see how steadfastly the Israelites resisted the practice of idolatry during the years between the Old and New Testaments. The closing part of verse 8 is Jehovah's assurance to Israel of his blessings. The same truth, of course, applies to us today; for Jehovah is the source of all blessings. (Cf. James 1: 17; Eph. 1: 3; Matt. 6: 33.) Although winter comes, the fir-tree remains green, and just so it is with God: his blessings never fail; and he alone is able to supply all our needs. (See again Phil. 4: 19.)

#### An Exhortation for a Personal Application (Hos. 14: 9)

*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.*

It has been suggested that as "wise" refers to spiritual insight into the divine message, so "prudent" refers to practical wisdom. (Cf. James 1: 5-8.) "These things" are evidently the truths which Hosea spoke, the things which pertained to the state of Israel during his ministry. The conclusions which the prophet drew from the character of Jehovah are

(1) his ways are right; (2) the just shall walk in them; and (3) transgressors shall fall therein. (Cf. Psalm 1.) When James delivered his message, he said, "Who is wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace." (James 3: 13-18.) Whether Israel or the people today, the message which God has addressed to them must be per-

sonally applied, if good is to result.

The Book of Hosea is a remarkable production. The prophet spoke with power and conviction, because he stood squarely on reality. He had both inspiration and experience; and he dealt, not only with external acts, but with underlying motives as well. He recognized that a man's will is influenced by his emotions, as well as by his intelligence. This, of course, made it necessary for one to have normal feelings in his heart, if he would respond properly to whatever the environment might be. Hosea was apparently the first messenger of the Lord to combat the idea of the double standard for human conduct, which places the entire burden of guilt upon fallen women, and allows the men to go without condemnation. His language is as follows: "I will not punish your daughters when they play the harlot, nor your brides when they commit adultery; for the men themselves go apart with harlots, and they sacrifice with the prostitutes; and the people that doth not understand shall be overthrown." (Hos. 4: 14.) This, of course, was God's teaching, and it is still his today; he does not recognize nor tolerate a double standard.

In commenting on Hosea's contribution to Israel's social ideals, Charles Foster Kent says, "Hosea's

solution, therefore, of the social problem was as simple as his analysis. If we are to have a perfect social order men must first gain an intimate knowledge of the character and purpose of that divine Lover who created man and is ever seeking to develop a perfect humanity. Hosea firmly believed that 'only they who know can serve.' He taught, therefore, that religious education is the first step toward any lasting social reform. When once men know God not only through instruction but also through personal insight and experience, they will love both him and their fellow men, who are the chief objects of his love. When they truly love God and their fellow men they will be faithful to all their social obligations. Then, like streams cut off from their sources, the vices and crimes which sweep society on to its ruin will vanish and a perfect social order will be established. The first task, therefore, of Israel's teachers and of all social reformers is, according to Hosea, to make men intimately acquainted with God and thereby to kindle in their hearts that divine love and loyalty which will bind them to their divine Lover and to their fellow men. Thus Hosea proclaimed that real religion is the supreme motive power in all enduring social reform."

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Why was Hosea such an effective prophet?  
Tell something of his own personal experience and the application made of it.  
What are the principal lessons which we should learn from his prophecy?

### The Golden Text

What use did Jesus make of the passage which serves as the golden text for today?  
What was the evident purpose of the passage?  
What application of the principle underlying it is made in both Testaments?  
What special application did Jesus make of the passage and how is it sometimes abused?

### The Call to Repentance and the Attitude to Be Manifested

Discuss Hosea's stirring call to repentance and tell what it should mean to us.  
Show why punishment is never an end within itself.  
What outstanding prophetic traits did Hosea possess?

What is the relation which confession of sin and repentance have toward each other?

What were the besetting sins of the Israelites?

What must every worthwhile resolution and all true action rest upon? Why is this true?

### God's Gracious Promise to the Penitents

What was the nature of the language which Hosea used toward the penitent people?

What is God's attitude toward such people? Give some illustrations.

Name the metaphors which Hosea used and indicate the lessons which they meant to teach.

Discuss the prophet's threefold application of the dew.

What gracious promise was made to the returning exiles? What is its application to us?

What effect did the captivity have on the Israelites with reference to idolatry?

What is the source of all our blessings, both material and spiritual?

### An Exhortation for a Personal Application

Who are the "wise" and "prudent"?

What conclusions did Hosea draw regarding the character of Jehovah?

How are the principals of this section of the lesson text applied to us?  
 What is the value of personal applications?  
 What are some of the special values of Hosea's prophecy to us?  
 What was his attitude toward a double

standard of personal conduct?  
 Discuss this prophet's contribution to Israel's social ideals.  
 What value does this phase of his teaching have for us?  
 Why is religious education so important to right living?

### Lesson III—January 17, 1965

## PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

### Lesson Text

Joel 2: 21-32

21 Fear not, O land, be glad and rejoice; for Je-ho'-vah hath done great things.

22 Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field; for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth its fruit, the fig-tree and the vine do yield their strength.

23 Be glad then, ye children of Zi-ón, and rejoice in Je-ho'-vah your God; for he giveth you the former rain in just measure, and he causeth to come down for you the rain, the former rain and the latter rain, in the first month.

24 And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.

25 And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, my great army which I sent among you.

26 And ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and shall praise the name of Je-ho'-vah your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you; and my people shall never be put to shame.

27 And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Is'-ra-el, and that I am Je-ho'-vah your God, and there is none else; and my people shall never be put to shame.

28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit.

30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Je-ho'-vah cometh.

32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Je-ho'-vah shall be delivered; for in mount Zi-ón and in Je-ru'-sa-lem there shall be those that escape, as Je-ho'-vah hath said, and among the remnant those whom Je-ho'-vah doth call.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Jehovah will be a refuge unto his people, and a stronghold to the children of Israel"* (Joel 3: 16.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Acts 2: 14-21.

### Daily Bible Readings

- Jan. 11. M..... The Holy Spirit Was Promised by the Father (Luke 24: 44-49)  
 Jan. 12. T..... The Disciples Were Charged to Wait for the Promise (Acts 1: 1-5)  
 Jan. 13. W..... The Promise of the Spirit Was Received by Jesus (Acts 2: 29-33)  
 Jan. 14. T..... The Promise of the Spirit Came on Pentecost (Acts 2: 14-21)  
 Jan. 15. F..... The Spirit Is Promised to Obedient Believers (Acts 2: 37-39)  
 Jan. 16. S..... The Spirit Guided the Apostles into All Truth (John 16: 7-14)  
 Jan. 17. S..... We Are Sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise (Eph. 1: 3-14)

TIME.—Probably between 875 and 845 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Joel and the people of Judah.

### Introduction

Joel has been called the prophet of desolation and promise; and one has only to read the entire book which bears his name, in order to

see the truthfulness of that statement. The book which we are now considering is a short one, with only three chapters and seventy-three verses. But every reader of the New Testament knows that Joel was one of the prophets of the Old Testament, because of Peter's quotation from his prophecy in the second chapter of Acts. The name "Joel" means *Jehovah is God*. The name apparently was a common one, since it was borne by several other Bible characters. Beyond the title of his prophecy (1: 1), there is no historical data regarding the identity of this Joel. All the information we have concerning him, and his work as a prophet, is based upon inferences gathered from his prophecy. There is no mention of this Joel in the Old Testament outside the book which bears his name.

One would gather from Joel 2: 15-17 that Joel probably prophesied in or near Jerusalem. It is possible that he was a native of Judah. It appears that his entire prophecy was directed to the southern kingdom. The time of Joel's work is not known with any degree of certainty. Bible students have long been in dispute regarding this question; but fortunately the value of the message does not depend upon the exact time of its deliverance. It was a message inspired of God (cf. 2 Pet. 1: 19-21), and that is the thing which counts. The prophecy of Joel was called forth by a national calamity, namely, an invasion of the land by a devastating plague of locusts and other destructive forces. This was followed by a

famine which resulted in poverty and misery.

In order that we may get some idea of the terrible conditions which resulted from the destruction which the invading insects brought about, attention is herein called to two incidents which are mentioned in the text, and which give a graphic picture of the distress to which the people were reduced. One, the daily offerings of the temple, which united the people with God, had to be given up. "The meal-offering and the drink-offering are cut off from the house of Jehovah; and the priests, Jehovah's ministers, mourn." (Joel 1: 9.) The other incident had to do with the barter of children for immoral purposes, along with the slavery of the people themselves. "And have cast lots for my people, and have given a boy for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink . . . and have sold the children of Judah and the children of Jerusalem unto the sons of the Grecians, that they may remove them far from their border." (Joel 3: 3, 6.) Thus, instead of paying a harlot in money for her prostitution, they gave a Jewish captive for a slave, and a girl was exchanged for wine. The wretched circumstances in which the Jews found themselves were such as to make it possible for the Philistines to sell them to the Grecians for slaves; so that they could be moved from their homeland, far enough away as to leave no hope of return. It was against this kind of background that Joel uttered his prophecy.

### The Golden Text

*"Jehovah will be a refuge unto his people, and a stronghold unto the children of Israel"* We can get a better view of why the prophet spoke the words just quoted, if we consider them in the light of their context. "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! for the day of Jehovah is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. And Jehovah will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but Jehovah will be a refuge to his people, and a stronghold to the children of Israel. So shall ye know

that I am Jehovah your God, dwelling in Zion my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more." (Joel 3: 14-17.)

The horrible plague of the locust was apparently intended to give a kind of foretaste of the terrible day of Jehovah which was to come. It was during the famine which followed the locusts that the people of Judah came to realize how helpless they were; but the Lord promised, and did fulfil the pledge, to "restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten," etc., as we shall see further on in this lesson. The "valley of

strict decision" (Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*) has reference to God's decision with reference to the enemies of his people. (Cf. Joel 3: 2, 12.) In other words, the time was coming when the sinful nations which had harassed the Jewish people would be brought to the valley of decision, where they would have no possible chance to escape from the judgment and wrath of Jehovah. An irrevocable decision would be made, and the decision would be against those who had disregarded Jehovah and his people. Possibly no violence is done the Scriptures when this text is used to indicate decisions which men must make regarding great issues in their lives; but that is not the primary meaning of the prophetic statement.

But while all of the things just mentioned were happening to those who had sinned against God and his people, the precious assurance was given to those who put their trust in

the Lord. "But Jehovah will be a refuge unto his people and a stronghold to the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am Jehovah your God, dwelling in Zion my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more." (Joel 3: 16b, 17.) The reference here is apparently to the kingdom of Christ, and the practical meaning is that no stranger, that is, unconverted person, will be in the church. (Cf. Isa. 35: 8; Eph. 2: 19-22.) All men outside the kingdom of Christ are in effect condemned in "the valley of decision" (cf. Rom. 3: 9; 11: 32; Gal. 3: 22), and must obey the gospel before they can enjoy the blessings of the redeemed (see John 6: 44, 45; Rom. 1: 16, 17; Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 36-38; 2 Thess. 1: 7-9). God is indeed a refuge and a stronghold to his people in Christ; and there is no harm that can come to them while they remain faithful to him. (Cf. Rom. 8: 31-39; 1 Pet. 3: 13-17.)

## The Text Explained

### A Call to Rejoice over God's Blessings

(Joel 2: 21-23)

*Fear not, O land, be glad and rejoice; for Jehovah hath done great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field; for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth its fruit, the fig-tree and the vine do yield their strength. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in Jehovah your God; for he giveth you the former rain in just measure, and he ceaseth to come down for you the rain, the former rain and the latter rain, in the first month.*

Something of the terrible conditions which had prevailed prior to this call for rejoicing, which involved both man and beast, may be learned by reading chapter 1 of the prophecy now before us. The closing paragraph of the chapter just referred to reads as follows: "Alas for the day! for the day of Jehovah is at hand, and as destruction from the Almighty shall it come. Is not the food cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seeds rot under their clods; the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the grain is withered. How do the beasts

groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. O Jehovah, to thee do I cry; for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field. Yea, the beasts of the field pant unto thee; for the water brooks are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness." (Joel 1: 15-20.)

Sinful conditions often make it necessary for distressing times to exist (cf. Lev. 26: 3-5, 14-16, 19, 20; Mal. 3: 7-12); but when people turn to the Lord, it will not be long until they will experience seasons of rejoicing (see Matt. 6: 19-34; Heb. 13: 5, 6; Phil. 4: 19). In commenting on the use of the examples of the Old Testament (cf. Rom. 15: 4) for our instruction and encouragement, David Lipscomb says, "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; but those recorded are ensamples to us. They are for our instruction, our guidance,

to teach us how we should walk before God acceptably 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 that they taught, to the promises made. They continually refer to the promises made under the Old Testament as grounds for our hoping for blessings—temporal blessings, too, under the new dispensation."

**God's Blessings Are Always  
Abundant and His Promises Never  
Fail**

(Joel 2: 24-27)

*And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and shall praise the name of Jehovah your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you; and my people shall never be put to shame. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am Jehovah your God, and there is none else; and my people shall never be put to shame.*

What greater example can be found of plenty after famine, than that which is set forth in the Saviour's parable of the prodigal son? The waywardness of the young man resulted in his deep poverty and wretchedness; but when he came to himself and returned to his father, there was "music and dancing." Jesus, in fact, says that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner than repents, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons who need no repentance. (See Luke 15: 7.) Joel, in calling for a national repentance during the troubled times, said, "Let the priests, the ministers of Jehovah, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Jehovah, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the peoples,

Where is their God?" (Joel 2: 17.) It was to this implied taunt that Jehovah had reference when he said, "My people shall never be put to shame." This is just as true of his people now; for God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." (Eph. 3: 20; cf. 2 Cor. 1: 20.)

**The Outpouring of the Spirit  
(Joel 2: 28-32)**

*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah cometh. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of Jehovah shall be delivered; for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape, as Jehovah hath said, and among the remnant those whom Jehovah doth call.*

George Adam Smith notes that upon the promises of physical blessings, that is, the physical blessings which were promised in the preceding sections of the lesson text, follows another great promise, that of the pouring forth of the Spirit: by which Joel "because the Prophet of Pentecost, and his book the best known among Christians." The return of the physical blessings, as Joel viewed the matter, simply meant that Jehovah had returned to his people; and those material things were made to indicate God's greater favor, that of the gift of the Spirit to his people. It was upon this prophecy, that is, upon its explanation, that Peter began his great sermon on Pentecost. There is no greater blessing that God can give to his people than his Spirit (cf. Acts 5: 32); for that clearly implies that they are acceptable to him. (Cf. Acts 11: 15-18; 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20.)

It will be much easier for us to understand the significance of the text now before us, if we first get a clear

idea of just who or what the Spirit is. Jehovah is revealed in the Bible as a Triune Being, but that does not mean that there are three independent Persons who coexisted from eternity. Only God, as an independent Being, has always existed. (Cf. Psalm 90: 1, 2.) The other two Persons who were associated with him in the "beginning" were his Spirit and his Word. (Cf. John 1: 1, 2.) The Spirit and the Word are integral parts of Jehovah, and could no more be separated from him, than the spirit and means of expressing himself can be divorced from a normal living man. (Cf. James 2: 26.) God, his Spirit, and his Word, are the three who make up that which is often referred to as the Trinity.

The mighty works which are attributed to God in the Bible were performed by his word and his Spirit, that is, God accomplished those things by means of his word and his Spirit. For example, "By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. . . . For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." (Psalm 33: 6, 9.) "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear." (Heb. 11: 3.) In the fulness of time and in order to provide a Redeemer for the fallen race, God's word became flesh and appeared in history in the Person of Jesus Christ (John 1: 14) which is another way of saying that the word of God was personified. From the incarnation and onward, the Word is known as God's Son, and is actually referred to as God, thus affirming his deity. (Cf. Isa. 9: 6; Psalm 24: 8; Tit. 2: 13.)

God's Spirit is his very life principle and the divine energy by which he has always carried on his diverse activities. For example, it was by his Spirit that God brought order out of the chaotic condition of the earth, after it had become waste and void. (Gen. 1: 2.) God strove with sinful men by his Spirit. (Gen. 6: 3.) "By his Spirit the heavens are garnished," that is, made beautiful. (Job 26: 13 and marginal note.) It is by God's Spirit that new life in the form of vegetation is seen in the earth year

by year. (Psalm 104: 30.) And it was by his Spirit that God's Son was begotten. (Luke 1: 34, 35.) Jesus himself, while here upon the earth, was subject to the Spirit, and was by him enabled to do his work. (Cf. Mark 1: 12; Acts 10: 38; Luke 4: 14-21.) The expression "Holy Spirit" (capital "H") is not found in the Old Testament. (Cf. Psalm 51: 11; Isa. 63: 10, 11. The Spirit in these passages was referred to as "holy," because it was the Spirit of God who is himself holy.)

Throughout the Old Testament God is represented as dealing with men by his Spirit, and the same is true in the New Testament; but with the incarnation, the term "the Holy Spirit" is the usual title which is given to God's Spirit. The impersonal aspect of the Spirit is dropped, and he, rather than it, along with the Father and the Son, is represented as a distinct person, whose special work is to bring to fulfillment in human experience the total meaning of Jesus Christ as God's Son and the Redeemer of the world. Or, to state the same thing in another way, the Spirit, along with the Word, was personified, and took his place in the scheme of human redemption. The following passages show that the terms "God" and "the Holy Spirit" are used interchangeably: (1) Acts 5: 3, 4; (2) Isa. 6: 8-10; Acts 28: 25-27; (3) Jer. 31: 31-34; Heb. 10: 15-17; (4) 2 Cor. 3: 17, 18.

The foregoing facts should be sufficient to show any thoughtful student that the term "pour" in the lesson text now before us is used in a figurative sense. God didn't any more pour out his Spirit literally, than would it be possible for a human being to pour out his spirit, literally. The original Hebrew word for "pour out" is *shaphak*, and other figurative uses of the term are as follows: pour out my soul (1 Sam. 1: 15); poureth contempt (Job 12: 21) poureth out my gall (Job 16: 13) pour out thine indignation (Psalm 69: 24); pour out my complaint (Psalm 142: 2) pour . . . the spirit of grace and of supplication (Zech. 12: 10). The corresponding New Testament word is *ekcheo* and its figurative use, in addition to Acts 2: 17, 18, is found in Acts 2: 33; Tit. 3: 6. There are various figures in the New Testament

for the impartation of the Holy Spirit to God's people; but the practical meaning of all of them is to give the Spirit to those who obey him. (Cf. Acts 5: 32; 15: 8.) There is no such thing as a literal "pouring out" of the Spirit, or a "drinking" of the Spirit, or a "baptism" in the Spirit. These are alike but metaphors, designed by the resemblance they suggest, to present to the mind, in various aspects and from various points of view, the most lively and correct ideas possible of a fact which, in whatever form or imagery it may be clothed, *itself always remains the same*, and is simply and unfiguratively the impartation or gift of the Holy Spirit to those who believe.

The language of Joel, along with Peter's quotation and use of it, indicates the wide "distribution" of the Spirit. "All flesh" evidently means people of *all nations*, as may be seen from such passages as Isa. 40: 5; Matt. 28: 19; while *your sons and your daughters, your old men, and your young men* shows that the language of the prophet was addressed to the Jewish people, as such. However, the time would come when they would have to learn that the gospel was also intended for men of every race. (Cf. Mark 16: 15; Acts 10: 34, 34.) In response to the question of the people on Pentecost, Peter said, "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. *For unto you in the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him*" (Acts 2: 38, 39.) You and your children were the Jews; while

"all that are afar off" were the Gentiles. (Cf. Eph. 2: 11-18.)

The "promise" to which Peter referred in Acts 2: 39 is the one which was made by Joel, and quoted by Peter at the beginning of his discourse. (Cf. Acts 1: 4.) As the apostle proceeded with his sermon, he said, "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." (Acts 2: 33.) Thus, the "pouring forth" of the verse just quoted is clearly that which was predicted by Joel and quoted earlier in the sermon by Peter; and since the promise had been given to Jesus by the Father, it was the same as that referred to in Acts 1: 4. And so Peter, in effect, said to the inquiring people of Pentecost, We have received the promise ourselves; and if you will get your hearts and lives cleaned up so that he can dwell in you, you, too, will receive the Holy Spirit. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the *promise of the Spirit* through [the] faith" (Gal. 3: 13, 14.) "The faith" in the original is equivalent to the gospel. (Cf. Acts 6: 7.) The blessings of the promise which Joel predicted began to be fulfilled of Pentecost; and all who obeyed the gospel were delivered from sin, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit. (Cf. 1 Cor. 12: 13; Heb. 6: 4; Gal. 4: 6; 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20.)

### Questions for Discussion

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

#### Introduction

What are some of the relevant facts concerning Joel and his prophecy?  
Where did he probably do his work?  
What important thing should we remember regarding his prophecy?  
What do we know regarding the terrible conditions during the time of his preaching?

#### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Joel speak the words of this text?  
What was the apparent purpose of the plague of locusts?  
What was the "valley of decision" and

where was it located?  
What decision was made there?  
What great assurance was given to the Lord's people at the same time?  
In what sense will no stranger pass through any more?  
A Call to Rejoice over God's Blessings  
What was the occasion for this call for rejoicing?  
What vital lessons can people learn from material disaster?  
What important lessons may we learn from the Old Testament Scriptures?  
God's Blessings Are Always Abundant and His Promises Never Fail  
What great example in the Saviour's teaching do we have of plenty after famine?



What are the principal lessons in the parable of the prodigal son?  
 What does the Lord mean by saying that his people would not be put to shame?

#### The Outpouring of the Spirit

Under what circumstances was the outpouring of the Spirit promised?  
 Why is the gift of the Holy Spirit such a great blessing to the Lord's people?  
 Who or what is the Holy Spirit?  
 In what way is the Holy Spirit related to God?  
 How has Jehovah always carried on his mighty works?  
 Cite some examples of the manner in which God has done his works.

Discuss "God in three Persons" as he is revealed in the Bible.  
 What is meant by saying that God's Word and Spirit were personified?  
 In what sense was the Holy Spirit poured out on Pentecost?  
 Why was figurative language used in describing the giving of the Spirit to God's people?  
 To whom was the Spirit promised or upon whom was he poured out?  
 What did Peter say about the promise as he answered the question of some who heard him?  
 In what way do people receive the Holy Spirit today?  
 In what way is this promise related to the gospel?

### Lesson IV—January 24, 1965

## AMOS PLEADS FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

#### Lesson Text

#### Amos 5: 14-27

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

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

16 Therefore thus saith Je-ho'-vah, the God of hosts, the Lord: Wailing shall be in all the broad ways; and they shall say in all the streets, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful in lamentation to wailing.

17 And in all vineyards shall be wailing; for I will pass through the midst of thee, saith Je-ho'-vah.

18 Woe unto you that desire the day of Je-ho'-vah! Wherefore would ye have the day of Je-ho'-vah? It is darkness, and not light.

19 As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.

20 Shall not the day of Je-ho'-vah

be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?

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

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

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

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

25 Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Is'-ra-el?

26 Yea, ye have borne the tabernacle of your king and the shrine of your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.

27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Da-mas'-cus, saith Je-ho'-vah, whose name is the God of hosts.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Woe to them that are at ease in Zion"* (Amos 6: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—AMOS 5: 1-13.

#### Daily Bible Readings

Jan. 18. M. .... Righteousness Exalteth a Nation (Prov. 14: 29-35)  
 Jan. 19. T. .... Righteousness Results from Obedience (Deut. 6: 20-25)  
 Jan. 20. W. .... All of God's Commandments Are Righteousness (Psalm 119: 169-176)  
 Jan. 21. T. .... Jehovah Loves Righteousness (Psalm 11: 1-7)  
 Jan. 22. .... F. Blessed Are They Who Hunger and Thirst After Righteousness (Matt. 5: 6)  
 Jan. 23. S. .... God Reckons Righteousness to the Faithful (Rom. 4: 1-8)  
 Jan. 24. S. .... We Must Learn What God's Righteousness Is (Rom. 10: 1-4)

TIME.—Probably about 760 B.C.

PLACE.—Bethel.

PERSONS.—Amos and the people of Israel.

## Introduction

Amos, one of the earliest of the Minor Prophets, preceded perhaps only by Jonah, is known as the prophet of social justice. He apparently lived in Tekoa, a few miles south of Jerusalem, as may be gathered from the first verse of his prophecy. Something of his call to the prophetic office, and the effectiveness of his work, may be learned from his encounter with Amaziah the priest of Bethel. "Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land. Also Amaziah saith unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thou away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: but prophesy not again any more at Bethel; for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house.

"Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycomore-trees: and Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Now therefore hear thou the word of Jehovah: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac; therefore thus saith Jehovah: Thy wife shall be a harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou thyself shalt die in a land that is unclean, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land." (Amos 7: 10-17.) The sending of Amos from Judah to Bethel in the kingdom of Israel, in the days of Jeroboam II, reminds us of a similar incident during the days of Jeroboam I. (See 1 Kings 13.)

The opening part of the Book of

Amos tells us something about the time of his prophecy. The words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake." (Amos 1: 1.) This was probably about ten years before the time of Hosea's prophecy. The Jeroboam of this period was known as Jeroboam II, to distinguish him from the first king of Israel, who was also named Jeroboam. It was during the reign of the second Jeroboam that the northern kingdom enjoyed a period of great national expansion and almost unparalleled prosperity. And as is so often the case, material blessings turned the hearts and minds of the people away from God. Moral corruption and spiritual decay were soon the order of the day. The people became guilty of almost every imaginable sin; and of course fell into the disfavor of God.

The Assyrian Empire, with Nineveh as its capital, had been spared by the preaching of Jonah, some twenty years before, and was, about the time of the lesson now before us, preparing to reach toward the Mediterranean Sea in a program of conquest. And it was not many years after the prophecy of Amos, probably around forty, that Israel fell a victim of that mighty power, and was taken into captivity. The people of Israel during the days of Amos apparently imagined that their God would always protect them from their enemies, regardless of their moral conduct, provided they conciliated him by sacrifices and offerings. This was the reason why Amos showed them once and for all that a merely ritual religion has no value in God's sight. Jehovah, as a moral Being, demands moral conduct; and as a spiritual Being, he demands spiritual service from his worshippers. (Cf. Matt. 7: 12; John 4: 24; Rom. 12: 1, 2.)

## The Golden Text

"Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, . . ." To be at ease evidently meant that the people of Israel were satisfied with their lot, and were not concerned with the physical suffering, and the moral and spiritual con-

ditions with which they were surrounded. This was especially true of the leaders. They had what they wanted, and that was all that mattered with them. In commenting on the situation which Amos faced,

Charles Foster Kent says, "The task of Amos and his fellow prophets was rendered doubly difficult by the fact that Northern Israel was then at the height of its national prosperity. Victories and wealth were regarded as convincing proofs that the nation enjoyed in a unique degree Jehovah's approval. The lavish gifts and elaborate ritual at the national sanctuary satisfied the national conscience and furnished the insecure basis for the prevailing optimism. This false confidence so blinded the eyes of Israel's leaders that they failed to appreciate the ominous significance of the steady approach of the invincible Assyrian armies. Social injustice was strongly entrenched in the temple as well as in the palace. If the mighty giants of social oppression that stalked abroad in the land were to be slain, a greater than David was needed. Again it was a Judean shepherd who went out single-handed to challenge the strong and deadly foes that threatened the peace and prosperity of Jehovah's people."

But if we are to be benefited by the lesson regarding Israel, we must take a look at ourselves. Any thoughtful observer knows that there are many among us today who lack real seriousness regarding the responsibilities which Christianity enjoins upon its adherents. To use a modern phrase, many of us are easy-going. Many professed Christians apparently have the idea that faith in the Lord is intended merely as a kind of condition to bring us into the place of peace and happiness. But faith is not a mere mental ecstasy; it is a

moral energy. It is not merely the expression of our relationship with God; it is the starting-point of our service in his kingdom. Thus, to settle down in the name of faith and be at ease in Zion, is either a total misconception of the nature of faith, or a wilful insincerity with reference to the carrying out the call and claims of faith. Any idea of the Christian life, as The Speaker's Bible points out, as one of ease and happiness, of self-enrichment and self-enjoyment, is entirely opposed to the whole spirit and teaching of the New Testament.

Service in a righteous cause, in all ages of the world, has and does require the Lord's people to gird up their loins for the running of a race which challenges their strength to the uttermost. In the language of one of the Old Testament's greatest prophets, "They that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." (Isa. 40: 31.) The writer of Hebrews puts the matter this way, "Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12: 1, 2; of. 1 Cor. 9: 26, 27.)

### The Text Explained

#### A Call to Seek Jehovah

(Amos 5: 14, 15)

*Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be with you, as ye say. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate: it may be that Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.*

Earlier in the chapter, Amos had spoken these words: "For thus saith Jehovah unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live; but seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity,

and Bethel shall come to nought. Seek Jehovah, and ye shall live: lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel. Ye who turn justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth, seek him that maketh the Pleiades and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night; that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth (Jehovah is his name); that bringeth sudden destruction upon the strong, so that destruction cometh upon the fortress." (Amos 5: 4-9.)

The principal idea in the exhortation to seek Jehovah is that men must first recognize something of who God is, and the character of the service which he requires of those who follow after him. Or, to state the same thing in another way, when people come to recognize the almighty power of Jehovah and the justice and righteousness which characterize his government, along with the certain destruction of all that which is opposed to him; then they will see that they must seek after him, or be destroyed. A failure to recognize these truths is one of the major sins of our day. People say that they want Jehovah to be with them, but instead of seeking for him in his own appointed way, they seek for him in worldly institutions and the ordinances of men. The New Testament abounds in teaching which shows that such efforts shall result in complete failure. (Cf. Matt. 15: 7-14; John 14: 6; Gal. 1: 6-9.) Ephraim, one of the sons of Joseph, was the dominant tribe of the northern kingdom; and that evidently accounts for the reference to the house of Joseph.

### The Day of Jehovah Will Bring Many Surprises (Amos 5: 16-20)

*Therefore thus saith Jehovah, the God of hosts, the Lord: Wailing shall be in the broad ways; and they shall say in all the streets, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skillful in lamentation to wailing. And in all vineyards shall be wailing; for I will pass through the midst of thee, saith Jehovah.*

This portion of the lesson text appears to be based on the imagery of that which took place among the Egyptians, at the time when the angel of Jehovah passed over the Israelites, but left one dead in every house of the Egyptians. The wailing and distress which would come to the people of the northern kingdom would be comparable to that which came to the people of Egypt. The people to whom Amos spoke, and who should have known better, apparently regarded lightly and imprudently the day of the Lord, which they professed to want. As George Adam Smith observes, all popular

hopes expect their victory to come in a single crisis—a day. To the people of Israel, the day of Jehovah meant the day of his judgment, or of his triumph—his triumph over the enemies of his people, and his judgment upon them. But Amos, who was warning the people that judgment begins at home, told them that the day of Jehovah meant, not victory over their foes, but their own destruction. Thus, instead of with rejoicing, the day would be characterized with mourning, so universal that the professional mourners would be brought in.

The religion of the New Testament is meant to bring men close to God. It is not something which men may use to soothe their conscience, while they live according to their own desires. Almost any thoughtful observer has seen members of the church treat others just about any way, so long as it pleased them; and then left them to suffer while they enjoyed the fruits of their unrighteousness. But what they fail to take into consideration is that there is a day of reckoning coming, when each person shall receive the things which he has done, whether they be good or bad. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 10.) John says, "All unrighteousness is sin," (1 John 5: 17); and this is, according to Thayer, "a deed violating law and justice, and an act of unrighteousness." It includes every breach of duty, and everything which comes short of the requirements of justice. Those who are in places of power and influence can do just about as they please during their lifetime; but there is a great day coming when they will have to answer to God. This is about the picture which Amos placed before the people of his day.

*Woe unto you that desire the day of Jehovah! Wherefore would ye have the day of Jehovah? It is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of Jehovah be darkness, and not light, even very dark, and no brightness in it?*

It appears that the people to whom Amos spoke pretended to deplore the existing condition of the nation, and professed to long for the day of the

Lord, when things would be made right. But Amos made it plain to them that that day would be darkness, not light; judgment, rather than deliverance. He compared the situation to a man who lived along where lions and bears lurked, and where the houses were infested with snakes. As G. Campbell Morgan expresses the matter, there can be no escape from doom, but by the way of penitence. We are not yet independent of God, notwithstanding all of our inventions, policies, armaments, and combines. This is the message which we have to preach, and the message which we must live in the midst of the nations around us.

### Hypocrisy and Formalism Will Certainly Be Punished (Amos 5: 21-27)

*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.*

The most elaborate worship of insincere people is an insult to God; and unless one's daily life is in accordance with the general teaching of the Lord, his acts of public devotion will avail nothing. The wise man of the Old Testament said, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." (Prov. 28: 9.) While Jesus declares, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4: 24.) This should be enough to convince even the superficial that only those whose hearts and lives are right before God are acceptable to him. George Adam Smith speaks of the false worship of the Israelites as the nurse of vain hopes, and the false prophet of peace; and he points out that they heard God speak more strongly than ever of its futility and hatefulness. Hastings notes that Amos did not denounce the worship of Israel because it was a degraded form of religion, nor like his successor Hosea, because it was calf-

worship, nor because it was schismatical; but because it was offered by unrighteous and immoral worshippers. It is very clear from the Lord's letter to the angel of the church in Ephesus that a correct form of worship and service will not suffice, if the hearts of the worshippers are not in it. (See Rev. 2: 1-7.)

In commenting on verse 24, The Speaker's Bible points out that this is one of the finest utterances in the Hebrew Scriptures. Never did prophet or psalmist urge with such force and terseness the claims of moral rectitude to rule our conduct. Doing that which is right and loving toward our fellow men must be regarded as the essence of true religion. Justice and righteousness, so often neglected or forgotten, must fill the land as with a flood of vivifying waters. The stream is to be not only mighty, but constant. It is not to be a torrent which is soon swollen, and as quickly dried up—that kind of brook so common in the East, and to which the man of Uz in Job 6:

15 reproachfully compared his friends; but a river flowing at all seasons, and which never fails. This return to justice and righteousness must be no sudden and transient reformation; it must become the regulating factor of every individual child of God.

*Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? Yea, ye have borne the tabernacle of your king and the shrine of your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith Jehovah, whose name is the God of hosts.*

Although Israel went through a pretense of worship to Jehovah during the time of the wilderness journeys, yet it is a historical fact that their hearts were not usually in that which they were doing; for they were almost continuously in a state of insurrection or murmuring. People cannot please God, although the form of their worship may be correct, if their hearts are not right with him. It should be remembered that 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." There-

fore, 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, so far as the Lord's people today are concerned, are stated in John 4: 24. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." When we analyse this passage, it will be seen that there are three major propositions to be considered, namely, (1) *The right object of worship—God.* The conditions of worship are such that the worshipper becomes in character like the object he worships. Therefore, the idea which man forms of God will have much to do with the development of his own character. (2) *The right motive—in spirit.* The idea is that our worship must be sincere, not formal nor indifferent. True worship includes a spiritual sense of the object worshipped, and spiritual communion with him. (3) *The right way—in truth.* That is, guided by the truth and thus free from false conceptions, which result from imperfect knowledge. True worship includes a truthful conception of the object of worship; and this truthful conception can be gained only by learning the truth.

There were many things in the lives of the Israelites which prevented their being acceptable to God. We have already emphasized two of them, namely, their unrighteous lives and the lack of whole-hearted devotion to God. When people maintain a wrong relationship with their fellow Christians, as evidenced in their unjust and unrighteous conduct toward them, they cannot worship

God acceptably. (Cf. Matt. 5: 23-26; 1 John 3: 14-18; 4: 20, 21.) But to love one's brother is not enough; there must also be room in the heart for nothing except God and that which pleases him. But there was another thing wrong with Israel, and that was their idolatry; and that is the thing which Amos condemned in the portion of the lesson text now before us.

It may seem difficult for us to understand why the people of the Old Testament period so often fell into idolatrous worship; but we should remember that the same thing in principle is often prevalent among the Lord's people today. The last exhortation in 1 John is, "My little children, guard yourselves from idols." (1 John 5: 21.) An idol, so far as its practical meaning is concerned, may be defined as anything which is exalted as the chief good, or which is made an object of supreme devotion; anything which absorbs one's attention or aspirations. With this definition in mind, it is easy to see that many professed Christians do have interests in things other than that which is strictly in the Lord's service; and which receives devotion from them which ought to be given to Jehovah. Amos quotes Jehovah as saying that he would cause the Israelites to go into captivity beyond Damascus, while Stephen, commenting on the same passage, quotes Jehovah as saying, "And I will carry you away beyond Babylon." (See Acts 7: 42b, 43.) Both statements were true. Stephen probably substituted Babylon for Damascus, because the former was inseparably connected with the captivity after it became a reality.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

For what is Amos particularly known among the prophets?  
How did he come to be a prophet and what is known of his effectiveness in that capacity?  
Of what does his going to Bethel remind Bible students?  
During what time did Amos prophesy?  
What attitude did the people of his day apparently manifest?  
What important lesson did Amos bring to their attention?

### The Golden Text

What did the prophet Amos mean by

saying, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion?"

What conditions contributed to the difficulty of Amos' task?  
In what way is this lesson applicable to people in this day and time?  
What should the faith of Christians do for them?  
What does service in a righteous cause require?

### A Call to Seek Jehovah

What is the principal motive which should actuate people in seeking for Jehovah?  
What mistakes were the people to whom Amos spoke making in this respect?  
What important lesson should people of our day learn regarding this?  
Why was the name of Joseph mentioned in this connection?

### The Day of Jehovah Will Bring Many Surprises

Upon what imagery is this portion of the lesson text apparently based?  
 What did they mean by the "day of Jehovah" and what was their attitude toward it?  
 What "surprise" were they going to receive regarding it?  
 What is the principal purpose of the religion of the New Testament?  
 What does the New Testament teach regarding a day of reckoning?  
 In what way did Amos illustrate what the day of Jehovah would bring the people of his day?

What should this teach us regarding the message which we are to proclaim?

### Hypocrisy and Formalism Will Certainly Be Punished

Why was the worship of the people now under consideration rejected?

Discuss the attitude which must be manifested by those who worship God, if they are to be accepted.

What did the unacceptable worship of the Israelites do for them?

Why did Amos denounce their worship?

What is the relation of righteousness and justice to acceptable worship?

What question did Jehovah ask the people regarding their worship and what was the purpose of it?

What are the essential conditions of true worship?

What place in the hearts of his people does Jehovah demand for himself? Why is this true?

What dangers of idolatrous worship faces the people of this day?

What is the essential meaning of an idol?

What difference is noted between Amos and Stephen regarding the place of the captivity?

## Lesson V—January 31, 1965

# JONAH S DISOBEDIENCE AND PUNISHMENT

### Lesson Text

#### Jonah 1:1-17

1 Now the word of Je-ho'-vah came unto Jo'-nah the son of A-mit'-tai, saying,

2 Arise, go to Nin'-e-veh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

3 But Jo'-nah rose up to flee unto Tar'-shish from the presence of Je-ho'-vah; and he went down to Jop'-pa, and found a ship going to Tar'-shish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tar'-shish from the presence of Je-ho'-vah.

4 But Je-ho'-vah sent out a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god; and they cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it unto them. But Jo'-nah was gone down into the innermost parts of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this

evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jo'-nah.

8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?

9 And he said unto them, I am a Hebrew; and I fear Je-ho'-vah, the God of heaven, who hath made the sea and the dry land.

10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, What is this that thou hast done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Je-ho'-vah, because he had told them.

11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea grew more and more tempestuous.

12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.

13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to get them back to the land; but they could not: for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them.

14 Wherefore they cried unto Je-ho'-vah, and said, We beseech thee, O Je-ho'-vah, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and

lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Je-ho'-vah, hast done as it pleased thee.

15 So they took up Jo'-nah, and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging.

16 Then the men feared Je-ho'-

vah exceedingly; and they offered a sacrifice unto Je-ho'-vah, and made vows.

17 And Je-ho'-vah prepared a great fish to swallow up Jo'-nah; and Jo'-nah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

**Golden Text.**—*"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"* (Matt. 12: 40.)

**Devotional Heading.**—Jonah 2: 1-10.

## Daily Bible Readings

Jan. 25. M.....	All Disobedient People Will Be Lost (Heb. 4: 1-7)
Jan. 26. T.....	The Consequences of Adam's Disobedience (Rom. 5: 12-21)
Jan. 27. ....	W. All People without the Gospel Are in Disobedience (Rom. 11: 25-32)
Jan. 28. ....	T. The Spirit of Satan Works in the Sons of Disobedience (Eph. 2: 1-10)
Jan. 29. F.....	Disobedience Can Become a Pattern (Heb. 4: 8-13)
Jan. 30. S.....	The Gospel Will Avenge All Disobedience (2 Cor. 10: 1-6)
Jan. 31. S.....	Punishment for Disobedience Is No Light Thing (2 Thess. 1: 3-10)

**Time.**—Probably between 800 and 780 B.C.

**Places.**—Joppa and the Mediterranean sea.

**Persons.**—Jehovah, Jonah, and the mariners.

## Introduction

The first mention made of Jonah in the Bible is in 2 Kings 14: 25. There the sacred historian speaks of Jonah's prophecy in connection with the success which attended the efforts of Jeroboam II in restoring the territory of Israel which had been taken by other nations. "He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah, according to the word of Jehovah, the God of Israel, which he spake by his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher." Gath-hepher was in Galilee, a few miles northeast of Nazareth. Jonah lived and prophesied either in the early part of the reign of Jeroboam II (about 786-745), or during the period immediately preceding it. George Adam Smith thinks that Jonah flourished nearly a generation before Amos; and if this is true, which apparently it is, then Jonah was the first of the twelve prophets which we are considering in these studies.

The Book of Jonah is listed among the prophets of the Old Testament, but it differs from all of the other books of the prophets in that it is a narrative, rather than a prophecy. It is true that several of the prophetic books do contain biographical and historical facts; but their major content is that of the utterances of the

prophets themselves. But in the case of the Book of Jonah, there are very few prophetic utterances found in it. (Cf. Jonah 3: 4.) Although the Book of Jonah is concerned with the activities of the prophet himself, it is entirely possible that the actual writing of the book may have occurred at a much later date than the lifetime of Jonah, in which case it would of necessity have to have been written by some other hand; but this in no way detracts from the inspiration of the narrative. It simply means that in the providence of Jehovah, a sacred historian recorded the facts as they occurred during the time of Jonah. But regardless of who may have written the book itself, its evident purpose was to teach the people of God the inclusiveness of the divine government, and to rebuke the exclusiveness of their own attitude toward other people.

It is a matter of regret that the very mention of Jonah today provokes a smile, or even a sneer, on the part of multitudes of people. The word "Jonah" has become for many a sort of synonym for bad luck or misfortune; and with this attitude toward the prophet, they miss both the beauty and the significance of the narrative. That Jonah himself was a real person, one who proph-



esied in the name of Jehovah, is attested in both the Old and New Testament. (2 Kings 14: 25; Matt. 12: 38-41.) While Bible students differ widely regarding the nature of the book of Jonah, practically all of them unite in saying that Jonah himself was a historical character. It is true

that there is no claim in the book itself to the fact that Jonah himself wrote it, and if written by someone else, we have no way of ascertaining his identity; but we must accept the historicity of the narrative or deny the claims of Jesus. (Cf. Luke 11: 29-32; Matt. 16: 4.)

### The Golden Text

*"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"* It is not uncommon in these days, to hear some one object to the story of Jonah on the ground that it would have been impossible for a whale to swallow him. This viewpoint has led some Bible students into the so-called allegorical interpretation of the narrative, as may be seen from the following quotation from Bewer. "The grotesqueness of the episode of the fish, when taken literally, has led some scholars to resort to an allegorical interpretation of the story. According to them Jonah stands for Israel; the great fish for the Babylonians. This, Israel, commissioned by God to bring his truth to the Gentiles, refuses and turns away from God to embark 'on the stormy sea of the world's politics.' There she is swallowed up by Babylon (cf. Jer. 51: 34) and carried into exile, where she turns again to the Lord who forgives and restores her. But she still hopes for the punishment of the nations and is utterly disappointed and even offended when this hope is not fulfilled. So she must be taught that her attitude is totally wrong, for God's mercy extends to all of his creatures, and sincere repentance insures his forgiveness to all, irrespective of nationality." (*The Prophets*, Harper's Annotated Bible.)

But such an interpretation as that just indicated is wholly uncalled for, as may be seen from the following from M'Clintock and Strong's *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*. "Much profane wit has been expended on the miraculous means of Jonah's deliverance, very unnecessarily and very absurdly; it is simply said, 'The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.' Now the species of marine

animal is not defined, and the Greek *ketos* is often used to specify, not the genus whale, but any large fish or sea-monster. All objections to its being a whale which lodged Jonah in its stomach, from its straitness of throat or rareness of haunt in Mediterranean, are thus removed." (Vol. IV, p. 991.) Thayer defines *ketos* to mean "a sea-monster, whale, huge fish;" and since Jehovah "prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah," we have every reason to believe that it was fully capable of doing just that. At any rate, we have the testimony of Jesus to that effect, as clearly stated in the words of the golden text.

Thus, not only does Jesus affirm the historicity of the book of Jonah, he also makes the experience of the prophet in the great fish the type of his own burial. However, Bible students through the years have not been in agreement regarding the exact day of the Lord's crucifixion, or, which is the same thing, the length of time he was in the tomb. Those who are acquainted with the New Testament are aware of the fact that there are three expressions which are used to indicate the period of time in question, namely, (1) "three days and three nights," Matt. 12: 40; (2) "after three days," Mark 8: 31; and (3) "the third day," Luke 24: 7. One has only to consult the Old Testament in order to find out that that was the manner in which the Jews spoke of the same period of time. (See Gen. 42: 17, 18; 2 Chron. 10: 5, 12; Esth. 4: 16; 5: 1; of. Matt. 27: 63, 64.) We know that Jesus was raised from the dead early on the first day of the week (Mark 16: 9), and that he was crucified on the evening of the day of Preparation, which was the day before the sabbath (Mark 15: 42). This should be sufficient to show that Jesus was in the tomb a part of Friday, all day

Saturday, and a part of Sunday or the first day of the week; and that the Jews reckoned a part of a day

as a whole day when it occurred at the beginning or the end of a series. (Cf. Acts 10: 3, 9, 23, 24, 30.)

## The Text Explained

### Jonah's Commission and Disobedience

(Jonah 1: 1-3)

*Now the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah; and he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah.*

The Book of Jonah is one of the most unique books in the entire Bible. Its message is simple; and yet it has been and still is the object of untold criticism—destructive criticism at that. It is not our purpose to deal with these criticisms, but rather to point out some of the lessons which are taught by the inspired writer. There are many strange things set forth in this book, but none stranger than Jonah's attempt to get away from the presence of Jehovah. He knew Jehovah, worshipped him, and was his minister and messenger; but with all of that, he actually made his plans and attempted to flee beyond his presence. We might wonder why he did not ask, with David, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." (Psalm 139: 7-10.) It is important to observe, however, that Jonah made no effort to get away from Jehovah, until he began to oppose his will—until he began to object to going where God wanted him to go; and doing what he wanted him to do. This is a good time for us to stop and examine ourselves in this respect; and especially when we sing, "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go."

There was no question regarding

Jonah's duty; for the word of Jehovah came unto him. Direct revelation, of course, ceased in the long-ago (cf. 1 Cor. 13: 8; Eph. 4: 11-16); but that does not mean that the Lord never speaks to his people in any other way. We can learn our duty today from reading the inspired scriptures, study and meditation, hearing a gospel sermon, et cetera, just as plainly as Jonah did. If this were not true, then how could people know what the Lord expects of them, for example, with reference to the plan of salvation and living the Christian life? We need not expect a direct call from the Lord, but we can and should yield ourselves to the teaching of his word and his providential guidance. We are therefore under just as much obligation to hear and obey the will of the Lord now, as were the people who received direct instruction during Bible times.

The record now under consideration plainly shows that Jonah did not want to do that which God told him to do, due, in all probability, to the prophet's misunderstanding of Jehovah's attitude toward people who were not of the Jewish race. The Lord originally intended for all men to walk after his commandments; but after sin entered into the world, his covenant has been with his chosen people. (Cf. Acts 14: 16; 17: 26-28; Rom. 2: 14, 15.) Although allowed to choose their own way, it did not follow that Jehovah ceased to have any interest in those who were not in covenant relationship with him. (Cf. Jonah 4: 6-11; 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 9; Acts 10: 34, 35.) Even God's chosen people have not always obeyed him, but the Father did not cast them off (cf. Rom. 11: 1-4). What therefore would have been their lot, had the Lord not been willing to bring them to repentance? We may criticize Jonah for his lack of interest in the disobedient of other nations; but are *we* doing any better? (Cf. Mark 16: 15.) Jonah 4: 1, 2 strongly indicates that the prophet felt that the people of Nineveh might repent; and that a blessing to them would be somewhat of a blow to

him and his people. But whatever the reason for his attitude, he made up his mind to disobey God at any cost.

**Jehovah's Intervention and the  
Mariners' Distress**  
(Jonah 1: 4-10)

*But Jehovah sent out a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god; and they cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it unto them. But Jonah was gone down into the innermost parts of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him. What meanest thou. O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou? And he said unto them, I am a Hebrew; and I fear Jehovah, the God of heaven, who hath made the sea and the dry land. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, What is this that thou hast done? for the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Jehovah, because he had told them.*

That which Jehovah did in arresting Jonah, as he made his attempt to flee from the presence of Jehovah, has been fittingly called the divine pursuit. The Lord is going to deal with every person who allows sin and rebellion to come into his life. (Cf. Heb. 2: 1-3; 1 Cor. 4: 2; 2 Cor. 5: 10.) God may, and often does, delay his judgments; but that is no indication that he is overlooking any sin in the lives of his people. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 8-10.) He waited long in Noah's time (Gen. 6: 1-8), and the same was also true in the case of the Jewish nation (Matt. 21: 28-44); but that only meant that he was allowing them to demonstrate their true character. A reckoning time is coming.

(Cf. Acts 17: 30, 31; Heb. 10: 26-31.)

Jonah was simply attempting the impossible. There were only two courses open to him, namely, (1) *Nineveh*—the city to which he could go in fellowship with God, and within the circle of his will; and (2) *Tarshish*—the city which lay at the end of the rebel's road; and in which he would have to walk without the fellowship of God whom he was disobeying. The prophet fully meant to take the latter route. There are likewise only two courses open to us: We each have our *Nineveh*, that is our duty, whatever and wherever it may be; and then there is *Tarshish*—the city of have-your-own-way, do as you please, and take it easy. Any right thinking person will be profoundly grateful to the heavenly Father, if in his providence such a one is prevented from going to his *Tarshish*.

The fact that Jonah could go to sleep so easily and quickly is a clear indication of his spiritual condition. A man whose mind is made up to do a certain thing, although entirely against the will of God, is more at ease than is he whose mind is not fully made up. There is hope for one when his disobedience causes him unrest and grief; but it is a sad day for him who can face the future undisturbed by such a condition. (Cf. 1 Sam. 15: 13, 14; Luke 15: 29.) The spirit of indifference toward the work of the Lord is one of the most discouraging features about the service which he has ordained; and in order that we may see the force of the statement just made, let each one ask himself what his individual religious program involves. For example, whose burden is the Lord's day Bible school? Upon whose shoulders does the responsibility for the mid-week meeting of the church rest? Whose responsibility is it to visit the sick, the needy, the indifferent, and the new members. In short, what does the average member's discipleship cost him?

Although Jonah sought to run away from Jehovah, God did not permit him to succeed. (Cf. Hos. 11: 8; Jer. 31: 3.) Jehovah "hurled" (see marginal note) a storm into the sea, which is another way of saying that he would not allow Jonah to go

comfortably and peacefully to his death. The story is told of a farmer who, on a bitter cold day, was driving his horses, hitched to his wagon, along a road, when he overtook a woman carrying her baby. He invited her to take her baby into the wagon, and ride with him. After a little while he noticed that the woman became drowsy; and, taking the baby from her, he required that she walk behind the wagon. After she had been out for a few minutes, he gradually began to drive the horses a little faster and faster; and it was not long until the woman was compelled to run in order to keep up. However, the vigorous exercise soon brought life into her body again; and the apparent mistreatment which she had received from the farmer was only an effort on his part to keep her from freezing. And just so, many of the seemingly hard things which happen to people may be but the workings of a kindly Providence, in an effort to bring them into the better way. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28.)

It is interesting and profitable to observe the difference in the attitude of the mariners and Jonah. They were desperate in their efforts to do the right thing, while the prophet was satisfied with his own comfort. This same principle can often be seen, when a comparison is made of people outside the family of God with some church members.

#### The Prophet Thrown into the Sea and Swallowed by a Great Fish (Jonah 1: 11-17)

*Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea grew more and more tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to get them back to the land; but they could not: for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Wherefore they cried unto Jehovah, and said, We beseech thee, O Jehovah, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Jehovah, hast done as it pleased thee. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth*

*into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared Jehovah exceedingly; and they offered a sacrifice unto Jehovah, and made vows.*

It is good to know that while the conscience of Jonah was slumbering, it was not dead. He knew that the trouble which the mariners were experiencing was due to his unfaithfulness; and when they asked him what they should do, he gave an answer which would punish him and save them. But they did not want to cast the prophet into the sea, and they tried desperately to reach the land without taking what they thought would be the life of a human being; but to no avail. They prayed earnestly unto Jehovah, the God of Jonah; and when they saw that there was nothing else to do, they took the prophet and did with him as he bade them.

In commenting on this section of the lesson text, Farrar says, "It is a remarkable fact that throughout the Book of Jonah the heathen are represented in a light far more favourable than the Jew. 'The mariners were spared; the prophet was cast forth as guilty. The Ninevites were forgiven; the prophet is rebuked. These heathen sailors were unwilling to cast Jonah into the sea. They rowed hard—in the picturesque language of the original they 'dug the sea'; but they could not bring the ship to land. The sea wrought and was tempestuous against them. Then, seeing that all else was vain, they cried: 'We beseech thee, O Jehovah, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life; let us not be held responsible for having shed innocent blood. We are but doing as thou hast willed.' So they bowed to the dreadful necessity. Without violence they lifted up the willing, conscious-stricken victim and cast him forth into the sea; and then, like a hungry monster which had received its prey, the sea was still. The ship sailed on with its awestruck and thankful crew."

And Jehovah prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Thus, in the simple language of the text, we have all the information which is available, and indeed all we need in order to

know, regarding the manner in which Jonah was saved from certain death. In the closing verse of chapter 2, we read, "And Jehovah spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry ground." And then, as Farrar further notes, it is on this single incident that attention has con-

centrated itself in volumes of speculation. But one thing is clear, and that is that the Book of Jonah was not written that we might "pore over the whale, and forget God." There are greater lessons to be learned from the facts contained in the book.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

Under what circumstances was Jonah first mentioned in the Bible?

When did he prophesy and how is he related in time to the other eleven minor prophets?

What can you say of the Book of Jonah in relation to other prophetic books?

What is the evident purpose of the Book of Jonah and what is known about its actual writer?

Why do so many people think and speak of Jonah in a light manner?

### The Golden Text

Why do so many people tend to reject the literal interpretation of the Book of Jonah?

What reasons can you give for accepting the book on the factual basis?

What is the literal meaning of the term which is used to indicate the fish which swallowed Jonah?

What should be our attitude toward the language of Jesus regarding Jonah?

What use did the Lord make of Jonah's experience?

What do we know regarding the time Jesus was in the tomb and how do we arrive at the conclusion?

### Jonah's Commission and Disobedience

How do you account for Jonah's attempt to get away from the presence of Jehovah?

Why should he have known that such a flight is impossible?

In what way do any of us learn what we should do in the Lord's service?

What was Jonah's probable reason for not wanting to obey Jehovah's command to go to Nineveh?

What lesson should we learn from this?

### Jehovah's Intervention and the Mariners' Distress

How may we fittingly describe Jehovah's work in stopping Jonah's flight?

What will he do with all people who allow sin and rebellion to come into their hearts?

What were the only courses of action which were open to Jonah?

How may this lesson be applied to people today?

Why was Jonah able to go to sleep so easily when he got into his place in the ship?

How may the lesson in this connection be made practical to us?

How may we come to realize the magnitude of the sin of indifference?

Why didn't Jonah succeed in his effort to flee from Jehovah?

How should we feel regarding many of the so-called hard things of life?

Discuss the difference in the attitude of Jonah and the mariners.

### The Prophet Thrown into the Sea and Swallowed by a Great Fish

What one redeeming feature do we see in this connection regarding Jonah?

How did he advise the mariners to solve their difficulty?

Why didn't they want to throw him overboard?

Discuss the contrast between Jonah and the heathen people who are pictured in the book from which our lesson text is taken.

What did the mariners do before casting Jonah into the sea?

What happened when Jonah was thrown out of the ship?

Discuss the manner in which Jonah was saved from certain death when he was cast into the sea

## Lesson VI—February 7, 1965

## EFFECTS OF JONAH'S PREACHING

### Lesson Text

#### Jonah 3: 1-10

1 And the word of Je-ho'-vah came unto Jo'-nah the second time, saying,

2 Arise, go unto Nin'-e-veh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

3 So Jo'-nah arose, and went unto Nin'-e-veh, according to the word of Je-ho'-vah. Now Nin'-e-veh was an

exceeding great city, of three days' journey.

4 And Jo'-nah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nin'-e-veh shall be overthrown.

5 And the people of Nin'-e-veh believed God; and they proclaimed a

fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

6 And the tidings reached the king of Nin'-e-veh, and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he made proclamation and published through Nin'-e-veh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water;

8 But let them be covered with

sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands.

9 Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not.

Golden Text.—*"The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here"* (Luke 11: 32.)

Devotional Heading.—Jonah 4: 1-11.

### Daily Bible Readings

Feb. 1. M.....It Pleased God through Preaching to Save Believers (1 Cor. 1: 20-25)

Feb. 2. T.....The Gospel Was Preached to Every Creature under Heaven (Col. 1: 19-23)

Feb. 3. W.....Christ Charged His Disciples to Preach to the People (Acts 10: 34-43)

Feb. 4. T.....Gospel Preaching Makes Hearers Responsible (Mark 16: 14-18)

Feb. 5. F.....One Can Fulfill His Duty in Preaching Christ (Rom. 15: 18-25)

Feb. 6. S.....Those Who Preach Christ Are Preachers of Righteousness (Rom. 1: 16, 17)

Feb. 7. S.....Gospel Preaching Must Not Be Altered (Gal. 1: 6-9)

Time.—Probably between 800 and 780 B.C.

Places.—The seashore and Nineveh.

Persons.—Jonah and the Ninevites.

### Introduction

The prophets of the Old Testament were primarily preachers of God's word. There is a widespread idea to the effect that a prophet was first and foremost a foreteller of future events, but that idea has no scriptural basis. The literal meaning of the term "prophet" is one who speaks for another, as, for example, Aaron spoke for Moses, and was, because of that, called the latter's prophet. (See Ex. 7: 1; of. 4: 10-16.) Throughout the Old Testament we read of prophets of Jehovah who were true to him, and of some who proved to be untrue. (Cf. 2 Pet. 2: 16.) There were also false prophets of idols, such as Baal and the Asherah (1 Kings 18: 19); but there were also prophets of Jehovah who were loyal to him, under any and all circumstances. (Cf. Heb. 3: 5.) It is true that prophets sometimes forecast the future, but much of their work had to do with the then present—telling the people what God wanted them to know at the time they spoke.

It often happened that the proph-

et's task was difficult, so far as he was concerned, due to the attitude of the people for whom the message was intended. (Cf. Ezek. 2: 1-7.) Jeremiah also had a difficult task, and on one occasion he said, "O Jehovah, thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am become a laughing-stock all the day, every one mocketh me. For as often as I speak, I cry out; I cry, Violence and destruction! because the word of Jehovah is made a reproach unto me, and a derision, all the day. And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain." (Jer. 20: 7-9; of.

2 Tim. 4: 1-5.) Opposition which sometimes results in persecution, however, is not the only reason why preachers often are tempted to "side step" the truth. There are some, or so it seems, who prefer popularity to faithfulness; and with that kind

of attitude, they are often guilty of a failure to preach the truth regarding questions which will tend to make their listeners think less of them.

The attitude just referred to is well illustrated by J. W. McGarvey, in a sermon on "Church Finances." McGarvey's words follow: "I am afraid that we preachers are not as faithful as we ought to be in dealing with this subject in the pulpit. I have myself tried to be, and consequently I have never yet lived and labored regularly for a congregation that was not a liberal one. I remember an incident told me by an aged brother when I was a young preacher, which often comes to me in this connection. There was a man about to die, the richest man in the congregation. He sent for his preacher. When he came, he said, 'I want you to read and pray with me; I think I am going to die.' The preacher sat down, and not recalling at once any particular passage to read, opened the book at random. His eyes fell on this—'Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.' He said to himself, I will not read that to the dying man; he will think I am hitting at his great failing. So he

gave the leaves a flirt at random to another place, and the first passage his eyes fell on, was the story of the man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, but who, when he died and was in Hades, lifted up his eyes in torment. He would not read that. Then he flirted the leaves towards the back of the book, and the first passage was this: 'But they that desire to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition.' The preacher's conscience began to hurt him now. He felt as if the Lord was dealing with him. He said to himself, maybe it is the intention of the Lord that I should read these very passages. So he read this last passage; he turned back to the story of the rich man and read that; he turned back to the passage in the Sermon on the Mount and read that; and when he got through, the dying man looked up at him and said, 'Why haven't you called my attention in your sermons to these passages? You know, and I know, that they strike the very sin of my life, and you have been unfaithful to me.' Oh! how did that preacher feel? I do not want to be involved in anything of that sort. I want to be faithful to men."

### The Golden Text

*"The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here"* We do not know what the man in Brother McGarvey's illustration would have done, had the preacher called his attention to the teaching of the New Testament on the subject of laying up treasures in heaven, instead of here upon the earth; but we do know what the Ninevites did when they heard the preaching of Jonah. However, if the prophet had been left to himself, he would have done as the preacher did, though from a different motive, that is, he would not have delivered the Lord's message to the people for whom it was intended. This should be enough to show the urgency of proclaiming the whole truth on all vital subjects to all people for whom

it has an application. (Read again 2 Tim. 4: 1-5.)

The words of the golden text were spoken by Jesus when the multitudes showed an unwillingness to accept him as the Messiah whom God had sent to them. Jesus told the people to whom he spoke that the seeking after a sign showed that those who sought it were an evil generation; and he assured them that no sign would be given to them but the sign of Jonah. When Jesus said that the men of Nineveh shall "stand up" in the judgment with that generation, and shall condemn it, he was probably referring to the Jewish and Roman custom which required witnesses to stand up while testifying in a criminal case.

The lesson which the Lord sought to impress upon his hearers was that inasmuch as the people of Nineveh responded to the preaching of a duly

accredited prophet, but who apparently performed no miracles to confirm his message, they would by their action condemn the people who heard Jesus, a fully accredited teacher, who did perform miracles to confirm his

message (cf. Acts 2: 22); for Jesus was in every way greater than Jonah, and those who hear him have a correspondingly greater responsibility. (Cf. Acts 3: 22, 23; Rom. 1: 20; 2 Thess. 2: 8-12.)

## The Text Explained

### Jonah's Second Chance

(Jonah 3: 1-4)

*And the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of Jehovah. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, of three days' journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*

It is interesting to observe that in giving Jonah his second commission, no reference was made to the first one. It is as if Jehovah had not spoken to the prophet before. However, Jonah was in a much better mood to listen to the Lord the second time, than he was the first. When God first told the prophet to go to Nineveh and deliver his message, he decided not to obey, but to flee in the other direction. But he had not gone very far before the Lord arrested him; and after three days Jonah found himself back at the place from which he had started. It is true that Jonah's heart had not changed; but he knew better than to try to flee from Jehovah's presence again. Man does not usually learn all of his lessons at one time. So far, Jonah had learned that he could not get away from the Lord; and later on he would learn something of the attitude which children of God should manifest toward people who are lost in sin. This last lesson is forcefully taught by Paul in the first part of Tit. 3.

There was no essential change in the content of the message which Jehovah entrusted to Jonah—just a slight change in the wording of it. [In the first instance, Jehovah said, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me;'] while at the second time, he said, "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and

preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." The words "cry" and "preach" are from the same Hebrew term *qara*, and they apparently had the same significance in Jehovah's instruction to Jonah. The prophet was to proclaim with a loud and earnest cry the danger which confronted the Ninevites. Or, to express the same thing in another way, Jonah was to deliver his message in such a way, as to lead the people of Nineveh to believe that what he said would literally come to pass, unless, of course, they changed their attitude and manner of living.

Adam Clarke points out that such earnestness becomes a ministry which has to do with immortal souls who are asleep or dead in sin (cf. Eph. 2: 1-10), hanging on the brink of perdition, and insensible to their state. The soft-speaking, gentle-toned, unmoved preacher is never likely to awaken any sleeping soul. People usually hear according to the way and manner in which preachers deliver their message; and they seldom receive any counsel from that which is said, if it is delivered in a manner which suggests that no importance is attached to it. However, it should be observed that the earnest type of preaching which we are now considering is entirely different from that noisy, blustering, screaming, ranting kind which manifests more of the turbulence of disorderly passions, than of that which is inspired by a knowledge of God's word and the lost condition of souls.

The use of the term "was" in the expression, "Now Nineveh *was* an exceeding great city, of three days' journey," has led Bible students to think that the Book of Jonah was written at a time considerably later than when he uttered his prophecy. We have already seen that Jonah's mission to Nineveh was probably between 800 and 780 B.C. Bible students are not agreed as to the time of the destruction of the Assyrian capital, but it was probably within the period of 608-606 B.C., which



would be some one hundred and seventy-five years after Jonah preached there. However, if the book was written after the fall of Nineveh, we have no way of knowing how long after. It is enough to know that it is an inspired book, and the exact time of its composition is not important.

The city of Nineveh was founded by Nimrod (Gen. 10: 9-11), and was located on the east bank of the Tigris river. It was the last capital of the Assyrian empire. Strabo says that "it was much larger than Babylon," and its builder is reported to have proposed, not only to make it the largest city in the world, but the largest that could be built by man! Something of its enormous size may be gathered from the statement found in the text, "an exceeding great city, of three days' journey" and from Jonah 4: 11: "Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle."

We are not specifically told what the three days' journey referred to, whether to the circumference of the city, across it, or whether it would take Jonah three days to pass through the principal streets and lanes of the city, and proclaim his message. In either case, it was a great undertaking; and, so far as the record goes, his preaching was confined to a single statement, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." If that was the extent of his message, its continuous repetition was both unusual and most effective.

The Israelites, through the years, had developed an attitude toward other nations which was characterized to a great extent by hatred and bitterness; and they were greatly reluctant to show any interest in their spiritual welfare. The people of Israel felt that Jehovah was peculiarly their own, and that his supreme concern was *their* welfare. The lesson of the Book of Jonah was intended to correct that narrow viewpoint. It pictures God's love as embracing people of all nations, and his desire that all men should be brought to repentance. (Cf. 1 Tim.

3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9.) It is to be feared that there are many professed Christians today who have an attitude toward people outside the church, com-

parable to that of Jonah and his brethren. There is no other book in the Old Testament which lays greater stress on God's feelings for and attitude toward the lost, than the one which bears the name of Jonah.

### The Response of the Ninevites to Jonah's Preaching (Jonah 3: 5-9)

*And the people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. And the tidings reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and set in ashes. And he made proclamation and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water; but let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?*

To believe in God is to have implicit confidence in that which he says; it is to give full credit to his message. This is exactly what the people of Nineveh did; and it is certain that they understood that Jonah was speaking for God, and their faith, as in all other instances, came by hearing God's word. (Cf. John 20: 30, 31; Rom. 10: 17; Acts 14: 1; 17: 11, 12.) And it should be observed that the people of Nineveh did not depend upon faith alone. Their faith put them to work, and they sought to demonstrate their inward feelings by their outward actions. They were greatly humiliated, as their fasting and sackcloth showed. Jesus, in commenting on this, said that the men of Nineveh "repented at the preaching of Jonah." (See Matt. 12: 41.) Furthermore, their repentance followed their faith. Men may preach "repentance and faith," but when it comes to actual practice, they won't get the order in reverse.

The "tidings" which reached the king could refer, either to the preach-

ing of Jonah, or to that which the people had done, or to both. The king apparently did not feel himself above any of his subjects in God's sight, and it was he who took the lead in ordering universal humiliation throughout the entire city. (Cf. Job 2: 8; Ezek. 27: 30.) The brute creation would have perished had the city been destroyed; and it was for that reason that they were included in the general demonstration of penitence. (Cf. Jonah 4: 11; Rom. 8: 20-22.) It appears to have been an eastern custom to have the animals share in man's outward demonstrations of humiliation.

It is also worthy of note that the king and his people did not limit their action to fasting and wearing sackcloth, nor even to their mighty cry unto God; they demonstrated their penitence by turning "every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands." That was bringing forth fruit worthy of repentance. (Cf. Matt. 3: 8; Acts 26: 20.) The king's question in verse 9 of that text now before us implies that they had no special word of encouragement for believing that God would spare them as a result of their demonstrated humility; and that made their faith all the more remarkable. (Cf. Luke 7: 9.) They were willing to do their part in correcting their wrong-doing, and then trust in God for his mercy. (Cf. Joel 2: 12-14.)

#### Jehovah's Mercy Never Fails (Jonah 3: 10)

*And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not.*

It appears from the record that when Jonah was sent to Nineveh he had a message regarding their destruction which was absolute, and which was not dependent upon what they might or might not do. That was probably the only way in which the Ninevites could be awakened to their sinful condition. They deserved destruction, and that was Jehovah's purpose regarding them, as they then were; but when they turned from their evil ways, a new relationship between God and them, a relationship which was not con-

templated in Jonah's message, came into being; and the way was opened for the word of God to take effect. (Cf. Tit. 3: 3-7.) The reason for the destruction of Nineveh had been removed, and that made it possible for Jehovah to spare the city.

That which was in reality a change in the Ninevites, and in Jehovah's corresponding dealing with them, is, in condescension to human conceptions, represented as a change in God himself. (Cf. 1 Sam. 15: 29; Mal. 3: 6; James 1: 17.) In commenting on this part of the lesson text, A. R. Fausset says that "the Bible ever assigns the first place to the eternal principles of righteousness, rooted in the character of God, subordinating to them all divine arrangements. God's sparing Nineveh, when in the jaws of destruction, on the first dawn of repentance, encourages the timid penitent, and shows beforehand that Israel's doom, soon after accomplished, is to be ascribed, not to unwillingness to forgive on God's part, but to their own obstinate impenitence."

Therefore, when the Bible says that God repented himself, it must be understood in the sense of his altering his attitude and conduct toward his creatures, either in the matter of bestowing good or inflicting evil. This change in the Divine attitude and conduct is based on the change in his creatures; and thus Jehovah, speaking after the manner of men, is said to repent. The idea in all of this is that Jehovah is represented as having human attributes; and the term which is usually used to describe them is "anthropomorphic" or "anthropomorphism," a term of Greek origin. The word is a compound term, composed of *anthropos*, the Greek word for man, and *morphe*, the Greek word for forms; and when combined to make anthropomorphous, they mean having the figure of or resembling a man; like a man.

The use of anthropomorphic language is our highest and best method of expression concerning God. Just as we adapt ourselves to the conceptions of a child, in an effort to get him to understand us, and use language which he can grasp; so the Bible employs anthropomorphic language when it becomes necessary to

bridge the great chasm between the Infinite and the finite minds. The Scriptures speak of God's heart, for example, being grieved at man's iniquity (Gen. 6: 5-7); and it is perhaps not out of place to say that when man, in true penitence turns from his wicked ways, the emotions

of God are aroused (speaking after the manner of men, or using anthropomorphic language), and that this leads him to pursue a different course in dealing with his creatures. This is what the Bible means when it says that God repents.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Who were the prophets of the Old Testament and what was their principal work?  
What is the popular idea of a prophet and how did the idea originate?  
Discuss the various types of prophets mentioned in the Bible.  
Why was the work of a prophet of God often difficult?  
Discuss the similarity between the work of Old Testament prophets and New Testament preachers.  
What important lesson should we learn from all of this?

### The Golden Text

What shows the importance of a messenger of the Lord being true to his assignment?  
Under what circumstances did Jesus speak the words of the golden text?  
In what sense will the men of Nineveh stand up in the judgment and condemn others?  
What lesson was Jesus apparently endeavoring to impress upon his hearers when he spoke these words?

### Jonah's Second Chance

What interesting observation is suggested when God gave Jonah his second chance?  
How did it happen that the prophet was given a second chance?  
What important lesson had Jonah learned at the time of his second commission?  
What further lesson would he have to learn?  
Discuss Jonah's two commissions in the light of each other.

What type of preaching did the prophet apparently do, that is, how did he go about it?  
What valuable lesson should preachers today learn from Jonah's preaching?  
What intimation do we have here regarding the probable time of the writing of the Book of Jonah?  
Give some facts regarding the city of Nineveh?  
What was the principal content of Jonah's preaching?  
What attitude had Israel developed regarding the nations about them?

### The Response of the Ninevites to Jonah's Preaching

What does it mean to believe in God and how is faith brought about?  
What idea did the people of Nineveh manifest regarding faith only?  
Why was their action called "repentance" by Jesus?  
What can you say regarding the order of faith and repentance?  
What impression was made upon the king of Nineveh and what did he do about it?  
How did he demonstrate his great faith?  
What important lesson should we learn from all of this?

### Jehovah's Mercy Never Fails

What apparently was the absolute nature of Jonah's message to the Ninevites?  
Why, then, were they not destroyed?  
What do we learn from this regarding God's method of dealing with such questions?  
What does the Bible mean when it says that God repented himself regarding this or that issue?  
What is our best way of expressing this attitude?  
What is the meaning of anthropomorphic language? and why is it so important?

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## Lesson VII—February 14, 1965

## MESSIAH'S KINGDOM

### Lesson Text

Mic. 4: 1-8; 5: 2-4

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

2 And many nations shall go and say. Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Je-ho'-vah, and to the

house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For out of Zi-on shall go forth the law, and the word of Je-ho'-vah from Je-ru'-sa-lem;

3 And he will judge between many peoples, and will decide concerning strong nations afar off: and they shall

beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

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

5 For all the people walk every one in the name of his god; and we will walk in the name of Je-ho'-vah our God for ever and ever.

6 In that day, saith Je-ho'-vah, will I assemble that which is lame, and I will gather that which is driven away, and that which I have afflicted;

7 And I will make that which was lame a remnant, and that which was cast far off a strong nation; and Je-ho'-vah will reign over them in mount Zi'-on from henceforth even for ever.

8 And thou, O tower of the flock,

Golden Text.—*"And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end"* (Luke 1: 33.)

Devotional Heading.—Isa. 2: 1-4.

the hill of the daughter of Zi'-on, unto thee shall it come, yea, the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Je-rusa-lem.

2 But thou, Beth'-le-hem Eph'-ra-thah, which art little to be among the thousands of Ju'-dah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Is'-ra-el; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

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

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

## Daily Bible Readings

Feb. 8. M.....	We Have Found the Messiah (John 1: 35-42)
Feb. 9. T.....	I Know That Messiah Cometh (John 4: 19-26)
Feb. 10. W.....	We Preach Christ a Messiah, Margin Crucified (1 Cor. 1: 20-25)
Feb. 11. T.....	The Kingdom of Christ Is the Church (Matt. 16: 13-20)
Feb. 12. ....	F. The Kingdom of Christ Is Not of This World (John 18: 33-38)
Feb. 13. S.....	People Are Born into the Kingdom of Christ (John 3: 1-7)
Feb. 14. S.....	The Kingdom Is Entered by Doing God's Will (Matt. 7: 15-23)

Time.—Probably between 730 and 700 B.C.

Place.—Judea.

Persons.—Micah, Israel, and Judah.

## Introduction

The Book of Micah, as any Bible reader can see, is sixth in the order of the Minor Prophets, as they are arranged in our Bibles. This arrangement is also according to the Hebrew Canon, as George Adam Smith points out; but Micah is third, after Amos and Hosea in the Septuagint. Dr. Smith also thinks that the latter arrangement was doubtless directed according to the size of the books; but in the case of Micah it has coincided with the prophet's proper chronological position. Although the precise date of Micah's prophecy is not certain, he appears to have been the youngest of a remarkable group of four well known prophets, Amos and Hosea being his immediate

predecessors in the northern kingdom, and Isaiah his great contemporary in the southern kingdom. Micah probably was somewhat younger than Isaiah. The name "Micah" means *Who is like Jehovah!* and it may have been an abbreviation of Micaiah (1 Kings 22: 8). Micah lived in a small village called Moresheth-gath (Micah 1: 1, 14), near the border line between Judah and Philistia. The term "gath" was probably added to Moresheth, either because the village at one time belonged to Gath, one of the principal cities of the Philistines, or was near that city. When translated, the name *Moresheth-gath* means "possession of Gath."

Micah has been called the prophet of the countryside, in contrast with Isaiah who was a prophet of the city and the temple. Living in the country as he did, Micah probably did not come in contact with kings and make his influence felt in the political affairs of the nation, as Isaiah did. But he did have an opportunity to observe, and perhaps to feel, the suffering from the cruel injustices which the rich urban people inflicted upon the poorer folk of the rural areas. This experience, coupled with his inspiration (Micah 1: 1; 3: 8), made him ideally fitted to attack the shameless offenders in Samaria and Jerusalem; and in God's name to predict terrible punishment for both capitals. There is no record in the Bible of Micah's call to be a prophet, or of any vision which he may have had. But the impression made by his prediction of the fall of Jerusalem (Micah 3: 12) was so great that it was still vividly recalled a hundred years later, along with the effect it had on Hezekiah the king (Jer. 26: 18, 19). This appeal to the prophecy of Micah was used by some of the leaders of Jerusalem to save Jeremiah from death, because of a similar prediction which he had made against the city. (See Jer. 26: 1-17.)

The Book of Micah is divided into three parts. The first three chapters contain prophecies of punishment for Jerusalem and Samaria, and a pow-

erful arraignment of the corrupt leaders and the brutal oppression of the poor. Chapters 4 and 5 set forth the picture of the Golden Age of peace, and the coming of the Prince of Peace of Bethlehem. These are among the noblest utterances of Jewish prophecy. Chapters 6 and 7 continue the rebuke of the sins of the people, give the perfect description of true religion, which is one of the great gems of religious literature, and close with a vision of the ultimate restoration of Jerusalem, in keeping with the promises made to the fathers. In commenting on this portion of God's word, Bewer says that "looking at the Book of Micah as a whole, the classical definition of religion (6:8), as well as the prophecy of the coming Saviour from Bethlehem (5: 2ff.) and the prophecy of universal peace (4: 1ff.) which we ordinarily associate with Isaiah, all shine like golden stars and make the book of perennial value. As for Micah himself, even if all these wonderful words should properly be assigned to other prophets and only ch. 1-3 (except 2: 12, 13) to him, his place among the prophets is secure as the uncompromising spokesman of social justice, the dauntless champion of the poor who was 'full of power by the Spirit of the Lord and of judgment and of might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin' (3: 8)."

### The Golden Text

*"And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."* The full statement of the context from which this passage is taken reads as follows: "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1: 30-33.) This statement must be understood in the light of the Old Testament predictions regarding the kingdom of David and

the coming of Christ his son, if we are to get the significance of its meaning.

When Jacob told his sons that which would befall them in the latter days, he said concerning Judah, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be." (Gen. 49: 10; of Num. 24: 17; Psalm 60: 7; 108: 8.) Jacob's prediction has a definite Messianic significance, and the tribe of Judah is declared to be the royal tribe. In later years the kingdom of Israel was given to David, a member of the tribe of Judah, and God's promise to him was that there would not fail to be one of his descendants upon the throne. (Cf. 1 Kings 2: 4;

11: 9-13.) Nineteen descendants of David, in direct line of succession, occupied the throne of David; but the time came when both the king and the people clearly demonstrated that they were no longer capable of maintaining a nation which was loyal to Jehovah; and it was for that reason that the Babylonian captivity became a practical necessity in order to preserve the line of David from utter extinction, and the people of Judah from irredeemable apostasy.

The last king in the line of David to occupy the throne before the captivity was Jehoiachin, also known as Jeconiah and Coniah. (See Jer. 22: 24-30.) Zedekiah was a descendant of David, but not in the line of the

kins (2 Kings 24: 17). The next person in the direct line of David to occupy the throne was the Christ, and the angel told Mary that he would reign for ever. (Cf. Acts 2: 29-32.) When the prophecy of Ezekiel (21: 25-27) is read in the light of Daniel 2, it will be seen that the probable meaning of the threefold overturning had reference to the overthrowing of one world empire after another, until the time arrived for the establishment of the kingdom which would never be destroyed (Dan. 2: 44); for it was then that he came whose right the crown was; and it was then that Jehovah gave it to him. (Cf. Acts 2: 36.)

## The Text Explained

### Zion's Future As Seen on Time's Horizon

(Mic. 4: 1-5)

*But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it. And many nations shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem; and he will judge between many peoples, and will decide concerning strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they will sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of Jehovah of hosts hath spoken it. For all the peoples walk every one in the name of his god; and we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God for ever and ever.*

The term "but," with which this section of the lesson text begins, suggests a contrast between what is about to be said and that which has just been said. The closing paragraph of the preceding chapter reads as follows: "Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel, that

abhor justice, and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet they lean upon Jehovah, and say, Is not Jehovah in the midst of us? no evil shall come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest." (Mic. 3: 9-12.)

Now, in contrast with that deplorable condition, is the prophet's prediction of the coming Messianic kingdom. The "latter days" have reference to the time when the kingdom of Christ would be established. (Cf. Acts 2: 17.) The term "mountain" is frequently used in the Bible, in a figurative sense, to indicate strength and stability; and when it is applied to a government or kingdom, as it evidently is here, the idea is that the kingdom would be exceedingly strong. That certainly is true of the kingdom of Christ. Daniel, in speaking of the Messianic kingdom, referred to it as a mountain which filled the whole earth (Dan. 2: 35), and one which would never be destroyed (Dan. 2: 44).

The temple, which in some respects typified the kingdom or church of Christ, was built upon Mount Moriah, and the reference here to the establishment of "Jehovah's house" on the top of the mountains may find some significance in that fact. But when

we read the parallel statement, "and shall be exalted above the hills," in the light of Daniel's prediction, the probable meaning is that the kingdom of the Lord would be exalted above and would be more enduring than all other kingdoms. A part of Daniel's statement follows: "And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." (Dan. 2: 44; of. Matt. 16: 18; Heb. 12: 28.)

Micah's words with reference to the coming kingdom parallel those of Isaiah. (See Isa. 2: 2-4.) Both predictions, as well as that of Daniel, found their fulfillment in the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, also known as the church of Christ; for they refer to one and the same thing. The "kingdom" has reference to the governmental feature, while the "church" has reference to the called out feature. Paul calls "the house of God" "the church of the living God." (See 1 Tim. 3: 15.)

In saying that "peoples shall flow unto it," or, as Isaiah has it, "all nations shall flow unto it," the obvious reference is to the conversion of the Gentiles. The truth is made certain by James' quotation from Amos, as found in Acts 15: 13b-18. "Brethren, harken unto me: Symeon hath rehearsed how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After these things I will return, and I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who maketh these things known from of old."

The fact that so many would seek to enter the house of the Lord in the latter days, stands in marked contrast with the desolate picture which Micah drew of the house of Israel, as we have already seen in the closing paragraph of chapter 3. When Jesus gave the great commission, he said, "Go ye into all the

world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16: 15); or, as Matthew has it, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28: 19, 20.) The history of the church, beginning with the Pentecost of its beginning, shows that the prediction that all nations would flow unto it has been literally fulfilled. Some thirty years after the church's establishment, Paul wrote these words to the Colossians: "If so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister." (Col. 1: 23.)

Teaching or instruction has always been peculiar to God's dealings with his people, in whatever age they may have lived. No one can know the will of God in the absence of teaching. While here among men, Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me." (John 6: 44, 45; of. Isa. 54: 13; Psalm 25: 8, 9, 12.) Passing by the technical difference between Zion and Jerusalem, the former being the most southwestern, as well as the highest, mountain on which Jerusalem was built, it should be noted that as used by the prophets, Zion and Jerusalem mean one and the same place. The two terms are used interchangeably in the two parts of the Hebrew parallelism. The city of Zion, or Jerusalem, had been the center of Jewish worship from the days of David; and now that the religion of Christ is to supersede that of Moses, the authority for the change, as well as the law to govern the new institution, will have its origin in this great center. (See Luke 24: 46, 47; Acts 2.)

In this new kingdom, Christ is the sole judge as to what is right and wrong (cf. John 5: 22; Psalm 110:

6), and his word will be the basis for all decisions (cf. John 16: 7-11; 3: 17-21). The reference to the disposition of the swords and spears is a complete reversal of that which was said in Joel 3: 9-13. The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of peace, and of peaceful pursuits. There will continue to be wars and rumors of wars, but the reference is to the world, rather than to God's people (cf. Matt. 24: 6ff.). For every man to sit under his vine and fig-tree is the picture of safety and contentment. (Cf. 1 Kings 4: 25; Zech. 3: 10; John 1: 48.) The peace which comes to faithful Christian people may be learned from such passages as Isa. 26: 3, 4; Psalm 84: 11; Phil. 4: 6, 7, 19; Heb. 13: 5, 6. All of this is true of the people who walk after the Lord, in contrast with those who follow their own ways.

#### The Return of the Dispersed People under the Kingship of Jehovah (Mic. 4: 6-8)

*In that day, saith Jehovah, will I assemble that which is lame, and I will gather that which is driven away, and that which I have afflicted; and I will make that which was lame a remnant, and that which was cast far off a strong nation: and Jehovah will reign over them in mount Zion from hence forth even for ever. And thou, O tower of the flock, the hill of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, yea, the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.*

Isa. 40 should be read in connection with this section of the lesson text. The people of God had been driven into captivity, and were lame, driven away, and afflicted; but Jehovah, as a good Shepherd, was about to bring them back from the exile and build them into a strong nation. They would have no further human king, but God himself would be their Ruler. That was his original purpose, but he had been rejected, both in Eden and following the period of the judges. (Cf. 1 Sam. 8: 7.) This new nation, however, over which Jehovah will reign will not be an earthly kingdom, but the one which Micah said in the first part of the lesson text would be established, that is, the M e s s a n i c kingdom. The

imagery is that of the former kingdom, especially that of David and Solomon; but the new order would be greater than the glory which those kings enjoyed. God was driven out of the kingdom of Israel, but he can never be driven out of his church.

#### The Coming of the Shepherd from Bethlehem (Mic. 5: 2-4)

*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 ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time when she who travaileth hath brought forth: then the residue of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand, and shall feed his flock in the strength of Jehovah, in the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God: and they shall abide; for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.*

Smith's Bible Dictionary says that Bethlehem was one of the oldest towns in Palestine, already in existence when Jacob returned to that country from Paddan-aram. Its earlier name was Ephrath or Ephrathah. (Gen. 35: 16-19; 48: 7.) After the conquest, Bethlehem appears under its own name "Bethlehem-judah" (Judges 17: 7; Ruth 1: 1, 2; 1 Sam. 17: 12), possibly, but hardly probable, to distinguish it from the small and remote place of the same name in Zebulun.

In saying that one should come forth from Bethlehem to rule Israel, the reference, of course, was to the birth of Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem. For centuries, especially between the Testaments, there had been suspense, as the people had awaited his coming; and then one night, over the quiet plain below the city, the voice of the angel was heard as he spoke the following words to the lowly shepherds: "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2: 10, 11.) The expressions "from of old" and "everlasting" have reference to his eternal nature, and the many predictions throughout the ages



regarding his coming. (Cf. John 1: 1, 2; Luke 24: 46.)

Before the coming of Christ, as we have already observed again and again, the Lord's people were at the mercy of their enemies; and they were given up, "until the time that she who travaileth hath brought forth." Bible students are not agreed as to the identity of "she who travaileth." Some think that the reference is to Israel who would be successful in giving birth to a king who would restore the nation and the monarchy; while others feel that the reference is to Mary the mother of Jesus. The latter view seems more in harmony with the context. We know that when Christ came and perfected the plans for the salvation of the world, men began to return to Israel, that is, spiritual Israel. The

next verse seems to confirm this viewpoint. "And he shall stand, and shall feed his flock in the strength of Jehovah, in the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God: and they shall abide; for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth."

If people would carefully consider the great contrast between Israel's deplorable condition before the coming of Christ, and that which happened to all of them who accepted the Saviour's offer of salvation; they would begin to see the greater contrast between people who are out of Christ and those who are safe in the fold which he has provided. (Cf. Eph. 2: 11, 12.) Israel had to wait and look for the coming of the Messiah, while people today are exhorted to look to and accept the Saviour now! (Read 2 Cor. 6: 2.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

State something of the relative position of Micah and his prophecy among other prophets and writings of his day.

Where did Micah live?

Why was he called the prophet of the countryside?

What advantage did his social position give him?

What use was made of his prediction regarding the fall of Jerusalem?

Unto what three divisions does the Book of Micah fall?

What were some of the valuable contributions which he made?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?

How can we best understand this statement?

What Old Testament predictions were made regarding the perpetuity of David's kingdom?

Why was it necessary to end the physical line of the kings of Judah?

Under what circumstances did this end come?

How do we know that Christ is the legal heir to the throne of David?

### Zion's Future As Seen on Time's Horizon

What contrast does the term "but" at the beginning of verse 1 introduce?

To what period do the "latter days" refer? Give reasons for your answer.

What is the figurative meaning of the term "mountain," as used in this lesson?

Show that this significance is particularly true of the kingdom of Christ.

In what sense was the kingdom of Christ

established on the top of the mountains?

How are the "kingdom" and the "church" of Christ related?

What was meant by saying that people shall flow into it?

What great contrast did this suggest?

Show that Micah's prediction regarding this was literally fulfilled.

Why is teaching so important in the kingdom of Christ?

What was meant by saying that the word would go forth from Jerusalem?

What are some of the results which follow the judging of Christ?

What did it mean for one to dwell under his vine and fig-tree?

### The Return of the Dispersed People under the Kingship of Jehovah

What promise did Jehovah make regarding his scattered people?

In what sense does Jehovah reign over his people?

What imagery did Micah use in speaking of these things?

### The Coming of the Shepherd from Bethlehem

What is known of the early history of Bethlehem?

Where was the city located?

What had been the general attitude of the people toward the place?

What was signified by the expressions "from of old" and "everlasting"?

What was the general condition of the people of God before the coming of Christ?

To whom did "she who travaileth" probably refer.

What did Micah say that the new Shepherd would do for his flock?

Who are his flock?

What lesson should we learn from all this?

## Lesson VIII—February 21, 1965

## THE PROPHECY OF NAHUM

## Lesson Text

## Nah. Is 1-13

1 The burden of Nin'-Ē-vēh. The book of the vision of Na'-hum the El'-kosh-ite.

2 Je-ho'-vah is a jealous God and avengeth; Je-ho'-vah avengeth and is full of wrath; Je-ho'-vah taken vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth *wrath* for his enemies.

3 Je-ho'-vah is slow to anger, and great in power, and will by no means clear *the guilty*; Je-ho'-vah hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

4 He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers; Ba'-shan languisheth, and Car'-mel; and the flower of Leb'-a-non languisheth.

5 The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt; and the earth is upheaved at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

6 Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks

are broken asunder by him.

7 Je-ho'-vah is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that take refuge in him.

8 But with an over-running flood he will make a full end of her place, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.

9 What do ye devise against Je-ho'-vah? he will make a full end; affliction shall not rise up the second time.

10 For entangled like thorns, and drunken as with their drink, they are consumed utterly as dry stubble.

11 There is one gone forth out of thee, that deviseth evil against Je-ho'-vah, that counselleth wickedness.

12 Thus saith Je-ho'-vah: Though they be in full strength, and likewise many, even so shall they be cut down, and he shall pass away. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more.

13 And now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.

Golden Text.—“*There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off*” (Nah. 3: 15.)

Devotional Heading.—Nah. 2: 1-8.

## Daily Bible Readings

Feb. 15. M..... A Prophet Is One Who Speaks for Another (Ex. 7: 1-7)

Feb. 16. T..... And He Gave Some to Be Prophets (Eph. 4: 1-16)

Feb. 17. W..... He Shall Be Called the Prophet of the Most High (Luke 1: 67-80)

Feb. 18. T..... He Was More Than a Prophet (Luke 7: 24-30)

Feb. 19. F. A Prophet Was Formerly Called a Seer (1 Sam. 9: 5-10)

Feb. 20. S..... False Prophets Cannot Deceive God (Jer. 23: 23-32)

Feb. 21. S..... The Fate of Those Who Refuse to Heed the Prophet Jesus (Acts 3: 22-26)

Time.—Probably between 640 and 612 B.C.

Place.—Unknown.

Persons.—Nahum and the people of Nineveh.

## Introduction

The name “Nahum” means *comforter* or *compassion*. There is nothing known of his personal history, other than that which may be learned from the book which bears his name. Bible students are not agreed regarding the place where the prophet lived. He is called “the Elkoshite” (1: 1), which implies that he was an inhabitant or native of

Elkosh; but where was that city or village? Some think that it was probably in Galilee; others on the bank of the Tigris, not far from Nineveh; while still others profess to see Elkosh in the name “Capernaum,” as *the village of Nahum*. The place of residence, of course, is not important; the principal point is the fact that Nahum was a prophet of Jehovah.

The theme of Nahum's prophecy was the approaching fall of the great city of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire. That mighty power had held sway for centuries, and has been regarded by Bible students as the most brutal of all the ancient heathen nations, the most cruel of them all, and the one which took the greatest delight in recording their atrocities in their inscriptions. It appears that the purpose of the prophet, in keeping with the meaning of his name, was to give comfort and consolation to the people of Judah, who had long been harassed by the Assyrians. This mighty empire had brought an end to the kingdom of Israel some eight or ten years before its own fall, when Sargon carried the Israelites away into exile.

There is a wonderful contrast between the book from which our lesson for today is taken, and the Book of Jonah. The Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah, more than a hundred and fifty years before; but when Nahum spoke against them their doom was sealed: they had gone beyond repentance. Bible students are not in agreement with reference to the date of the final over-

throw of Nineveh. However, in the light of available information, it appears that the most probable date was 612 B. C., and if that is correct, Nahum probably uttered his prophecy a short time before the fall, between 614 and 612 B.C.

The prophecy of Nahum is unique in several ways. He has been described as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, poet among the prophets. Some versions of the Bible have arranged his entire book in poetical form. His language, like that of Isaiah, is lofty and very suggestive. Nahum is the first of the prophets which we have studied in this series who did not condemn his own people, along with their enemies. It is, of course, probable that he spoke much more than is recorded in the book which bears his name (cf. Acts 2: 40); and he may have addressed other prophecies to the Hebrews. The Book of Nahum is roughly divided into three parts, namely, (1) the introduction and theme of the prophecy, chapter 1; (2) a description of the calamity which would befall Nineveh, chapter 2; and (3) the reason for the judgments which would be inflicted, chapter 3.

### The Golden Text

*"There shall the fire devour thee; the sword cut thee off"* It is difficult for enlightened people today to visualize the wickedness and brutality which characterized the Assyrians, against whom the prophecy of Nahum was uttered. The offense of these people was an insolent defiance of Jehovah and high-handed oppression, not only of his chosen people, but of a multitude of nations upon whom they trampled with brutal inhumanity. It is not necessary to depend upon the enemies of the Assyrians for testimony against them; for their own artists, in a series of pictures with which they adorned the palaces of their kings, have preserved and published to all nations, in all subsequent ages, Nineveh's undying shame. In speaking of Assurbanipal, the Assyrian king who destroyed ancient Thebes, and put an end to the Ethiopian dynasty of Upper Egypt, F. W. Farrar observes that the king's description of his own atrocities is complacently cruel. This terrible monarch tells how he tore off the

lips and hands of kings, and compelled a prince to wear around his neck the decapitated head of his king. During his triumphal march, this Assyrian ruler was dragged along by three kings of Elam, who were yoked to his war-chariot. In a sculpture now in the British Museum, this tyrant is represented as sitting at a banquet with his queen and gazing on the head of Nabubelzikri the Chaldean king, who had committed suicide.

God's people often have to suffer because of their sins, and sometimes for their own good (cf. Job; Hebrews 12: 5-13); but he has solemnly promised that the faithful will in time be avenged. The avenging may not take place during our lifetime, but we can rest assured that it will come in God's own good time. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 8, 9.) Not only does the Lord want to avenge his own people, but he also wants to save the wicked. In one of his visions on Patmos, John records this picture, "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw un-

derneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And there was given to them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled their course." (Rev. 6: 9-11.)

We have the example of Nahum's telling the bloody city that their day was coming; and we know from history that it did come. (Read Nah. 3: 1-19.) People cannot sin without in some way paying the penalty for their wrongdoing. Those with power to do so can cause others to

suffer, and that is often the case; but that does not give the sufferer the right to retaliate. Vengeance must always be in the hands of properly constituted authority (cf. Romans 13: 1-4), and ultimately in the hands of God, so far as his people are concerned. "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.)

## The Text Explained

### The Title of the Book

(Nah. 1: 1)

*The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.* The marginal reading for "burden" is *oracle concerning* which, of course, means the prophecy which Nahum spoke regarding Nineveh. That is also the way it is expressed in the second sentence of the verse, namely, "*The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.*" Nahum has been called one of the world's greatest poets, and the subject matter about which he wrote was one of the great events in history; "and the best description of it is in Nahum's marvelous poem." As already pointed out, some versions of the Bible have the entire prophecy of Nahum arranged in poetical form. (Cf. Moffatt, *The Complete Bible—An American Translation*, The Revised Standard Version, et al.)

If the prophet Nahum appears to be unmerciful in his attitude toward the Assyrians, we must remember that his words were not intended to reflect the moral character of his people, but were expressive of the exultation of a people who had long been enslaved, and who saw their tyrant ready for destruction. Or, to express the same thing in another way, the prophecy we are now con-

sidering is an example of the vengeance of Jehovah, after the day of mercy had passed. George Adam Smith notes that the language of the prophet is strong and brilliant; his rhythm rambles and rolls, leaps and flashes, like the horse and chariots he describes. He then goes on to say that if the original were before us, and that knowledge of the times which the excavation of ancient Assyria may still yield, we might judge Nahum to be an even greater poet than we do. A little insight into the method and significance of Hebrew poetry may help us to appreciate the Book of Nahum more.

Knopf points out the fact that Hebrew poetry does not rime, but has measure cadences within the lines. "These cadences indicate emotion—two short, sharp beats for alarm; four beats for marching or dignity; three for ordinary; and five for deep feeling, joy or sorrow. Nahum's sound pictures of a city's fall are lost in current Bible translations. However, it is possible, by proper translation of the original Hebrew and arrangement of the English phrases, to imagine ourselves on the very walls of Nineveh, witnessing the whole gripping tragedy. Now the enemy has been sighted. The alarm is given (2: 1), in the characteristic two-beat

measure of agitation (read with accents indicated):

Set the watch

Guard the way

Buckle the armor

i :

Muster arms

Loot the silver, loot the gold

Endless is the precious store

Hark! the whip and rattling wheel

Galloping horse and chariot's reel

Horsemen charging with flash of

sword

Glittering spear and wounded horde

Piles of slain no end of dead

They stumble upon their corpses

dread. (2: 9; 3: 2, 3.)

Try reading this with rhythmic cadence indicated by accent marks, imagining galloping horses and lurching chariots. The lines are quite different from those in the usual translations, yet here are the pictures and feelings that Nahum was trying to express to his readers." (Carl Sumner Knopf, *Ask the Prophets*, p. 76f.)

#### The Qualities and Attributes of Jehovah

(Nah. 1: 2-8)

*Jehovah is a jealous God and avengeth; Jehovah avengeth and is full of wrath; Jehovah taketh vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. Jehovah is slow to anger, and great in power, and will by no means clear the guilty: Jehovah hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers; Bashan languisheth, and Carmel; and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt; and the earth is upheaved at his presence, yea, the world, and*

*all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken asunder by him. Jehovah is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that take refuge in him. But with an over-running flood he will make a full end of her place, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.*

This section of the lesson text brings before us the fact of God's moral government of the world, and the duty of his people to trust in him as the Avenger of wrongdoers, since he is the sole source of security and peace to those who love him. Jehovah is a God who is not to be trifled with; for he is both powerful and active on behalf of his people, and against those who disobey him. God is jealous in the sense that he will not tolerate a rival, and will surely punish all who interfere with his possession. It must always be kept in mind that whatever Jehovah does with reference to the peoples of the earth, it is always in keeping with the principles of truth and righteousness. As Farrar points out, we infer from the prophecy of Nahum that he predicted the fall of Nineveh on the sure ground of faith in the Divine righteousness which governs the world's history. This principle has been in evidence in all ages of the world, and it still is. (Cf. Isa. 10: 5-11; Dan. 4: 17; Rom. 13: 1-7.)

It would be difficult to find a more striking manifestation of the power of Jehovah, than the one contained in the passage now under consideration. "Jehovah hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel; and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt; and the earth is upheaved at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken asunder by him."

These natural phenomena—the storm, drought, earthquake, and the overflowing streams of lava, are but

a few of the examples which demonstrate the infinite contrast between the power of Jehovah and the weakness and helplessness of man. (Cf. Job 38: 1ff; Psalm 97: 1ff.) But there is a purpose in all these great and wonderful natural manifestations, namely, the protection of those who put their trust in him, and the destruction of those who oppose him, as may be seen by the next two verses: "Jehovah is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knowest them that take refuge in him. But with an over-running flood he will make a full end of her place, and will pursue his enemies into darkness."

The assurance which is given to the Lord's people in this section of the lesson text is like a star of hope in the midst of great and terrible darkness. The whole passage has been described as a magnificent display of the glory of God, revealing his wrath and justice against the wicked, and his grace and mercy toward his people. The anger of his might is terrible toward those in rebellion against him; but his love is tender and reassuring toward those who humbly serve him. The same almighty power which is exerted for the terror of the wicked is extended for the comfort of the righteous. The goodness of God is one of his chief attributes, and the theme is discussed throughout the Bible. God is good, and only good; and there is no evil whatsoever in him. He cannot tolerate evil, because he is good; and when he turns his face against the wicked and punishes their sin, he is but manifesting his goodness.

#### The Overthrow of Nineveh Decreed and the Peace of Judah Assured (Nah. 1: 9-13)

*What do you devise against Jehovah? he will make a full end; affliction shall not rise up the second time. For entangled like thorns, and drunken as with their drink, they are consumed utterly as dry stubble. There is one gone forth out of thee, that deviseth evil against Jehovah, that counselleth wickedness. Thus saith Jehovah: Though they be in full strength, and likewise many, even so shall they be cut down, and he shall pass away. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no*

*more. And now I will break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.*

When the Assyrians devised evil against the Lord's people, they were devising evil against Jehovah himself; and notwithstanding the enormous strength of the aggressors, God promised to make a full end of them, and assured them that a second effort at destruction would not be necessary. Farrar says that "the ancient glories of Assyria were revived about B. C. 884 by Assurnazipal, who calls himself 'the king, the lord, the exalted, the revered, the gigantic, the hero, the mighty, the stalwart, a lion, a destroyer of cities, a treacher down of foes.' He vaunts his unheard-of savagery—how he dyed the mountains of the Nairi with blood like wool; how he flayed captive kings alive, and dressed pillars with their skins, and walled-up others alive, and impaled them on stakes; how he burnt boys and girls in the fire, put out eyes, cut off hands, feet, noses, and ears. And the Assyrian kings always profess to do this 'at the command of Asshur,' the enemies whose tongues they pulled out, and whose limbs they fling to dogs, bears, vultures, and eagles are always 'enemies of Asshur.' He had himself represented piling up the heads of his enemies. He fought ten campaigns, and built many palaces."

Several of the kings of Assyria are referred to in 2 Kings, chapters 15-19, along with a wicked counsellor; and the following paragraph shows how the great army was destroyed "in full strength." "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of Jehovah went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead." (2 Kings 19: 35-37; read also verses 20-34.) This should give us some idea of the terrible destruction which came to them when the empire was reduced to ruins, accord-

ing to the words of Nahum.

It was necessary for God to punish his own people because of their sins; but he assured them that the terrible yoke of the aggressor would be broken, and the bonds with which they were bound would be burst asunder. This should be a lesson of great encouragement to all of us. It matters not how much we suffer in this world, if we will give our hearts and lives to God, no enemy can destroy us. Bower notes that Nahum "proclaimed with passionate conviction the fundamental truth of prophetic religion, that God is in control of the history of the nations and that his moral government manifests itself in the punishment of the brutal tyrant." This is indeed a fundamental truth, and it should be stressed today. All nations are in the hands of God, and he uses them in the accomplishment of his will.

In summing up the idea of the ven-

geance of the Lord, George Adam Smith says, "Such is the religion of the Proem to the Book of Nahum—thoroughly Oriental in its sense of God's method and resources of destruction; Jewish, and natural both to that and other ages of Jewish history, in the bursting of its pent hopes of revenge. We of the West might express these hopes differently. We should not attribute so much passion to the Avenger. With our keener sense of law, we should emphasize the slowness of the process, and select for its illustration the forces of decay rather than those of sudden ruin. But we must remember the crashing times in which the Jews lived. The world was breaking up. The elements were loose, and all that God's people could hope was the bursting of their yoke, with shelter in the day of trouble. The elements were loose, but amidst the crash the little people knew that Yahweh knew them."

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What is the meaning of the term "Nahum"?  
What is known of the personal history of this prophet?  
What is the theme of Nahum's prophecy?  
What contrast is noted between the Books of Nahum and Jonah?  
What are some of the unique features of Nahum's prophecy?  
What are the natural divisions of the book?

### The Golden Text

Discuss the wickedness and brutality of the Assyrians.  
Why is it often necessary for God's people to suffer?  
What assurance has he always given to them when they manifest faithfulness to him?  
How must the Lord's people always regard the matter of vengeance?

### The Title of the Book

What is the meaning of the term "burden," as used in this section of the lesson text?  
How is Nahum regarded from the literary point of view?  
Why did Nahum appear to be so unmerciful toward the Assyrians?  
Discuss the question of Hebrew poetry and its effect upon the reader.

### The Qualities and Attributes of Jehovah

What is the purpose of this section of the lesson text?  
What important lesson should we learn from it?  
In what sense is Jehovah a jealous God?

What are the principles which characterize God in his dealings with the nations of the earth? What do the Scriptures say regarding this?  
In what ways does Jehovah manifest his power?  
What impression should all this make upon human beings?  
How do these manifestations of God's great power produce both hope and fear in people?

### The Overthrow of Nineveh Decreed and the Peace of Judah Assured

What were the Assyrians actually doing when they devised evil against the Lord's people?  
What effect should this have on us today?  
How did the Assyrians generally treat their captives?  
How can people be so wicked?  
Who are some of the Assyrian kings who are referred to in 2 Kings, chapters 15-19?  
What was the nature of their wicked counsel?  
In what way did Jehovah destroy the army of Sennacherib?  
Why is it often necessary for God to punish his people?  
What assurance does he always give them, if they yield themselves to him?  
What great lesson should we learn from this?  
What fundamental truth did Nahum proclaim in connection with the punishment of wicked nations?  
Why is this true?  
Why did the Jewish people feel so strongly regarding the vengeance of Jehovah?  
What difference is noted between them and us in this respect?

## Lesson IX—February 28, 1965

## THE WOES OF HABAKKUK

## Lesson Text

## Hab. 2: 1-16

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

2 And Je-ho'-vah answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that readeth it.

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

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

5 Yea, moreover, wine is treacherous, a haughty man, that keepeth not at home; who enlargeth his desire as She'-ol, and he is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all peoples.

6 Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and that ladeth himself with pledges!

7 Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booty unto them?

8 Because thou hast plundered many nations, all the remnant of the

peoples shall plunder thee, because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all that dwell therein.

9 Woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil!

10 Thou hast devised shame to thy house, by cutting off many peoples, and hast sinned against thy soul.

11 For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.

12 Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity!

13 Behold, is it not of Je-ho'-vah of hosts that the peoples labor for the fire, and the nations weary themselves for vanity?

14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Je-ho'-vah, as the waters cover the sea.

15 Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, to thee that addest thy venom, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!

16 Thou art filled with shame, and not glory: drink thou also, and be as one uncircumcised; the cup of Je-ho'-vah's right hand shall come round unto thee, and foul shame shall be upon thy glory.

Golden Text.—*"Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look on perverseness"* (Hab. 1: 13.)

Devotional Reading.—Hab. 1: 1-11.

## Daily Bible Readings

Feb. 22.	M.....	Who Hath Woe, Sorrow, and Contentions (Prov. 23: 29-35)
Feb. 23.	T.....	Woe to the Rebellious Children (Isa. 30: 1-5)
Feb. 24.	W.....	Woe to the Worthless Shepherd (Zech. 11: 15-17)
Feb. 25.	T.....	Woe to the Man Who Causes Offences (Matt. 18: 7-14)
Feb. 26.	F.....	Woe to Them That Call Evil Good, and Good Evil (Isa. 5: 18-23)
Feb. 27.	S.....	Woe Is unto Me, If I Preach Not the Gospel (1 Cor. 9: 13-18)
Feb. 28.	S.....	Woe unto Us! for We Have Sinned (Lam. 5: 7-16)

Time.—Probably between 608-597 B.C.

Place.—Probably in Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jehovah, Habakkuk, and the Chaldeans.

## Introduction

If the date of this lesson, which is listed as probable, is correct, then

it was during the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, that Habakkuk ut-



tered his prophecy. The Assyrian empire has just been overthrown, and the mighty Babylonians were coming into power; and Egypt was also still to be reckoned with. Josiah the fifteenth king of Judah, that is, the fifteenth descendant of David to reign over the southern kingdom (Athaliah, the usurper, does not count among the offsprings of David), and widely known for his godly reformations, was dead as the result of a battle wound. He was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz, but the latter's reign came to an abrupt end when Pharaoh-necho deposed him, after three months, and set his older brother Jehoiakim, one of the most godless, selfish, and tyrannical kings to reign over Judah, upon the throne (see 2 Kings 23: 28-35; Jer. 36: 1ff). It was against this kind of a background that Habakkuk cried out, "O Jehovah, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear? I cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save." (Hab. 1: 2; read on through verse 4.)

The Book of Habakkuk presents a situation which has not before been encountered in our study of the prophets. Even a superficial reading of that which has been written of and by the prophets will reveal the fact that they were primarily teachers and preachers of religion and ethics. They addressed themselves, as a rule, to their fellow countrymen, in an effort to win them back to Jehovah and the way of righteousness. That, however was not the plan which was followed by Habakkuk; instead, he addressed himself to Jehovah. He was clearly confused by the wicked conditions which prevailed about him; and he even questioned the divine justice and providence in dealing with them.

Habakkuk was evidently revealing the innermost thoughts of his own heart, as well as those of his brethren; and in doing so he received God's answer, not only for his own sake, but also for the sake of tried and troubled souls of all ages to come. This was evidently God's plan for this prophet. He has been called the prophet of faith, for his faith in Jehovah was strong; but like many other pious souls, he was greatly troubled by the apparent inequalities of life. However, instead

of sulking, as people in such situations so often do, he took the matter to Jehovah. It was difficult for him to reconcile these seeming injustices with his lofty conception of God but he wanted the Lord's answer. He was willing to trust in Jehovah, and the result was that his faith was made stronger.

Habakkuk gave utterance to two sublime truths, namely, (1) Jehovah was not interested in Israel alone. It was true that he exercised a special Divine Providence over them; but Jehovah also ruled in the kingdoms of other people as well. (Cf. Dan. 4: 17.) This truth was clearly seen by God's dealings with the proud and boastful Chaldeans.

(2) "But the righteous shall live by his faith." (Hab. 2: 4.) Paul quoted this passage in Rom. 1: 17; Gal. 3: 11; and Heb. 10: 38. Faithfulness always ensures permanency, as the following quotation from *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* shows: "A living faith determines conduct; religion and ethics go hand in hand, and especially in the hour of adversity a belief in Jehovah and unflinching reliance upon him are the strongest preservers of fidelity and integrity. Faith without works is dead; faith expresses itself in life. Habakkuk places chief emphasis upon the expressions of faith, and he does so rightly; but in doing this he also calls attention, by implication at least, to the motive power behind the external manifestations. As an expression of living faith, 3: 17-19 is not surpassed in the Old Testament." (Vol. II, p. 1313.)

The prophecy of Habakkuk, like that of Nahum, is short. For a practical analysis of it, the following is suggested: (1) A cry for Jehovah to avenge the righteous Jews who were suffering at the hands of their wicked brethren, 1: 1-4; (2) Jehovah's promise to send the Chaldeans for that purpose, 1: 5-11; (3) Habakkuk's perplexity, since the Jews were more righteous than the Chaldeans, 1: 12-17; (4) Jehovah replies that the wicked nation (that is, the Chaldeans) will also be overthrown; their power will be but temporary, 2: 1-4; (5) woes pronounced upon the Chaldeans, 2: 5-20; and (6) the lyrical prayer of Habakkuk, 3: 1-

19. The Book of Habakkuk has been described as a composition unrivaled for boldness of conception, sublimity

of thought, and majesty of diction; its figures are all happily chosen and splendidly developed.

### The Golden Text

*"Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look on perverseness."* The words just quoted are a part of a series of questions which Habakkuk asked Jehovah regarding the apparent injustices with reference to Israel's punishment: "Art not thou from everlasting, O Jehovah my God, my holy One? we shall not die. O Jehovah, thou hast ordained him for judgment; and thou, O Rock, hast established him for correction. Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look on perverseness, wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy peace when the wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than he; and maketh men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them? He taketh up all of them with the angle, he catcheth them in his net, and gathereth them in his drag; therefore he rejoiceth and is glad. Therefore he sacrificeth unto his net, and burneth incense unto his drag; because by them his portion is fat, and his food plenteous. Shall he therefore empty his net, and spare not to slay the nations continually?" (Hab. 1: 12-17.)

In this reverent address to Jehovah, Habakkuk suggests some of the apparent inequalities which he thinks he sees in the attitudes and manifes-

tations of the Chaldeans toward the people of the Lord. While the prophet could not understand why the ruthless invaders were allowed to inflict punishment on people who were more righteous than they were, it is a fact worthy of notice that he did not speak evil of Jehovah for permitting it. (Cf. Job 1: 22.) Instead, Habakkuk went directly to Jehovah with his problem. (Read Psalm 73: 11-17.) This characteristic of Habakkuk has led Bible students to refer to him as the prophet of faith.

Habakkuk's attitude in the matter now before us has a lesson and an example for all generations of the Lord's people; and, incidentally, it is a splendid commentary on Paul's statement in Rom. 5: 4 regarding steadfastness. Habakkuk could not be swayed from his lofty conception of the character of Jehovah; he held steadfastly to that conviction, and reverently called upon God to enable him to understand the apparent inconsistency. The Jews had sinned grievously, as he had freely stated in verses 2-4, and God was punishing them; but what the prophet could not understand was why a nation which was much more wicked than the Jews was being favored of God to do the punishing. The answer to this question will be found in the lesson text.

### The Text Explained

#### The Answer from the Tower

(Hab. 2: 1-4)

*I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will look forth to see what he will speak with me, and what I shall answer concerning my complaint. And Jehovah answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay.*

There is something dignified about a person whose aim is to do right

who will hold steadfastly to his convictions, until he is convinced that he is in the wrong. That was the attitude manifested by Job, and also by Thomas; but when the proof was presented, both men quickly bowed before it. There are some things in life which we cannot understand; but if we have faith, that is, confidence in the Lord, we can trust him to make them work together for our good. (Cf. Heb. 11: 6; Rom. 8: 28.) Job knew that he had done no wrong, so far as his personal life was concerned; but he did manifest an attitude for which he later repented. Even in the midst of his great suffering, Job did not curse

God nor deny him, but he did apparently question his providence, which is indicated by the many difficult questions which he asked.

Jehovah answered all of his questions; but it is a singular fact that in doing so he made no direct reference to the things about which Job asked. Instead, Jehovah's answer was found in a series of questions which he addressed to Job—questions which humbled the patriarch and brought him face to face with majesty and omnipotence of the Almighty. (See Job 38: 1ff.) In the midst of the questions which belong to the natural realm, Jehovah, in effect, asked Job, Wilt thou even annul my judgment, and condemn me, that thou mayest be justified? (See Job 40: 1, 2.) If Job knew so little about God's work in nature, why, then, should he question his providence; and when he realized that situation he said, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42: 6.) That was the spirit which characterized Habakkuk in the lesson now under consideration.

The fact that Habakkuk was told to write the vision, and make it plain, shows that it is to be for the encouragement of others, as well as a permanent record. The Lord's people are taught to wait for him (read Psalm 37), and they are assured that he will not fail them, even though the time may seem long to them. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 8.)

*Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him; but the righteous shall live by his faith.* The apparent meaning of this passage is something like this: The man who trusts in his own judgment as to what is best for him is not right before the Lord; but the man who will reply upon that which God has spoken, although he may not understand all the facts involved, can always depend upon the Lord to bring him safely through. This had particular reference to the safety of the people of Judah during the time of the Chaldeans, but Paul applied the principle to the salvation which has been made possible through Christ. (See again Horn. 1: 17; Gal. 3: 11; Heb. 10: 38.)

#### Tyranny Is Self-Destruction

(Hab. 2: 5-8)

*Yea, moreover, wine is treacher-*

*ous, a haughty man, that keepeth nor at home, who enlargeth his desire a? Sheol, and he is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathered unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all peoples. Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and that ladeth himself with pledges! Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booty unto them? Because thou hast plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder thee, because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all that dwell therein.*

This section of the lesson text contains the first of five woes which were pronounced against the invaders, namely the Chaldeans. (Read the entire second chapter of Habakkuk.) The arrogant and rapacious conduct of the Chaldeans is likened to the inflation of drunkenness. Their greed was as insatiable as death, and all the nations which were affected by their crushing sway would, in time, rise up and taunt them. But they would not stop at taunting; for, as the oracle asked, "Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booty unto them?" And then, "Because thou hast plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder thee, because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all that dwell therein."

In commenting on this portion of the lesson text, George Adam Smith says, "The belief which inspires these songs is simple. Tyranny is intolerable. In the nature of things it cannot endure, but works out its own penalties. By oppressing so many nations, the tyrant prepares the instruments of his destruction. As he treats them, so in time shall they treat him. He is like a debtor who increases the number of his creditors. Some day they shall rise and exact from him the last penny. So that in cutting off others he is but *forfeiting his own life*. The violence done to nature, the deforesting of Lebanon for instance, and the vast hunting of wild beasts, shall recoil on him."

Both Jesus and Paul plainly teach

that people shall reap that which they sow, which is to say that the law of the harvest is inexorable; no amount of entreaty can change the results. (See Matt. 7: 2; Gal. 6: 7, 8.) This is a lesson which every child of God should learn well. He needs, in the first place, to order his own life accordingly; and then he can base his hope upon it, if he is mistreated by others. He then will see the force of the apostolic statement 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 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." (Cf. Heb. 10: 30-39.) The Lord's people may have to suffer at times, because of their wrongdoings; but they may rest in the fact that they will never be entirely forsaken of the Lord, if they will put their trust in him.

### The Second, Third, and Fourth Woes (Hab. 2: 9-16)

*Woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil; Thou hast devised shame to thy house, by cutting off many peoples, and hast sinned against thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.*

The second woe is against the selfishness of the invader—the grasping tyrant whose whole attitude is for his own house; and in manifesting that kind of attitude, he does not care what ruin may be inflicted upon those who are at his mercy. But self-aggrandisement, like pride (cf. Prov. 16: 18), only results in self-destruction. Even the stones in the wall and the timber-work of the house cry out against such an attitude. (Cf. Josh. 24: 27; Luke 19: 40.)

Selfishness is the very opposite of

self-denial, which Jesus makes the first condition of discipleship. (See Matt. 16: 24.) No one can please the Lord and be a selfish person at the same time. As in the case of mammon, no man can serve two masters—the Lord and himself. In the words of Charles Kingsley, "Think about yourself, about what you want, what you like, what respect people ought to pay you, what people think of you, and then to you nothing will be pure. May God keep our hearts pure from that selfishness which is the root of all sin." It is extremely doubtful if any person can name a single sin in his life which is not in some way connected with selfishness. After Satan had moved Jehovah against Job to destroy him without cause (see Job 2: 3), the arch-enemy of both God and man endeavored to awaken in the patriarch the reliance upon the sense of selfishness (Job 2: 4, 5); but he misjudged the man of Uz, and failed utterly in his malicious endeavor. (See Job 2: 10.)

*Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity! Behold, is it not of Jehovah of hosts that the people labor for the fire, and the nations weary themselves for vanity? For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.*

The third woe is against those who endeavor to build a city with blood, and establish the state by wrongdoing. Jehovah alone is the strength of nations (cf. Dan. 4: 17; Rom. 13: 1ff); and those godless states do but weary themselves for vanity which is doomed to destruction.

*"Except Jehovah build the house,  
They labor in vain that build it:  
Except Jehovah keep the city,  
The watchman waketh but in  
vain." (Psalm 127: 1.)*

The statement, "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea," is similar to the statement in Isa. 11: 9, which see. Isaiah has "the knowledge of Jehovah," while in Habakkuk the reading is, "the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah." The idea in the text now under consideration is that when the time came for God to act, the wicked nation of Babylon would be destroyed, with

the result that all men would know that it was accomplished through the providence of Jehovah. The Book of Daniel is a splendid commentary on this part of the lesson text. And, too, the principle can be extended throughout the history of the world, and on to the end of time, when all men will behold the glory of the Lord as he triumphs over the evil forces of the world.

*Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, to thee that addest thy venom, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! Thou art filled with shame, and not glory: drink thou also, and be as one uncircumcised; the cup of Jehovah's right hand shall come round unto thee, and foul shame shall be upon thy glory.*

The fourth woe deals with the exploitation of the person of the victims of the Chaldeans. The attack is upon their self-estimation, and this continues until the sufferers are forced into a type of behavior which is contrary to their essential nature. Or, to state the same thing in another way, the victims are driven to the

point where they disgrace themselves; and when they are thus exposed, the aggressor gloats over their shame. But the evildoer is told that the tables will be turned, for he himself shall be forced to drink from the cup of God's fury.

As one reads of the fate of the cruel Babylonians of the Old Testament, he is naturally led to think of a similar condition which will finally come to spiritual Babylon, as may be seen by reading the eighteenth chapter of Revelation. Although God's people are frequently made to suffer by their unsympathetic enemies, they should remember that there will come a time of rejoicing for them. The evil one often exercises the uperhand in this life, but the reckoning day is coming.

The fifth woe was with reference to idolatry, but their idols proved to be worthless; and the chapter closes with the great timeless affirmation, "But Jehovah is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him;" and there is not a greater lesson for us to learn.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Give something of the background of the lesson we are to study today.  
What is peculiar about the Book of Habakkuk?  
About what was the prophet confused?  
What did he do about the matter?  
Why is he called the prophet of faith?  
What two great truths did Habakkuk give utterance to?  
What always follows a life of faithfulness?  
Give a brief resume of the contents of the Book of Habakkuk.

### The Golden Text

Give the setting of the passage which serves as the golden text.  
What attitude did the prophet manifest during the time of his confusion?  
What lesson should we learn from this?

### The Answer from the Tower

What should a person always do until he is convinced otherwise?  
Give some Bible examples of this attitude.  
What should a person always do when he sees that he is in the wrong?  
Why was Habakkuk told to write the vision?  
What lesson should we learn from this?  
What does it mean to wait for the Lord?  
What will this kind of attitude do for a righteous person?

Contrast the two characters referred to in verse 4.  
What application does Paul make of the principal of faith?

### Tyranny Is Self-Destruction

What form did Jehovah's answer to Habakkuk's cry take?  
Discuss the first woe.  
Why is tyranny self-destruction?  
What encouragement should we get from this?  
What lesson do Jesus and Paul teach regarding the principle now under consideration?  
Why should every Christian learn this lesson well?  
What will this truth enable the Christian to do?

### The Second, Third, and Fourth Woes

What was the nature of the second woe?  
Why is selfishness such a great sin?  
Why is it so easy for one to be selfish?  
What does the devil think of this?  
Against what was the third woe pronounced?  
In what way is God related to the nations of the earth?  
What effect should this truth have upon all men?  
In what way was the earth filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah?  
What further application will this truth have?  
With what did the fourth woe deal?  
Why did the aggressor himself come to the same end?  
What impression should this make upon the Lord's people today?

## Lesson X—March 7, 1965

## JEHOVAH'S DAY OF WRATH

## Lesson Text

## Zeph. 1: 1-13

1 The word of Je-ho'-vah which came unto Zeph-a-ni-ah the son of Cu'-shi, the son of Ged-a-li'-ah, the son of Am-a-r'-ah, the son of Hez-e-ki'-ah, in the days of Jo-si'-ah the son of A'-mon, king of Ju'-dah.

2 I will utterly consume all things from off the face of the ground, saith Je-ho'-vah.

3 I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the face of the ground, saith Je-ho'-vah.

4 And I will stretch out my hand upon Ju'-dah, and upon all the inhabitants of Je-ru'-sa-lem; and I will cut off the remnant of Ba'-al from this place, and the name of the Chem'-a-rim with the priests;

5 And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship, that swear to Je-ho'-vah and swear by Mal'-cam;

6 And them that are turned back from following Je-ho'-vah; and those that have not sought Je-ho'-vah, nor inquired after him.

7 Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord Je-ho'-vah; for the day of Je-ho'-vah is at hand: for Je-ho'-

vah hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath consecrated his guests.

8 And it shall come to pass in the day of Je-ho'-vah's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's sons, and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel.

9 And in that day I will punish all those that leap over the threshold, that fill their master's house with violence and deceit.

10 And in that day, saith Je-ho'-vah, there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and a wailing from the second quarter, and a great crashing from the hills.

11 Wail, ye inhabitants of Mak'-tesh; for all the people of Ca'-naan are undone; all they that were laden with silver are cut off.

12 And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Je-ru'-sa-lem with lamps; and I will punish the men that are settled on their lees, that say in their heart, Je-ho'-vah will not do good, neither will he do evil.

13 And their wealth shall become a spoil, and their houses a desolation: yea, they shall build houses, but shall not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but shall not drink the wine thereof.

Golden Text.—*"For then will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of Jehovah, to serve him with one consent"* (Zeph. 3: 9.)

Devotional Heading.—Zeph. 1: 14-18.

## Daily Bible Readings

- Mar. 1. M..... When the Wrath of Jehovah Went Out (Num. 16: 41-50)  
 Mar. 2. T..... The Wrath of Jehovah Is Like Fire (Nah. 1: 2-8)  
 Mar. 3. W..... Wrath and Indignation Shall Be on the Disobedient (Rom. 2: 1-11)  
 Mar. 4. T..... The Wrath of God Is Revealed from Heaven (Rom. 1: 18-23)  
 Mar. 5. F..... A Prayer That God's Wrath Be Turned Away (Dan. 9: 12-19)  
 Mar. 6. S..... God's Wrath Will Prevent the Blessing (Heb. 4: 1-7)  
 Mar. 7. S..... God Did Not Appoint Us unto Wrath (1 Thess. 5: 1-11)

Time.—Probably between 630 and 625 B.C.

Place.—Probably in Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jehovah, Zephaniah, and evil people generally.

## Introduction

Zephaniah identifies himself in the opening verse of his prophecy: "The word of Jehovah which came unto

Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Jo-

siah, the son of Amon, king of Judah." There is no mention in the Bible of a son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, by the name of Amariah, but it is generally thought by Bible students that the Hezekiah of the text now before us was the good king of the southern kingdom who reigned during the days of the prophet Isaiah. (See 2 Kings, chapters 18-20.) If the Hezekiah of this lesson was the king of Judah, then Zephaniah was of royal blood, and his denunciation of the princes and the king's sons was significant.

One has only to read of the evils which were practiced by Manasseh and Amon, grandfather and father, respectively, of Josiah, in order to have some idea of the corrupt state of affairs which existed when Josiah came to the throne. It would be difficult to imagine conditions which were much worse. Josiah's reign is remembered chiefly for his great reforms, and it was against such a background as has just been mentioned that the young king was compelled to work. It is altogether probable that Josiah was greatly aided in his great undertakings by the prophet Zephaniah. It will help us to appreciate the situation now before us, if we will keep in mind the fact that the prophets of those days were comparable to the preachers of our day. A faithful and dedicated gospel preacher can often exercise more influence in stemming the tide of evil, and bringing about reforms, than any other single individual in the community. This very thought should have a sobering effect upon every man who considers himself a minister of the word of the Lord.

The three chapters of Zephaniah contain only fifty-three verses, but

they contain much valuable information. The picture which he draws is a dark one, but he expresses the conviction that there is always hope, and even joy, for those who will fully trust in the Lord. Chapter 1 predicts the utter destruction of Judah as a judgment for idolatry and neglect of Jehovah, principally on the part of the leaders; but the people had followed them, and they would have to suffer too. Zephaniah warned that the "day of Jehovah" was at hand, and that it would be a day of reckoning. (Cf. Amos 5: 18-20.) He made it plain that Jehovah would no longer tolerate idolatry and skepticism on the part of his people; and he presented a vivid contrast between the prosperity, security and insolence of the people, and the horrors of the day of wrath.

Chapter 2 opens with a call to repentance; and then in rapid succession the prophet predicts punishment for the enemies of his people. Chapter 3 is addressed primarily to Jerusalem. Zephaniah reproved the people there for their vice and disobedience, the cruelty of the princes and the treachery of the priests, and for their general disregard for the warnings which had been given to them. The chapter concludes with a series of promises to those who put their trust in Jehovah, which included the restoration of the people from their captivity. We should, of course, not lose sight of the fact that the prophecies we are studying usually had a double meaning. The language was primarily addressed to the people of their day; but over and beyond their time was the better life for those who would put their trust in Christ.

## The Golden Text

*"For then will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of Jehovah, to serve him with one consent."* The Jewish people who lived during the time the law of Moses was in force often fell into idolatrous worship. However, while serving idols, they also continued to regard themselves as servants of Jehovah; and that dual would-be-devotion resulted, of course, in a mixed-language which was entirely unacceptable to the

Lord. In fact, since the time of Babel (Gen. 11: 1-9), sin has always resulted in a confusion of languages. The Jewish people, following the Babylonian captivity, were completely cured of idolatry; and that at least makes one think of the gospel age when those who are truly converted to Christ will have a common language, entirely free from that which displeases him.

In writing to the Romans, Paul said, "Now the God of patience and

of comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another according to Christ Jesus: that with one accord ye may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 15: 5, 6.) And then to the Corinthians, "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. 1: 10.) Paul exhorted his son in the gospel, Titus, to employ "sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us." (Tit. 2: 8.)

The "pattern of sound words" which faithful Christians should follow is found in the New Testament; and if we will thoroughly familiarize ourselves with this teaching, it will

be obvious to those about us that we have a pure language which, not only was given to us by the Lord, but which will enable us to serve him with one consent, or, as the margin has it, with one *shoulder*. When every individual puts his shoulder to the wheel, then something is going to happen. The metaphor of "one shoulder" is probably based on the idea of a yoke or burden which is "borne between two." The Septuagint renders the expression now before us "under one yoke." When the spies were in the land of Canaan, they "came unto the valley of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, *and they bare it upon a staff between two.*" (See Num. 13: 23.) It is only when people have a pure language that they can be sure of having that fellowship in the work of the Lord, which will enable them to do that which is pleasing to him. (Cf. Acts 2: 42.)

## The Text Explained

### The Title of the Book

(Zeph. 1: 1)

*The word of Jehovah which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.*

Zephaniah, it appears, was contemporary with the prophets Jeremiah and Nahum, with Jeremiah probably the youngest, at least in the time of his ministry. It had seemingly been about seventy-five years since the close of Isaiah's prophecy and so far as we know there was no prophet between Isaiah and Zephaniah. It is possible that Nahum began his prophetic ministry a few years earlier than Zephaniah entered into his. The reigns of Manasseh and Amon came between Isaiah and Zephaniah, and it is doubtful if a more wicked king ever sat on the throne of Judah than Manasseh, and the Bible says that Amon did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, as did Manasseh his father. With conditions such as they were during that period, it is not surprising that the voice of prophecy was silent. But when Josiah came to the throne the tide turned, and things were different; the voice of prophecy was again heard in the land.

Those who are familiar with the prophets who have left a record of their preaching will readily see that Zephaniah was more like Amos and Isaiah when it came to his idea of how God's holiness reacted to man's sin. With these prophets of old, the day of judgment was certain to come; and this we shall plainly see when we come to the next section of the lesson text. But though Zephaniah's message was austere and condemnatory, he did offer hope; because it is not God's will that any should perish. (Read Ezek. 33: 11; 2 Pet. 3: 9.) In the words of Isaiah, "Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isa. 55: 6, 7.) But it should be kept in mind that if God's word does not bring men to repentance, then it will condemn them, as Isaiah also points out. (See Isa. 55: 10, 11; of. 2 Cor. 2: 14-17.)

Preachers today can very well take a lesson from the ministry of Zephaniah. If we will get a clear picture of the righteousness which God requires, and over against that a view of the deplorable condition of man-



kind in general and the church in particular, it will be easy for us to see the great responsibility which is resting upon us. And if we have any doubt about the responsibility which is ours, we can soon get that out of the way by reading Paul's final commission to his son in the faith. "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.)

#### Jehovah's Threat of Destruction (Zeph. 1: 2-6)

*I will utterly consume all things from off the face of the ground, saith Jehovah. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the face of the ground, saith Jehovah. And I will stretch out my hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarim with the priests; and them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship, that swear to Jehovah and swear by Malcam; and them that are turned back from following Jehovah; and Those that have not sought Jehovah, nor inquired after him.*

Reference has already been made to the exceeding sinful conditions which prevailed during the reigns of Manasseh and Amon. It was after their passing that Josiah came to the throne, and he apparently did not realize how the Lord felt about his people. It was natural, of course, for the temple to be neglected during the years that idolatry flourished, and for it to fall into a state of deterioration; and it was during the time that the workmen were repair-

ing the breaches in the house of Jehovah that the book of the law was found by the priest, among the rubbish which had accumulated in the building during the long period of its neglect during the reigns of the kings already referred to, namely Manasseh and Amon.

After the priest had found the book of the law of Jehovah, he gave it to the scribe; and he in turn took it to the young king Josiah, and read to him from it. The words which were heard by the king made a profound impression upon him, and he refused to rest until he could learn from the Lord something of the significance of the contents of the book which had been found in the temple. Some men were appointed to make inquiry, and when they had consulted the prophetess Huldah, and they received this message: "Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: Tell ye the man that sent you unto me, Thus saith Jehovah. Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah. Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands: therefore is my wrath poured out upon this place, and it shall not be quenched. But unto the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of Jehovah, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: As touching the words which thou hast heard, because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and hast humbled thyself before me, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith Jehovah. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof. And they brought back word to the king." (2 Chron. 34: 23-28. Read the entire chapter.)

These words have been quoted in order to show that the reformations which were attempted by the king were only superficial, so far as the people were concerned. If the people

had been sincere, then God would have saved them from the punishment which had been reserved for the wicked; but as it was, Jehovah's word to the king was, "Therefore is my wrath poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched." There was no doubt about the zeal, fidelity, and acceptance of Jehovah on the part of Josiah, but the people were beyond redemption. All of this will help us to understand in some measure why the prophet Zephaniah spoke so sternly regarding the punishment which was coming to Judah and her people, without so much as referring to the reformation which Josiah had attempted. Josiah was a noble ruler; and if he could have infused his own spirit into his subjects, all would have been well. It was simply too late. He struggled nobly to perform an impossible task. The very best that his royal presence and royal mandate could do was to compel an external show of submission to God's will. The hearts of the people were not in the reformation, because they were joined to their idols.

The term "Chemarim" (cf. 2 Kings 23: 5; Hos. 10: 5, marginal notes) apparently referred to idolatrous priests, while "Malcam" was a false god, probably the same as *Milcom*, the god of the Ammonites. (Cf. Jer. 49: 1, 3, and marginal note.) These false gods and idolatrous priests were brought into Judah and Jerusalem from the heathen nations during the reigns of Manasseh and Amon, and the false worship which they inspired was adopted by the people of the Lord.

The lesson which we should learn from this section of the lesson text is that the condemnation of God is coming upon sin and sinful practices, regardless of the relationship which those who are guilty sustain to the church. Mere membership in the church is not enough; God requires faithfulness on the part of those who profess to serve him. And it is the business of those who preach the gospel to warn people of the impending danger.

#### The Judgment Described in More Detail

(Zeph. 1: 7-13)

*Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord Jehovah; for the day of Je-*

*hovah is at hand: for Jehovah hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath consecrated his guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of Jehovah's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's sons, and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel. And in that day I will punish all those that leap over the threshold, that fill their master's house with violence and deceit. And in that day, saith Jehovah, there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and a wailing from the second quarter, and a great crashing from the hills. Wail, ye inhabitants of Maktesh; for all the people of Canaan are undone; all they that were laden with silver are cut off. And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with lamps; and I will punish the men that are settled on their lees, that say in their heart, Jehovah will not do good, neither will he do evil. And their wealth shall become a spoil, and their houses a desolation: yea, they shall build houses, but shall not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but shall not drink the wine thereof.*

When the Lord says, "Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near," as was pointed out earlier in this lesson, the implication is, of course, that there is a time when sinful people can turn to him, with the assurance that they will be accepted. But when people continue to rebel against him, the time will come when nothing but punishment awaits them. This is apparently what Zephaniah meant when he said, "Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord Jehovah; for the day of Jehovah is at hand," that is, the day of judgment or punishment is rapidly approaching. In saying that Jehovah hath prepared a sacrifice, and hath consecrated his guests, the reference was to the captivity of Judah, by the Babylonians. The people of Judah would be the sacrifice, while the Babylonians, the instruments of punishment, would be the guests.

The punishment of the day of Jehovah would include the princes and the king's sons, the very ones who should have taken the lead in examples of righteousness. Those who were clothed with foreign apparel may have been those who imported

their clothing, or, which is more probable, those who arrayed themselves with the garments of idolatrous worship. (Cf. Isa. 2: 6.) Those who leaped over the thresholds were probably those who entered houses violently and with deceit, in order to take the possessions of the victims for those who sent them. The noise of the cry from the fish gate, and the wailing from the second quarter (Mishneh, margin), apparently refer to those sections of the city of Jerusalem which would be the first to receive the news of the crashing of the Babylonian army from the hills. The inhabitants of *Maktesh* (the mortar, margin) were probably those who maintained their commercial activities in that part of the city, so called because of its basin-shape, probably in the valley of Tyropoeon, which ran through the city of Jerusalem from north to south.

Verse 12 declared that Jehovah would make a thorough search for all the complacently wicked people, who were satisfied with their sinful condition. The lees were the settlings of wine, and the wine was said to

rest upon them. Thus, for men to rest or be settled on their lees, figuratively speaking, came to mean that they were both fixed and undisturbed. Such men proclaimed their feeling that God was not going to do anything about the existing situation; but he assured them that their efforts to benefit themselves would not be rewarded.

It is not out of place to think of the judgment on Jerusalem as being somewhat of a foretaste of the great judgment at the end of time; and no one should ever get the idea that he can be hidden from God. (Cf. Heb. 4: 12, 13; Rev. 20: 11-15.) We have this life in which to get ready to meet the Lord in peace, and we should use it to the full for that purpose. In the words of Robert Browning,

Have you found your life distasteful?

My life did, and does, smack sweet.  
Was your youth of pleasure wasteful?

Mine I saved, and hold complete.

Do your joys with age diminish?

When mine fail me, I'll complain.

Must in death your daylight finish?

My sun sets to rise again.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

In what way did Zephaniah introduce himself?

Against what kind of background did he prophesy?

What lesson should we learn from the manner in which Zephaniah performed his work?

Give a brief analysis of the book which bears his name.

### The Golden Text

Why was it necessary for God to give his people a pure language?

Just what is meant by such a language?

How can we know that we have a pure language?

What will such a language enable us to do?

### The Title of the Book

At what time in the history of Judah did Zephaniah prophesy?

Who were some of his contemporaries?

Compare the nature of his work with other Old Testament prophets.

Why was Zephaniah such a stern condemnatory prophet?

What place did hope have in his preaching?

What lesson should preachers today learn from his style of proclaiming his message?

### Jehovah's Threat of Destruction

Give some of the principal facts of Judah's

history which influenced Zephaniah's work.

Why didn't he refer to the reforms which were carried out by Josiah?

What lesson should we learn from this section of the lesson text?

In what way do some people abuse the privilege of church membership?

### The Judgment Described in More Detail

What is implied in the Lord's exhortation to seek him?

Why did Zephaniah tell the people to hold their peace at the presence of the Lord?

What was the sacrifice which Jehovah had prepared?

Who were the consecrated guests?

Whom did he say that he would punish in that day? Why?

Who were those who were clothed with foreign apparel?

Who leaped over the thresholds and for what purpose?

Why was the noise of crying heard at the fish gate and in the second quarter of the city?

Who were the inhabitants of Maktesh?

Whom did Jehovah say that he would search of the city?

What lesson should this teach us?

What attitude did such people manifest?

Why do some people seem to think that Jehovah is not going to disturb their way of living?

Why should the conditions described by Zephaniah make us think of the day of judgment?

What should we do with our present life?

## Lesson XI—March 14, 1965

## HAGGAI, PROPHET OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Lesson Text

Hag. 2: 1-19

1 In the seventh *month*, in the one and twentieth *day* of the month, came the word of Je-ho'-vah by Hag'-gai the prophet, saying,

2 Speak now to Ze-rub'-ba-bel the son of She-al'-ti-el, governor of Ju'-dah, and to Josh'-u-a the son of Je-hoz'-a-dak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying,

3 Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes as nothing?

4 Yet now be strong, O Ze-rub'-ba-bel, saith Je-ho'-vah; and be strong, O Josh'-u-a, son of Je-hoz'-a-dak, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith Je-ho'-vah, and work: for I am with you, saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts.

5 According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of E'-gypt, and my Spirit abode among you: fear ye not.

6 For thus saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;

7 And I will shake all nations; and the precious things of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts.

8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts.

9 The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts.

10 In the four and twentieth *day* of the ninth *month*, in the second year of Da-ri-us, came the word of Je-ho'-vah by Hag'-gai the prophet, saying,

11 Thus saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts: Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying,

12 If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any food, shall it become holy? And the priests answered and said, No.

13 Then said Hag'-gai, If one that is unclean by reason of a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.

14 Then answered Hag'-gai and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith Je-ho'-vah; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.

15 And now, I pray you, consider from this day and backward, before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of Je-ho'-vah.

16 Through all that time, when one came to a heap of twenty *measures*, there were but ten; when one came to the winevat to draw out fifty *vessels*, there were but twenty.

17 I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the work of your hands; yet ye *turned* not to me, saith Je-ho'-vah.

18 Consider, I pray you, from this day and backward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth *month*, since the day that the foundation of Je-ho'-vah's temple was laid, consider it.

19 Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, the vine, and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive-tree have not brought forth; from this day will I bless you.

Golden Text.—*"He that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes"* (Hag. 1: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Hag. 2: 20-23.

## Daily Bible Readings

Mar. 8. M.....	Encouragement Is a Christian Duty (1 Thess. 5: 12-22)*
Mar. 9. T. ....	The Strong Should Encourage the Weak (Gal. 6: 1-5)
Mar. 10. ....	W God Gives Practical Encouragement to His People (Psalm 138: 1-8)
Mar. 11. ....	T. We Are Encouraged to Follow in the Footsteps of Jesus (1 Pet. 2: 18-25)

- Mar. 12. F..... The Faithful Child of God Should Never Fear (Isa. 41: 8-16)  
 Mar. 13. S..... Servants of the Lord Need Encouragement (2 Chron. 35: 1-6)  
 Mar. 14. S..... Paul Was Greatly Encouraged by Silas and Timothy (Acts 18: 5-11)

Time.—520 B.C.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Haggai, Zerubbabel, Joshua, the priests, and the remnant of the people.

## Introduction

Haggai belonged to the latter part of the Babylonian exile. He was probably born in Babylon, and it appears that he was among the number who came to Judaea under the leadership of Zerubbabel. (Ezra, chapters 1 and 2.) We do not have very much information regarding his personal history, and cannot therefore say much about him before the time of his work as a prophet. The sins of God's people had made it necessary for him to send them into captivity; but that was not to be the end of their career: the time would come when they would have the opportunity to return to their homeland. If one will read the One Hundred and Thirty-Seventh Psalm, he will be able to understand something of the feeling which characterized the exiles in a foreign land.

It was the policy of the Assyrians and the Chaldeans to uproot captive people, and remove them to other lands; but when Cyrus came to the throne, there was a great change with reference to such matters. This Persian ruler understood human nature, and he knew that even captive people would be better subjects, if they were permitted to enjoy their own homes and worship their God as he had directed. Here is the way in which Ezra introduces us to the great events which lay ahead of the Jewish people: "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Jeho-

vah, the God of Israel (he is God), which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill-offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem." (Ezra 1: 1-4.)

The history of the efforts to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, as authorized by Cyrus, and the manner in which the work was halted, are graphically set forth in the 3 and 4 chapters of Ezra. Nothing more was done about the work for the next sixteen years. It was at the end of that period of inactivity that the prophet Haggai appeared on the scene. (Read the 5 and 6 chapters of Ezra.) Haggai was the first of the prophets of the restoration period. The long period during which no work was done toward rebuilding the temple had dulled the zeal of the Jews; and they apparently were becoming more interested in their own welfare, than in the work which God had ordained for them to do. Haggai therefore was commissioned by Jehovah to stir up the people, and urge them to go forward with their work on the temple. He and Zechariah were closely associated in this undertaking. (Ezra 5: 1; 6: 14; Hag. 1: 1; Zech. 1: 1.)

The dates which are given in the Book of Haggai make it easy to analyze this prophetic production. There are four distinct discourses in this book, all delivered in the second year of Darius the king of the Persians. The first one was spoken on the first day of the sixth month (September). It was an exhortation to rebuild the temple, and it stirred the people to action. (Hag. 1: 1-15.) The second was in the twenty-first day of the seventh month (October), to encourage the workers with a Messianic prediction. (Hag. 2: 1-9.) The third, on the twenty-fourth day

of the ninth month (December), was a parabolic rebuke of their indifference and unfaithfulness. (Hag. 2:

10-19.) The fourth, on the same day, contained Jehovah's promise to Zerubbabel. (Hag. 2: 20-23.)

### The Golden Text

*"He that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes"* These words are taken from Haggai's first address in which he called the people's attention to their negligence, and exhorted them to begin again their work of rebuilding the temple. He began his discourse with these words: "Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, saying, This people say, It is not the time for us to come, the time for Jehovah's house to be built." These words were addressed to Zerubbabel, the governor, and to Joshua, the high priest. "Then came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your ceiled houses, while this house lieth waste? Now therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes." (Read Hag. 1: 1-6.)

This is a clear instance of how Jehovah feels about his people's not putting first things first. (Cf. Matt. 6: 33.) The attitude of the people of Haggai's day was in marked contrast with that of David when he said to Nathan the prophet: "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains." (2 Sam. 7: 2.) It is never right for people to be more interested in their own welfare, than in the glory of God; and the first thing that they should do is to heed the admonition which was given by the Lord through his prophet, namely, "Now therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Consider your ways." (Cf. Lam. 3: 40.) If all of

God's people would follow this admonition, and make it their aim to please God (cf. 2 Cor. 5: 9), they would soon see the work of the Lord growing and their own lot improving. But as it was in the days of Haggai, so it is in our day when people manifest the same attitude, namely, nothing prospers in our hands, while we neglect our duty to God. We may think that we are prospering, but that is only temporary. (Cf. Psalm 73.) Instead of being grateful to God for restoring them to their homeland and joyfully serving him, the Israelites were more interested in their own welfare. How does their attitude compare with ours today?

The same principles which were emphasized by Haggai are also set forth in the New Testament. Paul, in fact, quoted from the Old Testament in presenting his lesson to the Corinthians, namely, "Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work: as it is written,

He hath scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor;

His righteousness abideth for ever. And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness: ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God." (2 Cor. 9: 7-11; cf. Luke 12: 22-34.)

### The Text Explained

#### A Prediction Regarding: the Future Glory of the Temple

(Hag. 2: 1-9)

*In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet, saying, Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, gov-*

*ernor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes as nothing? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak,*

*the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith Jehovah, and work: for I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts, according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and my Spirit abode among you: fear ye not.*

The message of Haggai which we are considering in this section of the lesson text was delivered during the closing part of the feast of tabernacles, as may be seen by reading Lev. 23: 39-44. It was a season of great rejoicing and many sacrifices; and that may have been the reason why that particular date was chosen for the message of encouragement which the prophet delivered. As was pointed out earlier in this lesson, work on the temple halted for sixteen years, when Haggai urged his people to begin their efforts anew. It had been many years since the destruction of the first temple took place, and only the older people among those returning to Judah could remember it; and they, of course, were the ones who could make the comparison between the first and the second temples. (Cf. Ezra 3: 12, 13.)

It appears, however, that the difference between the two temples was not so much in their sizes, as in their glory. (Cf. Ezra 6: 3-5.) Many of the furnishings which had adorned the temple which Solomon built were doubtless not in the temple of Zerubabel: and that greatly contributed to the lack of glory in the latter. But the prophet Haggai was told to comfort the mourners, by assuring them that the glory of the house which they were building would eventually exceed that of the building which was destroyed by the Babylonians; because of the coming of the Lord, that is, Christ Jesus, to it, and filling it with his glory, as we shall see in the next portion of this section of the lesson text. But before going to that part of the text, it should be observed that, although there were actually three different temples, the ones built by Solomon, Zerubabel, and Herod, the last being the one to which Christ came, yet as Jehovah spoke of them, it was "this house! With Jehovah there was but *one* house.

*For thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth,*

*and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations; and the precious things of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts.*

This portion of the lesson text is definitely Messianic in its thought, and this must be kept in mind as we seek its meaning. Although it was a little more than five hundred years before the coming of Christ when Haggai spoke these words, the Lord speaks of the period as a "little while." (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 8.) The shaking of the heavens, the earth, and all nations had reference to the great upheavals, such as rocked the Persian and Greek Kingdoms, and which brought the Roman Empire to power before the coming of Christ. (Read the second chapter of Daniel.) This is the way in which Ezekiel speaks of those cataclysmic times: "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: this also shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." (Ezek. 21: 27.) One kingdom after another would be overthrown before the coming of Christ. This shows how God rules in the kingdoms of men. (Cf. Dan. 4: 17; Rom. 13: 1f.)

The reference to the silver and gold appears to have been to reassure the people who were charged with rebuilding the temple. It is very often the case that those who are responsible for the Lord's work wonder where the money is coming from; but if they are sure that they are doing what he wants them to do, they can rely on the Lord's promise to his people; for all things belong to him, and he can overrule them as it seems good to him. (Cf. Phil. 4: 19; 2 Cor. 9: 6-15.) In commenting on this, The Wycliffe Bible Commentary says, "Lest the remnant continue to be surcharged with concern over the lack of precious metals in the restoration temple, the Lord pointed to his inexhaustible supply. It has been conjectured that in Solomon's temple some twenty million dollars' worth of gold was used to overlay the innermost compartment of the sanctuary. But what was that in compari-

son to the supplies of the One who has all? (Psalm 50: 12.) Yea, more than that, God will beautify it in the coming of his Son. The poor exiles had little with which to decorate the temple, but God assured them that he would supply the lack." Haggai was looking beyond the temple to the church which Christ would build.

### A Lesson Concerning Holiness and Uncleanness

(Hag. 2: 10-14)

*In the jour and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any food, shall it become holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by reason of a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith Jehovah; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.*

As already pointed out in this lesson, the date of the discourse by Haggai which we are now considering was the same as our December; and that was the time when they could expect the early rains to make ready for the crops in the coming year. If these rains failed to come, they would, of course, be concerned regarding their crop prospects in the year ahead. These people had been punished in temporal things because of their former disobedience; and now it appears that they want to know if conditions will be changed for them, if they do as they are told. The priests were charged with teaching the law, and Jehovah directs that two questions be placed before the priests, their answers will enable the people to see their own condition. The principle is that moral cleanness cannot be transmitted according to the law of Moses, but moral uncleanness can be transmitted.

This is a most important lesson for us to learn, namely, a person whose heart is not right before God cannot

hope to have that which he does accepted by him. The people of Haggai's time had been going through a form of service, while neglecting the work on the temple; and now they must learn that no amount of worship on their part will atone for a life which is not pleasing to God. Or, to say the same thing in another way, even that which they offered on the altar was unclean, because of the unclean condition of their lives before God. (Head Ezra 3: 3.) In the words of Pusey, "In the application, the two melt into one; for the holy thing, viz, the altar which they raised out of fear on their return, so far from hallowing the land or the people by the sacrifices offered thereon, was itself defiled."

### The Application of the Truths Just Stated

(Hag. 2: 15-19)

*And now, I pray you, consider from this day and backward, before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of Jehovah. Through all the time, when one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten; when one came to the winevat to draw out fifty vessels, there were but twenty.*

*I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the work of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith Jehovah. Consider, I pray you, from this day and backward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, since the day that the foundation of Jehovah's temple was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, the vine, and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive-tree have not brought forth; from this day will I bless you.*

The people to whom Haggai spoke were asked to consider their physical circumstances during the twenty years they had neglected to work on the temple. If people would only stop and think, they could easily see what their relation to God is. They were following their agricultural pursuits during the time of their indifference toward the Lord, and what were the results? When a man had threshed his grain and expected the heap to yield twenty measures, he found that it contained only half that much. And the vat which contained the season's vintage he thought would enable him to take out fifty measures.



but he learned to his disappointment that it contained only twenty measures. Expectations were always disappointing; because the prospering hand of God was not with them.

As in the days of their fathers, God had punished them with "blasting," that is, with excessive drought, with "mildew," a consequence of too much moisture, while the remainder of their labors were destroyed by hail. But even those destructive forces of nature did not cause the people to return to God, the Giver of all things. When Moses repeated the Law to Israel, in his addresses which make up the major part of the Book of Deuteronomy, he warned of these very conditions; but when people do not read and meditate upon that which God has said to them, his warnings and other teaching have little effect upon their lives. (Read Deut. 28: 15ff; Lev. 26: 3-5, 14-16, 19, 20.) A double exhortation to "consider" is found in verse 18 of the text now under consideration. Jehovah wanted his people to review the time during which they had not worked on the temple, and then compare their conditions before and after their obedience. It would be easy for them to see their situation, according to that which is said in verse 19. The same God who can withhold blessings, can also supply them; and that is precisely what he promised to do—"from this day will I bless you."

The principle we are now considering is so plainly stated by Malachi that no one who stops to think can miss the point. "From the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. But ye say, wherein shall

we return? Will a man rob God? yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation. Bring ye the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground: neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field, saith Jehovah of hosts. And all nations shall call you happy; for ye shall be a delightful land, saith Jehovah of hosts." (Mal. 3: 7-12.)

There is nothing more plainly taught in the Bible than that God rewards obedience with his blessings—temporal blessings as well as spiritual blessings—; and that when disobedience is rampant in the land, he, to a certain extent, withholds his blessings from men. It is true, so far as the world goes, that the wicked often seem more prosperous than the righteous (cf. Eccl. 8: 9-13), but their prosperity is only apparent. The mere possession of material wealth is no guarantee of true prosperity. Material possessions are ephemeral, and the prosperity they bring is, in the very nature of the case, but temporary. True prosperity does not depend wholly upon the things of this world. Possibly it would be too much to say that every famine can be traced directly to the wickedness of the people at a given time; yet, in the light of the general teaching of the Bible on this question, there is sufficient reason, during times of depression, for people to examine their conduct before God.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What is known about the life and time of Haggai?  
Why were the people of God in a foreign land at the time of his birth?  
What change in the policy of their captors was made about this time?  
Why were the Lord's people allowed to return to their homeland?  
What particular situation was Haggai commissioned to deal with?

Give a brief analysis of the Book of Haggai.

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances was the statement of this text made?  
What important lesson should we learn from it?  
Why is it important for the Lord's people to consider their ways?  
What New Testament teaching do we have from Paul on this question?

### A Prediction Regarding the Future Glory of the Temple

At what time of the year was this mes-

sage of Haggai delivered and what of its significance?

Why did the people at that time need encouragement?

What difference in the two buildings of the temple were they exhorted to observe?

What really made the difference?

Although there were three buildings of the temple, how did Jehovah himself regard it?

What did Jehovah mean by saying that he would shake the heavens, earth, etc.?

What lesson should we learn from this regarding God's rule in the kingdoms of men?

Why did Jehovah speak of the silver and the gold as being his?

What should this teach us regarding our attitude and work in his kingdom?

#### A Lesson Concerning Holiness and Uncleaness

At what time of the year did Haggai deliver this message to the people?

What questions were they told to ask the priests and why ask them?

What principle would this impress upon their minds?

Why is it that moral cleanness cannot

be transmitted, while moral uncleanness can be?

What application do these truths have for us?

What effect in Christian living would these things have, if they were fully recognized?

#### The Application of the Truths Just Stated

Why were the people asked to consider their physical circumstances during the time they were neglecting to work on the temple?

What peculiar situation did they find during that time?

In what ways did Jehovah say that he had punished them?

What effect did this have upon them? Why?

What has the Lord always taught regarding obedience and prosperity?

What double exhortation was urged upon the people?

Show how other prophets enforced this lesson of the relationship between obedience and the physical blessings of life.

Why are the Lord's people so slow in seeing these truths?

What should people frequently do during times of depression? Why?

## Lesson XII—March 21, 1965

# PROMISE OF GREAT BLESSING

### Lesson Text

Zech. 13: 1-6; 14: 1-8

1 In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Je-ru'-sa-lem, for sin and for uncleanness.

2 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered; and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.

3 And it shall come to pass that, when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of Je-ho'-vah; and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.

4 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he prophesieth; neither shall they wear a hairy mantle to deceive:

5 But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the ground; for I have been made a bondman from my youth.

6 And one shall say unto him,

What are these wounds between thine arms? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

1 Behold, a day of Je-ho'-vah cometh, when thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.

2 For I will gather all nations against Je-ru'-sa-lem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

3 Then shall Je-ho'-vah go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of ol-ives, which is before Je-ru'-sa-lem on the east; and the mount of ol-ives shall be cleft in the midst thereof toward east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

5 And ye shall flee by the valley of my mountains; for the valley of

the mountains shall reach unto Azel; yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uz-zi-ah king of Judah; and Je-ho'-vah my God shall come, and all the holy ones with thee.

6 And it shall come to pass in that day, that there shall not be light; the bright ones shall withdraw themselves:

7 But it shall be one day which is known unto Je-ho'-vah; not day, and not night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time there shall be light.

8 And it shall come to pass in that day, that living waters shall go out from Je-ru'-sa-lem; half of them toward the eastern sea, and half of them toward the western sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts” (Zech. 4: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Zech. 1: 1-11.

### Daily Bible Readings

Mar. 15. M.	Promises Are Given to Encourage Obedience (Acts 2: 37-41)
Mar. 16. T.	It Requires Faith and Patience to Inherit the Promises (Heb. 6: 9-12)
Mar. 17. W.	..... The Gospel Contains God's Promises to Men (Acts 13: 32-39)
Mar. 18. T.	We Must Believe That God Will Fulfill His Promises (Heb. 11: 1-6)
Mar. 19. F.	God Never Fails to Keep His Part of the Promise (1 Kings 8: 54-61)
Mar. 20. S.	God's Blessings Meet Our Every Need (Phil. 4: 13-20)
Mar. 21. S.....	We Are Encouraged to Pray for God's Promised Blessings (Jer. 33: 1-3)

TIME.—520 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Zeehariah and the people.

### Introduction

There are few books in the Old Testament which are as difficult to interpret as the Book of Zeehariah. It is of the apocalyptic type, comparable in this respect to Ezekiel and Daniel. The only other book of the Old Testament prophets which is as Messianic as Zeehariah is Isaiah. It has been said that the scope of Zeehariah's visions and the profundity of his thoughts are almost without parallel. Zeehariah began his prophesying some two months after Haggai began his. (See Hag. 1: 1; Zech. 1: 1.) The conditions under which they prophesied therefore were practically the same. The foundation of the temple which had been destroyed by the Babylonians had been laid, but no effort had been made to go on with the building since the initial work on it was halted some sixteen years before. Haggai, who was probably older, prophesied for about four months, while Zeehariah continued for about two years. (Cf. Zech. 7: 1.) It is probable, of course, that both prophets spoke much more than is recorded (cf. Acts 2: 40); but we are limited in our study to that which is written.

The name “Zeehariah,” which means *Jehovah remembers*, or *Jehovah has remembered*, is widely used

in the Old Testament, having been given to about thirty different people. The one whose prophecy we are to study today was the son of Berechiah, and grandson of Iddo. (See Zech. 1: 1, 7.) We learn from Neh. 12: 4 that one of the chiefs of the priests who went up to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel from the exile was named Iddo, and it is thought by many Bible students that he was identical with the grandfather of Zeehariah. Ezra (5: 1; 6: 14) speaks of Zeehariah as the son, rather than grandson, of Iddo; but that is explained on the theory that for some unexplained reason—perhaps the death of Berechiah—Zeehariah followed his grandfather in the priestly office, and that the historian simply dropped the name of his father. (Cf. Gen. 28: 5; 29: 5, where Laban, the son of Bethuel, and grandson of Nahor, was called the son of Nahor.) It can be seen, from all of this, that Zeehariah was a priest as well as a prophet.

The Book of Zeehariah naturally falls into two main divisions, namely, chapters 1-8 and chapters 9-14. A critical study of the book has resulted in an almost unanimous opinion in the latter part of the book is *ro\** later than the first part. (Cf.

9: 13, where Greece is mentioned as a hostile world power.) We are distinctly told that the prophecy of the first part of the book was during the reign of Darius, and we know that it was later than this before Greece became such a power. But even if the two parts were not written at the same time, as many Bible students think, that in no way destroys the

general value and purpose of the book; for it is an inspired prophecy. In general, the first eight chapters deal with the construction of the temple and the resumption of the worship, as prescribed by Moses; while the last six chapters have to do with the future of the Jews and the coming of the Messiah.

### The Golden Text

*"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts."*

This statement was made in explanation of the vision of a candlestick and two olive-trees which came to Zechariah, and which contained a message for Zerubbabel. This was the Zerubbabel, of our last lesson, who rebuilt the temple, after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile. After reaching Jerusalem, the people under Jeshua and Zerubbabel first erected the altar and restored the worship; and then apparently as soon as arrangements could be made, they laid the foundation of the temple, with great rejoicing, in anticipation of a speedy completion of the entire superstructure. (Read Ezra 3.)

But this joyful anticipation of a finished temple did not continue long: for when Zerubbabel and his helpers saw the magnitude of the task which was before them, and the greatness of the number of those who opposed their efforts, they became discouraged and ceased from their labors for a period of about sixteen years. (See Ezra 4.) It was at the expiration of that time that Jehovah sent his prophets Haggai and Zechariah to stir up the people, and the work on the temple was resumed. (See Ezra 5: 1ff.) The vision which came to Zechariah, which we are now considering, contained a message for Zerubbabel, as may be seen from the following: "And I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these are? And I said, no, my

lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the top stone with shoutings of Grace, grace unto it. Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house: his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? for these seven shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel; these are the eyes of Jehovah, which run to and fro through the whole earth." (Zech. 4: 4-10. Read also verses 1-3.)

No opposition, however great, which stands before the people of the Lord, who are charged with a specific duty, can stop their advance, so long as they are faithful and it is the Lord's will for them to move forward. This was true during the time of miracles (cf. the Red Sea, the river Jordan, before the marching Israelites; and the mountain's becoming a plain before Zerubbabel), and it is still true today (cf. Matt. 28: 20; Phil. 4: 13). This is exactly what happened in the case of Gideon and the three hundred (Judges, chapters 6, 7); and any one today who has faith in the leadership of the Lord can have the satisfaction of knowing that he, too, can be successful in that which he has been taught by God's word to do.

### The Text Explained

**A Glorious Promise to God's People**  
(Zech. 13: 1-6)

*In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David*

*and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, that I will cut off*

*the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered; and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. And it shall come to pass that, when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live: for thou speakest lies in the name of Jehovah; and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he prophesieth: neither shall they wear a hairy mantle to deceive: but he shall say, I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the ground; for I have been made a bondman from my youth. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds between thine arms? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.*

The chapter from which this portion of the lesson text is taken is a continuation of the preceding chapter, and they should not have been separated. The first part of chapter 12 begins with the greatness of God, and a prophecy regarding the fate of Jerusalem. Bible students are not agreed regarding the reference to Jerusalem, whether the literal city or, as Adam Clarke has it, or whether it "belongs to the 'glory of the latter times.'" The chapter then goes on to mention the death of Christ, and the effect which it would have upon the Jewish people. Chapter 13 opens with a continuation of the thought of chapter 12, namely, God's method of redeeming Israel. When people humiliate themselves at the foot of the cross, as it were, or, as the figure now before us has it, plunge in the fountain which God has opened for the cleansing of sin, they are assured of the forgiveness of their sins.

It is only by the blood of Christ that any sinner today can be cleansed from sin. John says, "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1: 6, 7.) This is one of the greatest truths set forth in the Bible; and while most people

who claim to accept the Bible as the Word of God, many of them are greatly confused when they are confronted with the further fact that the salvation which is made possible by the blood of Christ is a conditional salvation. It is seemingly very difficult for some to understand how it is that Christ died for the sins of all men (cf. Heb. 2: 9), and yet at the same time there is something which the individual sinner must do before he can obtain the forgiveness of his sins.

When man sinned in the garden of Eden, he sinned as the head of the race, and the result was alienation from God and forfeiture of his life; and he was sentenced to die. But Jesus, by the sacrifice of his own sinless life (cf. 2 Cor. 5: 21), satisfied the demands of the righteous law of God which had been violated, and thereby made it possible for man to have another chance. (See Rom. 3: 23-26; 1 Pet. 1: 18-21.) But if man's life is saved through the blood of Christ, then Christ is entitled to that life; and it is clearly taught in the New Testament that no one can approach God, except through and by virtue of the blood by which he was redeemed. (Cf. Eph. 1: 7; 2: 13-19.) Or, to state the same thing in another way, the redeemed person must come to God as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Cf. 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20.)

The remainder of this section of the lesson text deals with the question of idolatry and false prophecy, with reference to the kingdom of Christ; and it is substantially the same as the New Testament teaching regarding the binding of Satan. The "unclean spirit" of verse 2 is the spirit which inspires false prophecy, or, which is the same thing, the devil himself. Neither the passage before us nor the New Testament teaches that Satan is not active today; but it is a fact, fully supported by the Scriptures themselves, that the devil does not have the power to deceive any one who sincerely wants to do God's will. (See Rev. 20: 1-3.) The clause "that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished," indicates both the purpose and the extent of the binding. The original term for "should deceive" is in the subjunctive mood, and that represents the denoted action, not as a fact, but as contingent or possible.

The practical meaning is that people will not be at the mercy of the devil during the thousand years; and that if they are deceived, it will be their own responsibility. (Cf. Matt. 12: 22-29.) The original word for "bind" in Matt. 12: 29 is from the same root (*deo*) as "bound" in Rev. 20: 2.

The attitude of the father and the mother of a false prophet is the same as that which Jesus taught in Luke 14: 26: "If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." The word for "hate" in the passage just quoted is a stronger word than the one used in Matt. 10: 37, where the idea is that of loving the Lord more than we do our closest relatives. The word in Luke indicates that, not only must we love the Lord more than others, but that we must actually oppose anything in them which is contrary to the will and way of Christ. (Cf. Deut. 13: 6-11; 1 Kings 15: 13.)

False teachers are put to shame before Christian people who understand and practice the truth, and they will actually do what they can to make it appear that they are not teachers at all. (Cf. 2 Kings 1: 8, margin.) The reference in verse 6 of the text now before us is not to Christ, but to false prophets. Christ was not a farmer, and he never claimed to be; and he never asserted that he was not a prophet. The whole context shows that the false prophets were doing all they could, even to lying about the marks on their bodies (cf. 1 Kings 18: 28).

### The Destruction of Jerusalem

(Zech. 14: 1-5)

*Behold, a day of Jehovah cometh, when thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall Jehovah go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and*

*the mount of Olives shall be cleft in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee by the valley of my mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azel; yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah; and Jehovah my God shall come, and all the holy ones with thee.*

While many expositors seek to give the passage just quoted a spiritual interpretation, it is probably nearer the truth to say that the reference was to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, in A.D. 70. The Romans at that time were the masters of the nations of the earth, and their imperial army was made up of the nations under their domination. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans beggars description. Josephus says that eleven hundred thousand perished during the whole siege, while ninety-seven thousand were taken into captivity. He further says that the multitude of those that perished "exceeded all the destructions that either men or God ever brought upon the world." It would be interesting to go through the Bible and list the number of ways in which Jerusalem had been the favored city of God's people; but the time finally came when the ungrateful center of so much activity had to pay the price of rejecting God's Son. (Cf. Matt. 23: 37-39.)

But, as is so often the case, when the day seems the darkest, Jehovah comes to the rescue. Adam Clarke thinks that Jehovah fought against the enemies of Jerusalem by means of the armies of the north which destroyed the Roman Empire. The statement regarding the mount of Olives, and the cleaving which followed, may have reference to the way of escape which the Lord provided through the gospel. (Cf. Ezek. 11: 23.) The mount of Olives figured frequently in the earthly ministry of Christ; and it was the place from which he ascended to heaven. (See Acts 1: 9-12.) If the two mountains have any significance, the reference is probably to God's governments of the two dispensations. The

destruction of Jerusalem brought to an end the old order, and the Jewish people who had clung to the law of Moses were, as it were, between the two systems. The earthquake referred to was a recognized epoch in Jewish history (cf. Amos 1: 1), and suggests diligence in one's flight (cf. 2 Pet. 1: 4). If the reference to the Lord and the holy ones in the closing part of verse 5 is to the second coming of Christ (cf. Jude 14; Matt: 25: 31f), then we have in Zechariah's prophecy here a sweep which covers the entire Christian dispensation.

### There Shall Be Light in the Evening (Zech. 14: 6-8)

*And it shall come to pass that day, that there shall not be light; the bright ones shall withdraw themselves: but it shall be one day which is known unto Jehovah; not day, and not night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time there shall be light. And it shall come to pass in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the eastern sea, and half of them toward the western sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.*

This section of the lesson text — is apparently a description of the Christian dispensation which was to follow the awful calamities incident to the destruction of Jerusalem. The language is highly figurative, and it is perhaps unwise to try to give every term a specific application. It should be kept in mind that Zechariah's prophecy was for the people of Jerusalem and Judah, and that accounts for many of the expressions which the prophet used. Terrible darkness would be experienced during the final days of the Jewish people as a nation, and only God knew the time and the manner of liberation; but so completely would the change be that when men would naturally expect the darkness to reappear, it would still be light.

In saying, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that there shall not be light; the bright ones shall withdraw themselves," the reference was probably to the close of the Jewish dispensation. Only Jehovah know when the day would arrive; and it is described as being neither day nor

night. The "evening time" was probably the close of the old order, and that would be followed by the light of the new dispensation. While what has just been said seems to be the general idea of the prophetic message, the words contained in the passage are very suggestive when they are used to illustrate the ordinary life of the Lord's people.

The very thought of evening suggests twilight and darkness. That has been demonstrated time and again to every responsible human being. "Sunset and evening star" is the common experience of humanity. But regardless of the presence of "evening," light always comes to the trusting child of God. This, of course, is not physical light of day, as we understand that term, but relief and blessings which follow the trials and afflictions which often beset the Lord's people. It is said that the white-crested summit of Mount Atlas is not discernible during the full light of the day; but that in the evening it can be seen plainly. Just so it is with life. There are many things which we cannot understand now; but when the eventide comes, many of the incidents in a faithful Christian's earthly experience will be made plain. (Cf. the song, "Sometime We'll Understand," No. 449 in Christian Hymns Number Two.)

The "living waters" which flowed out from Jerusalem were the truths of the gospel, or, which is the same thing, the law of the Christian dispensation. Isaiah and Micah made the same prediction in their day. (Head Isa. 2: 2-4; Micah 4: 1-5.) Jesus also referred to this when he said that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." (See Luke 24: 46, 47.) The eastern and western seas were the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, respectively, and the idea is that the gospel would be published in all directions and to all peoples. In some seasons of the year in Bible lands, water would not flow freely, due to drought and other conditions; but there would be no such hindrances in the Lord's great work, as seen by Zechariah. (Cf. Mark 16: 16; Col. 1: 23.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons

### Introduction

Tell something of the nature of the Book of Zechariah.

When did this prophet live and preach?

What else do we know about him?

What are the general divisions of the Book of Zechariah and about what do they treat?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?

Why was it necessary to urge the people to resume work on the rebuilding of the temple?

What is the principal lesson of this text for us?

What effect should all of this have on the Lord's people now?

### A Glorious Promise to God's People

Discuss the setting of the chapter from which this portion of the lesson text is taken.

What are the general contents of the two chapters—twelve and thirteen?

What was and is God's method of redeeming people from sin?

Why do some people have difficulty in seeing that salvation by the blood of Christ is also a conditional salvation?

How would you explain the matter to one who does not understand it?

What is the relation of the redeemed soul to Christ?

What impression should this truth make on us?

In what sense would idolatry and false prophets pass out of the land?

What assurance has the Lord given to his people in this respect?

What should be the attitude of faithful Christians toward those who propagate error?

What do false teachers do in the presence of informed and faithful Christians?

### The Destruction of Jerusalem

How do some Bible expositors deal with this section of the lesson text?

To what does it apparently have reference? Give reasons for your answer.

What did the prophet say would happen at the time that Jerusalem was attacked?

Why was Jerusalem destroyed?

What promise has Jehovah made regarding his people who are in trouble?

What provisions were made for the deliverance of the people?

What appears to have been the scope of Zechariah's prophecy here?

### There Shall Be Light in the Evening

To what did the prophet refer in this section of the lesson text?

Why is it difficult to be sure about the prophet's meaning at times?

Why would there not be light at that time?

Why would there be light in the evening?

What practical use may these thoughts have in our daily lives?

What were the living waters?

Where were they to flow and why?

What does the New Testament say regarding the success of the gospel proclamation?

What was the reference to summer and winter?

What lesson should we learn from all of this?

## Lesson XIII—March 28, 1965

## A MESSENGER PROMISED

### Lesson Text

#### Mal. 3: 1-12

1 Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple: and the messenger of the covenant, whom ye desire, behold, he cometh. saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts.

2 But who can abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

3 And he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Le'-vi, and refine them as gold and silver; and they shall offer unto Je-ho'-vah offerings in righteousness.

4 Then shall the offerings of Ju-

dah and Je-ru'-sa-lem be pleasant unto Je-ho'-vah, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years.

5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against the false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the sojourner from his right, and fear not me, saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts.

6 For I, Je-ho'-vah, change not: therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

7 From the days of your fathers ye



have turned aside from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you. saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts. But ye say, Wherein shall we return?

8 Will a man rob God? yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

9 Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation.

10 Bring ye the whole tithe unto the store-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now

herewith, saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field, saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts.

12 And all nations shall call you happy; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts.

**Golden Text.**—*"Then they that feared Jehovah spake one with another; and Jehovah hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that reared Jehovah, and that thought upon his name."* (Mal. 3: 16.)

**Devotional Reading.**—Mal. 4: 1-6.

### Daily Bible Readings

Mar. 22. M.....	John the Baptist Was the Messenger of Christ (Matt. 11: 7-14)
Mar. 23. T.....	John Prepared the Way for Jesus (Luke 7: 24-30)
Mar. 24. W.....	A Wicked Messenger Falls into Evil (Prov. 13: 12-17)
Mar. 25. T.....	The Angels Are God's Messengers to His People (Heb. 1: 7-14)
Mar. 26. F.....	The Angels Brought a Message of Great Joy and Peace (Luke 2: 8-15)
Mar. 27. S.....	The Gospel Is a Message to Be Proclaimed (Mark 16: 14-20)
Mar. 28. S.....	The Gospel Is a Message to Be Obeyed (2 Thess. 1: 3-10)

**Time.**—Probably between 440 and 420 B.C.

**Place.**—Jerusalem.

**Persons.**—Malachi, the priests, and the Jewish people.

### Introduction

We have come to the last book of the Old Testament. The prophecy is ascribed to *Malachi*, but Bible students are not agreed regarding the significance of the term "Malachi," that is, whether or not it was the personal name of the prophet, or simply the designation of God's spokesman. The word itself means "my messenger" (see marginal reading), and it could therefore have been used in either sense. (Cf. Mal. 2: 7; 3: 1.) While it does not appear that it makes any great difference which view is taken, for in either case the reference is to the spokesman for Jehovah; yet in the absence of any proof to the contrary, we shall regard the term as the personal name of the prophet. Malachi was God's messenger.

There is nothing in the Book of Malachi which, taken alone, would determine the date of the prophecy; but when it is read in the light of the Book of Nehemiah, and especially chapter 13, it becomes quite evident that Malachi prophesied during the general period of Nehemiah. The

same conditions are described by both men, namely, (1) it was after the temple service had been restored; (2) it was during the time of unlawful marriages to foreign women; and (3) it was during the time when the tithes were being withheld. (See Neh. 13: 1-31.) It appears therefore that the prophecy of Malachi was intended to support the reforms of Nehemiah. All of this indicates that an amazing lack of reverence and devotion characterized the people of the Lord, and it was the aim of Malachi's message to do something about the prevailing conditions. The prophet stressed the importance of the temple, its sacrifices, and the functions of the priests; and it was in this that he differed somewhat from the great pre-exilic prophets, and yet he was one with them in demanding above all else wholehearted devotion to God, sincerity and social righteousness, and in predicting a terrible purging and cleansing of both the

Malachi's method of teaching is priests and the people in the day of the Lord.

unique among the prophets which we have studied. His method is known as the "didactic-dialectic," that is, a kind of teaching by means of debate. The method consists, first, of a charge, then a fancied objection raised by his hearers, and finally the prophet's refutation of their objection. There are eight distinct examples of this method of teaching found in the Book of Malachi, and in each instance the prophet sets forth what "ye say." (See Mal. 1: 2, 6, 7; 2:

14, 17; 3: 7, 8, 13.) The entire Book of Malachi should be carefully read by each member of the class. In the words of Bewer, "That which gives urgency to all of Malachi's teaching and which will solve all problems is the Day of the Lord. It is about to come with all the terrors of its relentless purging and refining judgment, not by any historic agents but by the angel of the Lord and the Lord himself." (See the Introduction to Malachi in *The Prophets*.)

### The Golden Text

*"Then they that feared Jehovah spake one with another; and Jehovah hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared Jehovah, and that thought upon his name."* The attitude of the people referred to in this passage was in marked contrast with those who spoke against Jehovah. (See Mal. 3: 13-15.) The ones referred to in the verse new under consideration feared, that is, revered, J e h o v a h, and meditated upon his name; and in order to encourage each other, they spoke one with another. When those who are true to God see wickedness flourish, the tendency is for them to be drawn closer together. (Cf. Acts 4: 23-35.)

In speaking of the value and opportunities of religious conversation, The Great Texts of the Bible observes that many of those who must fail in making religious conversation profitable have yet a good object in view in their attempts to cherish it. They have felt that it is a strange thing, and one not altogether seemly, that people who are bent upon the same pursuit—truth, holiness, and salvation, their own and that of others—should never give the slightest indication to each other in word that it is so; should never allude, in the presence of their best and nearest friends, to that which is their chief hope and highest interest; should be content to talk as if this chief concern had no existence for

them, and be as much ashamed of having its existence in them discovered as if it were something discreditable or degrading. They have felt that there must be a fault somewhere, if this state of things is unavoidable and irremediable. They have observed how different was the conduct, in this respect, of the early Christians; how they, in their briefest letters upon the commonest subjects, and much more therefore in their private oral communications with those who shared in the same feeling, could not refrain from constant allusions to things spiritual and eternal; and they have painfully felt how much they are losing, day by day, both of assistance and of comfort, from a total silence, in the presence of experienced and Christian men, upon a point on which they so much need and would be so deeply thankful for either advice or encouragement.

In ancient times the kings kept a record of those who did service for them, so that they might be suitably rewarded. (Cf. Esth. 2: 21-23; 6: 1ff.) God also, as the passage now before us indicates, keeps a record of the deeds of both the righteous and the wicked. (Cf. Isa. 65: 6; Dan. 7: 10; Rev. 20: 11, 12; 2 Cor. 5: 10.) This is a fearful thought to contemplate; for nothing which man says or does can escape the attention of Jehovah. (See Heb. 2: 1-3; Matt. 12: 36, 37.)

### The Text Explained

#### The Coming of Jehovah's Messenger

(Mal. 3: 1)

*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, will*

*suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom ye desire, behold, he cometh, saith Jehovah of hosts.*

The preceding paragraph, that is, the closing part of chapter 2. gives

some idea of the sinful attitude of the people of Judah to whom Malachi spoke. "Ye have wearied Jehovah with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? In that ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of Jehovah, and he delighteth in them; or where is the God of justice?" (Mal. 2: 17.) The words of this portion of the lesson text is the answer to their question, Where is the God of justice? or, as the King James Version has it, Where is the God of judgment?

The "messenger" whom Jehovah was sending to prepare the way before his Son was John the Baptist. This doctrine of a forerunner had become a fixed item in the Messianic hopes of Israel, as may be seen by reading such passages as Isa. 40: 3-5. (Cf. Mark 1: 2, 3.) The sinful condition of the people of Israel still continued, as the time came nearer for the coming of the Redeemer; and it was necessary therefore that a messenger be sent to them, in order to prepare them for his coming. In recording the events concerning these things, Matthew says, "And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of through Isaiah the prophet, saying

The voice of one crying in the wilderness,

Make ye ready the way of the Lord,

Make his paths straight."

(Matt. 3: 1-3.)

Maggai and Zechariah, who had encouraged the rebuilding of the temple, had foretold the coming of the Lord to the temple, the coming which Malachi described as sudden. The Interpreter's Bible notes the fact that whether as a part of the prophetic expectation or as a recorded fact in the Gospels, the place of the forerunner in religious history is one which is well recognized. The work of many a reformer and pioneer has failed, not because he was mistaken in his vision of the truth, or lacking in integrity; but rather because the soil of the common mind was not made ready to receive his message. (Cf. Ezek. 20: 49; 12: 27, 28.) The great Sixteenth Century Reformation did not begin with Luther's nailing his ninety-five theses on the

church door in Wittenberg in 1517. That act and the events which followed in swift succession were the consummation of the processes which had been set in motion some two hundred years before. John Wycliff has been called the morning star of the Reformation. Luther's work and that of his contemporaries would not have been nearly so successful, had it not been for such forerunners as Wycliff, Huss, and others.

*"Like a Refiner's Fire"*

(Mal. 3: 2-6)

*But who can abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap: and he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and silver; and they shall offer unto Jehovah offerings in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto Jehovah, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against the false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the sojourner from his right, and fear not me, saith Jehovah of hosts. For I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob are not consumed.*

These words of the prophet were spoken to people who were in covenant relationship with Jehovah, but whose lives, for the most part, were unacceptable to him. This is sufficient to show that the Lord, whom they desired, would not come as they expected. He would not flatter nor condone their prejudices and sins, but would subject their principles and way of living to the fiery test of heart-searching truth. (Cf. Matt. 3: 10-12; Luke 12: 49.) The work which the Messiah would do is compared to a refiner's fire and the fuller's soap; and, in the language of forerunner, "The axe lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 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 burn up with unquenchable fire." (Matt. 3: 10-12; of. Luke 3: 15-17.)

The work of a refiner is that process by which pure metal is separated from alloy and dross. This is done by causing the substance containing the precious metal to pass through the furnace, until the undesired part has been removed. (Cf. Psalm 12: 6; Zech. 13: 9.) The refiner is pictured as sitting before the crucible, with his eyes fixed on the metal and regulating the heat to its desired degree. The refiner sometimes finds it necessary to employ excessive heat in order to destroy the dross; but he takes great pains to see that no more heat is used than is necessary to remove the undesirable portions. (Cf. 1 Cor. 10: 13; James 1: 2-8.) It is said that the refiner knows when the process is completed, by seeing his image reflected in the precious metal which has been purified.

Jesus, of course, is the refiner about whom Malachi was speaking; for, as we have already seen, his mission was and is to separate the righteous from the wicked, or, which is the same thing, to save men from their sins. (Cf. Matt. 1: 21; Luke 19: 10.) Man was made in the image of God, and is therefore worth saving; but since sin came into the world, there is always a certain amount of dross attached to all men which must be removed. (See Rom. 3: 10, 23; Matt. 16: 24-26.) The reference in Malachi's prediction concerning the work of Christ is to the purifying influence of affliction which would be brought upon the people of God, until their sinful impurities gradually disappear and the Divine image is reflected from the soul, as the face of the refiner is seen upon the surface of the purified metal. (See Job 23: 10; of. Gal. 4: 19.)

The Lord does his work of refining his people by imparting to them those holy qualities which will prepare them for the most honorable service upon the earth, and which will finally fit them for the inheritance of the saints in heaven. (Cf. Tit. 2: 14.)

Most thoughtful people long for that purity, but they frequently rebel against the process which is necessary to make it possible. This is true of most of us, and the reason is because we do not understand it. Fire does not destroy the gold, but only the dross. (Cf. Heb. 12: 5-11; Rom. 5: 3-5.) The other figure which is used to indicate the Lord's cleansing is that of the fuller's soap. (Cf. Mark 9: 3.)

Verse 5 of the text now under consideration makes it plain that the Lord does not merely deal in generalities, but centers his attack on specific sins. And the only reason why his people are not completely destroyed is due to the character of the Lord himself: he changes not. And since his aim is to save people, and he will not be turned aside from that purpose, as long as there is hope (cf. 2 Pet. 3: 9, 15-18). Some of the sins from which Christ seeks to cleanse us are malice and unforgiveness (Matt. 5: 23-26; 6: 14, 15); lust and sinful practices (James 1: 13-15; Rom. 13: 14; Matt. 5: 27, 28); greed and avariciousness (Luke 12: 15-21; Matt. 6: 19-21; 1 Tim. 6: 17-19); pretense and hypocrisy (Tit. 1: 16; Matt. 6: 1-18; 23: 23-28). The Lord has provided and has put into operation all that is needed for our salvation, from the divine side; but it still remains for us to do our part too. (Cf. 1 Pet. 1: 22-25; James 4: 8; 2 Pet. 1: 5-11.) The doing of our part is absolutely essential; for only the pure in heart shall see God. (See Matt. 5: 8.)

#### Obedience Is a Guarantee of Unmeasured Blessings (Mal. 3: 7-12)

*From the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. But ye say, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation. Bring ye the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you*

*out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field, saith Jehovah of hosts. And all nations shall call you happy; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith Jehovah of hosts.*

The accusation which Jehovah made against his people had been true of them during their history from the time that he had brought them out of the land of Egypt. Ezra had confessed their waywardness after their return from the exile in these words, "Since the days of our fathers we have been exceeding guilty unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to plunder, and to confusion of face, as it is this day." (Ezra 9: 7.) The same general accusation was also made against them by Jehovah through Jeremiah: "Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff: they did worse than their fathers." (Jer. 7: 25, 26; of. Ezek. 20: 1ff.)

It had now been about one hundred years since the prophets Haggai and Zechariah had aroused in the returned exiles the Messianic hopes of the future; and since those hopes had not been fulfilled, the people apparently became both discouraged and neglectful of their duty, and had as a result degenerated into a very low condition. It was necessary for Zechariah to remind the people of his day that they were not doing the Lord's will, just as Malachi was doing. (See Zech. 1: 1-6.) This section of the lesson text gives some examples of Malachi's method of teaching by means of the didactic-dialectic system. He first leveled the charge of unfaithfulness against them, and then stated their fancied reply. The tone of their reply expressed an injured innocence, as if the great Jehovah had no basis for his charge against them. This shows how insensible to

their guilt they had become. Their conscience had become so seared, as to make them unaware of their sin.

But the divine messenger gave them definite evidence that they were not faithful, and gave them specific examples of their sin. They had failed to bring the tithes and offerings which had been commanded of them: and that, of course, they could not deny. It would be a fine exercise on our part to place ourselves in their stead, and honestly see how much better we have been doing. How few Christians today seriously endeavor to ascertain just what Jehovah expects of them by way of material offerings! The New Testament is full of teaching on this subject, but brethren do not seem to feel that they are under any special obligation to make a sacrifice for the Lord's cause here upon the earth. (Cf. 1 Cor. 9: 13, 14; 16: 2; 2 Cor. 9: 6-11.)

After showing the people that they were indeed unfaithful to the Lord, as their failure to do his bidding plainly demonstrated, a challenge was then placed before them in these words: "Bring ye the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." This was to be done by giving them bountiful crops and seeing to it that nothing would destroy them. We like to look upon this incident as being something which the Lord promised by way of material blessing in the former dispensation: but something which we can hardly expect in our day. But if we will only take the time to read the New Testament we can plainly see that the very same kind of assurance is given to us today. Among the many such passages, let the following suffice for now:

"Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than

they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. ***But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*** Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matt. 6: 25-34.)

"And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4: 19; of. Heb. 13: 5, 6.) "But this I say, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work: as it is written,

He hath scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor;

His righteousness abideth for ever. And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness: ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God." (2 Cor. 9: 6-11.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Who was Malachi?  
During what time did he prophesy? Give reasons for your answer.  
What method of teaching did he employ?  
Wherein can we see the importance of his teaching?

### The Golden Text

Who were the people referred to in this part of the lesson?  
Wherein did they differ from the others to whom Malachi spoke?  
Why should the Lord's people talk frequently with each other regarding their work?  
Why is it that many of them do not avail themselves of these opportunities?  
Why was a record of them kept?

### The Coming of Jehovah's Messenger

What had been the attitude of the people toward Jehovah?  
What was his reply to their question?  
Who was his messenger?  
What was his mission?  
Why is a forerunner so often essential to the success of a worthy undertaking?  
Give some examples of this principle in action.

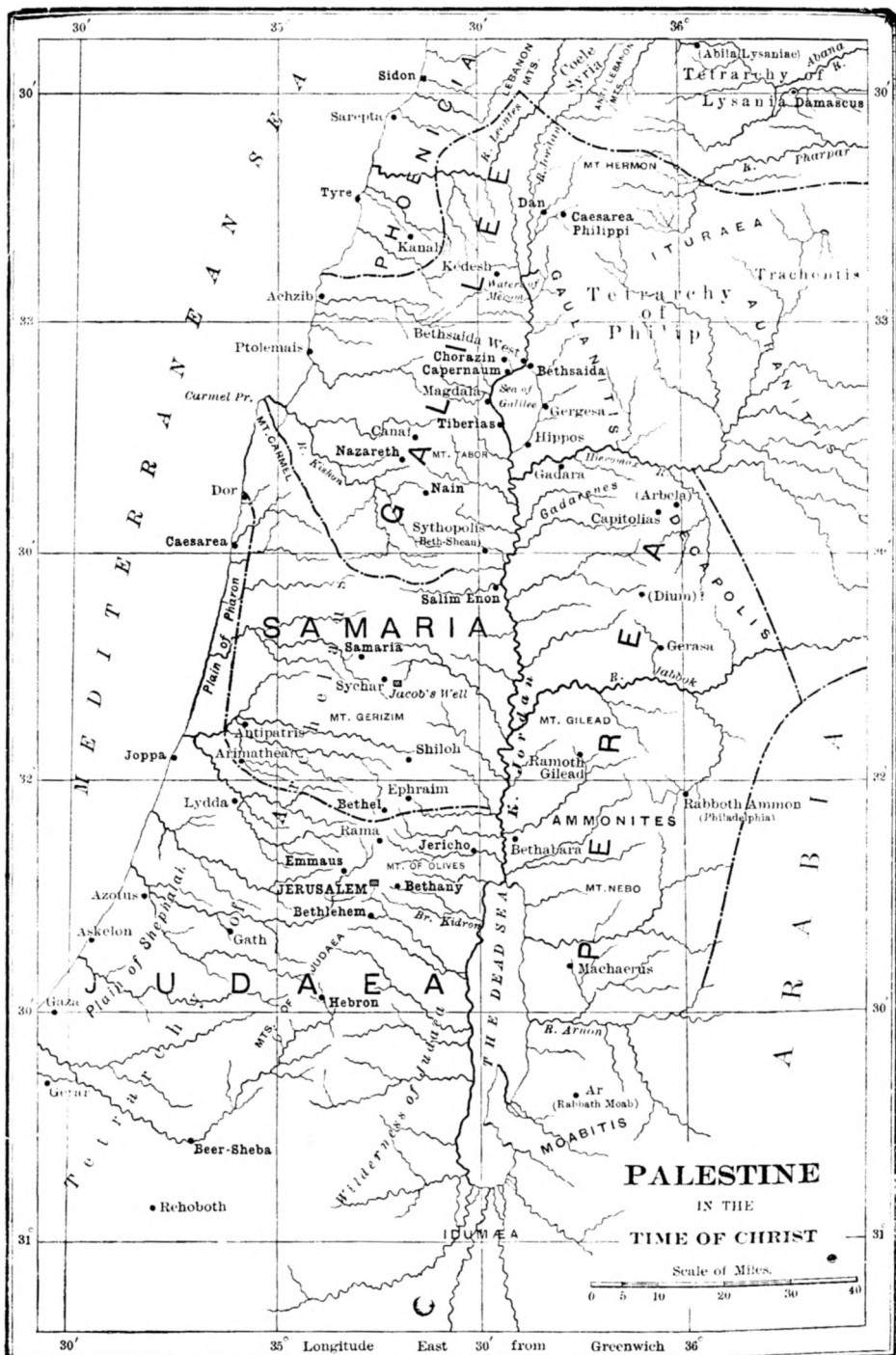
### "Like a Refiner's Fire"

To whom were the words of this section of the lesson text spoken and why?

Why would the people be disappointed in the coming Messiah?  
What would his attitude be toward the sins of the people?  
Why was his work compared to a refiner's fire and the fuller's soap?  
What did John the Baptist say regarding the work of Christ?  
Describe the work of a refiner.  
How could he tell when his work was finished?  
Why is the work of a refiner always necessary among the Lord's people?  
How does the Lord purify his people?  
Why do so many people object to the purifying process?  
Give a practical application of the work which Christ does in this respect.

### Obedience Is a Guarantee of Unmeasured Blessings

What was always the attitude of Israel toward Jehovah?  
How do you explain this disposition on their part?  
Discuss Malachi's method of teaching.  
In what way did the prophet show the people that they had indeed sinned against Jehovah?  
What is the lesson in all of this for us?  
What challenge did Jehovah place before his people in Malachi's day?  
Why do people today fail to see that the same principle is also applicable to us?  
Give some scriptural proofs of this.



## SECOND QUARTER

### STUDIES IN THE EPISTLES OF JOHN AND JUDE

*Aim.—To drink deeply of the spirit of devotion and loyalty exhibited and expressed by these New Testament writers, and to allow the lessons they taught to sink deeply into our hearts and to find expression in our lives.*

Lesson I—April 4, 1965

### HOW GOD KEEPS US SAVED

#### Lesson Text

1 John 1: 1-10

1 That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life

2 (And the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal *life*, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us);

3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Je'-sus Christ:

4 And these things we write, that our joy may be made full.

5 And this is the message which we have heard from him and an-

nounce unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is: in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Je'-sus his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

*Golden Text.—"But now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by The sacrifice of himself " (Heb. 9: 26.)*

Devotional READING.—Rom. 5: 12-21.

#### Daily Bible Readings

Mar. 29. M..... The Gospel Is the Power of God unto Salvation (Rom. 1: 16, 17)  
 Mar. 30. T..... Initial Obedience Brings Salvation from Alien Sins (1 Tim. 1: 12-17)  
 Mar. 31. W.. God's Divine Power Makes It Possible for Us to Be Like Him (2 Pet. 1: 1-4)  
 Apr. 1. T..... But We Have an Obligation to Keep Ourselves Saved (2 Pet. 1: 5-11)  
 Apr. 2. F..... Paul's Life Is a Demonstration of This Truth (Phil. 3: 12-16)  
 Apr. 3. S..... The Christian Is in Constant Need of the Blood of Christ (1 John 1: 5-10)  
 Apr. 4. S..... The New and Living Way Is Available to All (Heb. 10: 19-25)

**Time.**—Probably about A.D. 90.

**Place.**—The letter was written in Ephesus.

**Persons.**—John and Christians.

#### Introduction

The letters from which our lessons for this quarter are taken are found in a section of the New Testament which is often referred to as the general or catholic epistles. The term "catholic" is used in the sense of *universal*; and the letters in question were apparently so called to distinguish them from the epistles of

Paul, which were addressed to individual churches and persons. The Second and Third Epistles of John seem to be exceptions to the rule of general or catholic; but they may have been in a manner of speaking, as follows: (1) James and 1 Peter are predominantly ethical and practical; (2) 2 Peter and Jude are escha-



tological, that is, they deal with the final things; (3) the Epistles of John are concerned with Christ and what it means to live for him. All the lessons for this quarter are taken from the Epistles of John and Jude.

Conservative Bible students, as a rule, regard the author of the three Epistles of John as being the apostle John and son of Zebedee, who also wrote the gospel record which bears his name and the Book of Revelation. But it is only fair to say that the view just stated is not unanimous, even among conservative students, as those who are accustomed to the use of reference works well understand. This is mentioned so that such students will not become confused, when they read the various views of men. But, on the whole, one will find himself in good company, so far as human reason is concerned, when he holds to the view that all five of the books which bear the name of John were written by the apostle of Christ who bore that name.

The letter from which this and

several of the succeeding lessons are taken is entitled *The First Epistle of John*, but, as *The New Bible Dictionary* notes, there is nothing "epistolary" in the strict sense about it. It is more like a tract, as we understand that term, which was addressed to a particular situation, and which was called forth by the activities of false teachers. (We should remember that the titles of the various books of the Bible were placed there by uninspired men, and that as such, they are not beyond question.) The false teachers about whom John wrote had seceded from the church, and were attempting to seduce the faithful. (Cf. 1 John 2: 18, 19, 26.) These false teachers formed a special group, who believed that they had superior knowledge to ordinary Christians, and who were the forerunners of the heretics who came to be known as "Gnostics," that is, those who claimed to have special knowledge of God. Paul also dealt with the same general problem in his letter to the Colossians.

### The Golden Text

*"Bzit now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of him self."* This passage which serves as the golden text for today is meant to embody the basic thought of how God keeps his people saved. This is done by calling attention to the source of our salvation. Sin had been in the world since the days of Adam, and had to be atoned for, if men were to be saved. That problem was dealt with throughout the Old Testament period under various types and shadows; but now once at the end of the ages, or, as the margin has it, at the consummation of the ages, that is, the winding up of all previous ages, Christ was manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

The singular "sin" is significant. In the old order of things, the sacrifices had to do with individual transgressions, while under the new order Christ deals with the principle of sin. Sins were remembered under the law, but with the sacrifice of Christ they are completely forgiven, and the offender is treated as if he had never sinned. "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new crea-

ture: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." (2 Cor. 5: 17.) This is the meaning of salvation from sins, that is, from alien sins, which must precede our being kept in a saved condition. This is accomplished through the blood of Christ; and when one has been thus redeemed he becomes the bond-servant of Christ. This is the person who is to be kept saved.

The question of the victory over sin is discussed at length by Paul in the sixth chapter of Romans. After showing that we are made free from sin by yielding ourselves to the "form of teaching" whereunto we were delivered, the apostle goes on to show that as followers of Christ, the power of sin is broken in our lives. "For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, *that so ice should no longer be in bondage to sin*; for he that hath died is justified from sin." (Rom. 6: 5-7.) This does not mean, of course, that it is impossible for the new creature in

Christ to sin; but it does imply that he will not live a life of sin (cf. 1 John 3: 9), so long as he remains in the Lord's favor. This is the way Paul expressed the matter to the Galatians: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith

which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me." (Gal. 2: 20.) God has made it abundantly clear that divine help is available to any faithful Christian, who has a will to be saved and who is doing his best to appropriate the aid which is offered. (Cf. Heb. 4: 14-16; 13: 5, 6; Rom. 8: 31-39.)

## The Text Explained

### The Introduction

(1 John 1: 1-4)

*That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: and these things we write, that our joy may be made full.*

It has already been pointed out in this study that 1 John is more like a tract, than a letter. There is no salutation at the beginning, and no benediction at the conclusion. The first four verses, which have just been quoted, correspond to the first eighteen verses of John's record of the gospel; and they should be studied in that light of that "Prologue." (See also Rev. 1: 1-3.) The apostle's purpose in the verses we are now considering is to present the pertinent facts concerning the "Word of life." In the words of Westcott, "The subject is not merely a message, but all that had been made clear through manifold experience concerning it." Bible students are not agreed regarding John's use of the term "Word," whether in a personal sense, as in John 1: 1, or the revelation concerning it. While it may not make a great deal of difference which idea is accepted, it does, however, seem probable, in the light of John 1: 1-18, to regard the term as being personal.

All that John is saying in the verses now under consideration is

directly related to the incarnation, or, as he expresses the matter in John 1: 14, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." The purpose of the incarnation was to make possible the salvation of the human race, as may be seen by reading such passages as 2 Cor. 5: 18-6: 1. "But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

"We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God. Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him. And working together with him we entreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

The literal meaning of "incarnate" is to embody in flesh; and so, when we speak of the *incarnation* the reference is to the process whereby the Eternal Word of God appeared in history as the man Jesus Christ. This was done to reveal God to men in the fulness of his love, and to make possible a way to save them. But it should be kept in mind that in becoming flesh this Divine Being did not cease to be the Eternal Word. (Cf. Rev. 19: 13.) He did not lay aside his divine nature, but only his glory. (Cf. John 17: 5; Phil. 2: 5-11.) Before the incarnation he was "in the form of God," but with that great event he took "the form of a servant." He did not become a new being, but entered into a new

mode or manner of being, which is indicated by the term "flesh."

The story is told of a man who refused to attend a religious meeting with his wife, because he could not "go along" with the idea of God's being manifested in the flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. It was a cold, stormy evening; and while he was at home alone, some migrating birds were caught in the storm and were certain to suffer or maybe die. He decided to go out, open the barn door, and try to get them to go inside where they would be safe from the storm. But the more he tried the more they refused the haven. Finally, in desperation, he said, "If I were just one of them, they would understand;" and it was then that he saw clearly the implication of the incarnation. God was, in his great love for the lost race, simply becoming one of them when he sent his Son into the world! When John wrote the document we are now studying, there were those who flatly denied the truth that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh. (See 1 John 4: 1-3; of. 2 John 7.)

### The Divine Way to Fellowship

(1 John 1: 5-7)

*And this is the message which we have heard from him and announce unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

The message which John is here announcing is the one which he received from Christ, and that message is that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. John apparently tells us more about God, than any other of the New Testament writers. God is Spirit (John 4: 24); God is light (1 John 1: 5); and God is love (1 John 4: 8). These statements tell us something about the nature of God. In speaking of this aspect of God's nature, Paul says, "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power eternal. Amen." (1 Tim. 6: 16.) If

no one can gaze at the sun, which is but a small part of creation, because of its brightness, heat, and power; how much less can a mortal being look upon God's inexpressible glory! Not only is God light, but in him there is no darkness whatsoever. This should be enough to cause every thoughtful person to tremble at the very mention of God and his message to mankind. (Cf. Isa. 66: 2.)

If light is the symbol of wisdom and holiness, then darkness may be said to represent folly and sin. Any professed follower of Christ therefore who claims to have fellowship with God, while walking in darkness, is both a liar and one who fails to live as the truth directs. This is a fearful indictment; and what makes it all the more impressive is, that it comes from an inspired apostle whose record has been preserved for all generations. The only possible way to keep from walking in darkness is to make sure that one is doing his best to learn the truth, and live as it directs. "And this is the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God." (John 3: 19-21.)

However, if we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship with him, as a matter of course; and it is only in this way that we can have fellowship with each other as Christians. If we are to live together as brethren should, then we must first get right with God. There is much said these days about Christian unity, and that is well; but all who are interested in that subject should first learn the truth that it is only when people have done that which God commands, both in becoming his people and in living the Christian life, that Christian unity is possible. And, too, it should be remembered that this unity or fellowship involves more than a mere profession: there must be a continuous effort to walk as the truth directs and thereby do

what we can to maintain joint participation in the work which God has ordained for his people. (Cf. Acts 2: 42; Gal. 6: 1-10; 1 Cor. 12: 26, 27.)

A continuous walking in the light will show us our many mistakes and sins, and still make us aware of the need for continual cleansing from them. The Lord has graciously made his cleansing blood available for his people at all times; and we can always be assured that we need never allow ourselves to become entangled in those things which are displeasing to God. There is no sin for which there is no forgiveness, provided the sinner wants forgiveness and is willing to meet the Lord's conditions for pardon. It is only when people allow their sins to continue with them that they are in danger. If this condition is prolonged until the offender loses his sense of sin, it will then be impossible to renew him again unto repentance. (Cf. Heb. 6: 4-6; 1 John 5: 16.)

### The Proper Attitude toward Sin

(1 John 1: 8-10)

*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

While it is entirely probable that John wrote in view of the assertion of certain heretics who claimed to be above sin, the words which he penned have a meaning for all of us today; and it is with reference to the latter application that we are concerned in this lesson. The apostle's use of the personal pronoun "we" shows that he included himself, and that should be sufficient to show that any and all Christians are involved in the problem of sin, in one way or another. No living person who is responsible in the sight of God for his own life is above the possibility of sin; this, notwithstanding the claims of some today that they are living above sin. The bold affirmation of John in the passage now under consideration is enough to show the error of such a contention. Any person who claims to be

without sin is only demonstrating the fact that he is self-deceived and without the knowledge of the truth. It should be observed, however, that John is not talking about a continuous life of sin (cf. 1 John 3: 9), but rather with isolated acts of sin, or, which is probably more correct, with the principle of sin.

While sin in one way or another is inevitable, so long as we remain in our conscious fleshly state, it need not be fatal; for we have God's promise of forgiveness, if we are willing to comply with the conditions which he has named. Those who are in their alien sins are taught to believe the gospel message of salvation, repent of their sins, and obey that which he says for them to do, namely to be baptized in the name of Christ (cf. Acts 2: 36-38; 22: 10, 16). But John, in the passage now before us, is not speaking of alien sins, but of the sins of Christian people; and while he mentions only one condition which we are to meet, we know from other parts of the New Testament that there are others. When the Philippian jailor asked what to do to be saved, Paul told him to believe on the Lord, with all his house, and he would be saved; but he did not stop there, as the context plainly shows. If one really believes that which the Lord says, he will always be willing to do what he is further told to do; and the same thing is true of a sincere Christian who confesses, that is, admits or acknowledges that he has sinned. What would be the value of confession, if one is going to allow the matter to rest there? There are many people in the church today who freely admit that they have sinned, and some of them seem to think, judging by their actions, that there is nothing more for them to worry about. But erring Christians are also told to repent and pray for or ask for forgiveness. (See Acts 8: 18-24.)

When God forgives the sins of his people, he also cleanses them from all unrighteousness. Or, to state the same thing in another way, their guilt is removed and they are restored to their former place in his favor. When the prodigal son returned to his father, he was both received (forgiven) by his father, and was restored to his place in the

family, notwithstanding the fact that he had only asked to be made as one of the hired servants. But we should always keep in mind the truth that if we are to enjoy the Lord's forgiveness, we must also forgive those who have sinned against us. Jesus says, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt. 6: 14, 15.)

If sometimes happens that people say that they have not sinned at all, and if that claim is made, then they are making out God a liar; for he

says that they have sinned. David Smith has pointed out that any person who claims sinless perfection has two causes for his attitude, namely, a stifled conscience, which permits him to make God a liar, and ignorance of God's word, which is not in him for if it were, he would make no such claim. Sin in one's life is the only thing which will keep him out of heaven; and this should be enough to cause every thoughtful person to think seriously about the problem of sin, and do his best to deal with it as he should. God will give whatever help he needs, if he will do his part.

### Questions for Discussion

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

#### Introduction

What is the setting of the lesson for this quarter?  
Why are these letters called general or catholic epistles?  
Give a brief analysis of them.  
What John was the author of one which bears that name?  
What other books did he write?  
What is the nature of the book which is called First John?  
Why did John write this composition?

#### The Golden Text

In what way does this passage make a suitable golden text for this lesson?  
How was Jesus able to put away sin?  
What is the significance of the singular "sin"?  
What difference is noted in the Old and New Testaments regarding sin?  
How may the Christian gain the victory over sin?  
Does victory over sin mean that the child of God cannot sin? Give reasons for your answer.  
How do we know that the Lord will help us in our fight against sin?

#### The Introduction

What are some of the reasons for saying that First John is like a tract?  
How is the Introduction of 1 John related to the Prologue of the Gospel of John?  
In what sense did John probably use the term "Word"?  
What is meant by "the incarnation" and what was its purpose?  
Illustrate the way in which people may

be brought to see the significance of the incarnation.

#### The Divine Way to Fellowship

From what source did John receive his message which he passed on to his readers?  
What are some things which this writer tells us about God?  
Why can't there be any darkness with God?  
What effect should this have on every thoughtful person?  
What are the conditions of fellowship with God?  
How alone may we have true fellowship with each other?  
What is Christian unity and how is it brought about?  
What will a continuous walking in the light do for us?  
How alone are people cleansed from sin?  
What is the danger of allowing sins to continue with us?

#### The Proper Attitude Toward Sin

What was probably John's immediate reason for writing regarding sin?  
Discuss the importance of the lesson for our day.  
Why can't Christians people live without sin?  
What happens to the person who says that he has no sin?  
What is implied by the personal pronoun "we"?  
How do we know that sin need not be fatal in the Christian's life?  
What are the conditions of forgiveness for alien sins?  
Why is it proper to say that God will forgive our sins if we confess them?  
What about the person who says that he has not sinned?

## Lesson II—April 11, 1965

# COMMANDMENTS NEW AND OLD

### Lesson Text

1 John 2: 7-17

7 Beloved, no new commandment write I unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the

beginning; the old commandment is the word which ye heard.

8 A g a i n, a new commandment

write I unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth.

9 He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now.

10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him.

11 But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes.

12 I write unto you, *my* little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye know him who is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the

evil one. I have written unto you, little children, because ye know the Father.

14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye know him who is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one.

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Golden Text.—*"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."* (1 John 2: 4.)

Devotional Reading.—1 John 2: 1-6.

## Daily Bible Readings

Apr. 5.	M. God's Commandments Are Righteousness (Psalm 119: 169-176;
Apr. 6.	T. His Commandments Are Pure and Will Enlighten the Eyes (Psalm 19: 7-14)
Apr. 7. W.	.....The Ten Commandments (Ex. 20: 1-17)
Apr. 8.	T. Christ Gives New Meaning to Old Commandments (John 13: 31-35)
Apr. 9. F.	.....The Writings of the Apostles Are God's Commandments (1 Cor. 14: 33-38)
Apr. 10. S.	.....Christians Are Commanded to Love One Another (1 John 4: 11-21)
Apr. 11. S.	.....God's Commandment Is Life Eternal (John 12: 48-50)

Time.—Probably about A.D. 90.

Place.—The letter was written in Ephesus.

Persons.—John and Christians.

## Introduction

John was an old man when he wrote the epistle or tract from which the lesson now under consideration was taken; and, as would be expected, his whole aim was to encourage faithfulness on the part of the disciple where he was, and who might come under his influence. John had long since learned at the feet of Jesus himself that only by obeying the teaching of the Lord can one be pleasing to God; and he was also an inspired apostle, and knew that what he taught was the truth. When Jesus delivered his great Sermon on the Mount, he said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy

by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7: 21-23.)

When John spoke of commandments new and old, he was not talking about the commandments of the Old Testament and those of the New Testament, as we shall see further on in this lesson; but rather those of the commandments of the Lord Jesus as they are applied to the varied and sundry relationships of life. A commandment which today might seem old and familiar, might tomorrow take on an entirely new meaning. This is one of the crowning glories of the Bible. There is not a situation in life that can possibly arise for which the teaching

of Christ and the inspired writers of the New Testament are not suited. The old and familiar words of some unknown author, which are given below, should be read and meditated upon often. The reference is to the entire Bible, but even at that, the Old was written for the New.

"This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its percepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer

you. It is the traveller's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand object, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened in the judgment, and be remembered for ever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents."

### The Golden Text

*"He that saith. I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him"* It makes no difference how hard a person may try to do right, he can never save himself; he will always need a Saviour. The full context of the passage just quoted shows this to be true. An "Advocate with the Father" is one who stands by our side, and pleads our case for us. Here is the way John puts the matter: "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the whole world. And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him: he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked." (1 John 2: 1-6.)

This may very properly be called the test of our personal religion. In chapter 1 the apostle says, "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." And now in chapter 2 he draws the contrast between mere intellectual knowledge, and true devotion to the Lord's teaching. A faithful doing

of that which Jesus teaches is equivalent to an experimental knowledge of him: for it is only by doing that which he commands that one really comes to know the Lord. Paul told the Philippian brethren that he sacrificed everything which he had formerly counted dear, that he might gain Christ and be found acceptable to him; and then added, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead." (See Phil. 3: 7-11.)

One of the common practices among professed Christians of our day, or so it seems, is to see how little one can do and still be regarded as a Christian. Such people are not satisfied without doing something; but they obviously do not want to do any more than what they consider their absolute duty. But what do such people regard as their duty? and who is it that sets the standard of their obligation? The average person is likely to find the answer to these questions in the standard of public opinion by which he is surrounded. Duty too often means the average expectation in any given situation of life. But the folly of trying to reduce Christianity to mere duty can easily be seen by considering a few illustrations which are taken from life. When a person starts out to be a musician, does he talk about how little music he can know, and still be called a musician?

Does true friendship consist in seeing how little one can venture into it, and still be called friendly? Would a person be regarded as a successful businessman, who tries to see how little he can do, and still be considered a good businessman? The life of every individual Christian is

a trust which has been committed to him (cf. 1 Cor. 6: 19, 29); and if he is true to his trust, he will endeavor to make his life as nearly like the life of Christ, as it is possible for him to do. He will do his best to keep his Lord's commandments.

## The Text Explained

### The Lord's Commandments and Brotherly Love

(1 John 2: 7-11)

*Beloved, no new commandment write I unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word which ye heard. Again, a new commandment write I unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth. He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes.*

As John began this section of his document, he assured the brethren that he had nothing new in the way of a commandment to set before them. The old teaching which they had had since they came to understand and accept the teaching of Christ, was sufficient for all their needs. This is to say that the gospel itself is not subject to change. Jude wrote, "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3.) "The faith" is equivalent to *the gospel*. (Cf. Acts 6: 7.) Although the commandment about which John was writing was old in the sense that it belongs to the original teaching of Christ, it is a fact that familiarity with even the basic requirements of the Lord can sometimes dull their edge and power. John identifies the old commandment as "the word which ye heard."

The time will never come when preachers and teachers of God's word

should cease to tell the old, old story, and call to men's attention that which is found in the New Testament in the way of old commandments; but it is also true that they must be ready at all times to emphasize and teach the new. This is true because, in the words of Lowell,

New occasions teach new duties:

Time makes ancient good uncouth;

They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth.

Many a sensitive soul in the service of Christ has seen new applications for the truth which he has known all along; and it is in this way that an old commandment often becomes a new one.

Jesus taught the same truth in John 13: 34, 35, when he said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." The commandment to love one another was not new in the sense that it had just come into being, for Moses taught that; but it was new in the sense that the interpretation which Christ gave to it contained a new quality of love. The difference between the love which Jesus taught, and that which had previously been commanded, may be compared to the difference between the deep affection of a loving family, and that of a kindly spirit of neighborliness. Any love which has the heart of Jesus as its standard must of necessity be new. The love which Christ urged upon his disciples was based upon his own love for them; and such love as that had never before been demonstrated. The manifestation of this love by the brethren, or its absence, as John pointed out, determines where a professed child of



God is walking—in the light or in darkness. This is a serious matter for the earnest consideration of every one of us. (Cf. 1 John 3: 14, 15; 4: 20, 21.)

### John's Reasons for Writing (1 John 2: 12-14)

*1 write unto you, my little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye know him who is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the evil one. I have written unto you, little children, because ye know the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye know him who is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one.*

Without entering into a technical discussion regarding the threefold division of John's readers, suffice it to say that he evidently had in mind the principal phases of the life of Christians, namely, that of childhood (new converts), the active and vigorous state, and maturity. We know that he was not referring to mere children in the physical sense; because they neither know the Father, nor have any sins to be forgiven. Both Jesus and John use the term "children" to mean adults. (Cf. John 21: 1-5; 1 John 2: 1.) All people who enter the kingdom of Christ must do so as children, that is, as babes in Christ; and it is from that state that they must grow into manhood, if they would enjoy the blessings of maturity and experience. Browning expressed the matter in these words:

Grow old along with me!

The best is yet to be,

The last of life, for which the first  
was made:

Our times are in his hand

Who saith "A whole I planned,

Youth shows but half; trust God:

see all, nor be afraid!"

The difference in tense—"I write" and "I have written"—has been variously explained. Some think that the first was from John's point of view, that is, as he wrote; while the second was from the reader's standpoint, as they read. Others are of the opinion that both viewpoints were those of

John. (1) while he was writing this particular part of the incomplete composition, and (2) as he looked back over that which he had finished. The "little children," that is, the babes in Christ, had had their alien sins forgiven, and had come to know the Father, in the sense that they had tasted his goodness. (Cf. Heb. 6: 4f.) The "fathers" had a fuller knowledge of the Lord. (Cf. John 1: 1, 2). Christ is the eternal Son through whom men are brought to Christ, and to know him is to know the Father and enjoy eternal life." (See John 14: 8, 9; 17: 3.) The "young men" were strong because the word of God abode in them, and with the result that they had overcome the evil one. (Cf. 1 John 4: 4; 5: 4.)

### The Christian Attitude toward the World

(1 John 2: 15-17)

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

The subject which is foremost in this section of the lesson text in that of the attitude which the Lord's people should manifest toward the world, or, what is popularly known as worldliness; and there are few subjects which are more important to Christians. The statement, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," should cause people to ask. What does that mean? And then. "Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God." (James 4: 4.) These two statements from inspiration should be sufficient to cause us, without delay, to seek the answer to the question, What is the world which we must not love? or, which is the same thing, What is worldliness?

The world which Christians are forbidden to love is not the material universe, nor the people, as such, who inhabit it: for the material world is

a part of God's creation, and he himself so loved the world, meaning the people, though sinful as they were, as to give his only begotten Son to die in order to make their salvation possible. (Cf. John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 6-8.) But as it is, the world which we must not love may be described as those worldly affairs, such as endowments, riches, advantages, pleasures, et cetera, which stir desires, seduce from God, and are obstacles to the cause of Christ. (Cf. Matt. 6: 24; 16: 26.)

The thoughtful Christian can easily see that what has just been said is much broader and more comprehensive than the usual definition of worldliness which is so often heard, namely, the indulgence in popular amusements, such as card playing, dancing, mixed bathing, and attendance at moving picture shows. While the practices just mentioned do not appeal to well-informed and devoted Christians, because they have nothing in them to commend one to Christ; but it will have to be admitted that such an idea is far short of the New Testament conception of worldliness. Worldliness, as the Scriptures conceive of it, does not consist solely in doing certain things, or in being in certain places; it is, rather, an attitude or view of life, a state of mind. (Cf. Rom. 12: 1, 2; Phil. 3: 17-19—"who *mind* earthly things.") The original word for "mind" (*phroneo*) means, according to Arndt-Gingrich, Thayer, et al, to set one's mind on, be intent on, to pursue those things which gratify the flesh. (Cf. Rom. 8: 5-8, where the same original word is found.)

The seriousness of this question is seen in the fact that John says that they who love the world do not have the love of God in them, while Paul declares, in the passage just quoted, that people who are in that state cannot please God; while both Paul and James affirm that the result is enmity with God. (See again Rom. 5: 7; James 4: 4.) In commenting on John's statement, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," Vincent notes that this means more than that he does not love God: rather that the love of God does not dwell in him as the ruling principle of his life. He then goes on to say, "Westcott cites a par-

allel from Philo: 'It is impossible for love to the world to coexist with love to God, as it is impossible for light and darkness to coexist.' Compare Plato. 'Evils, Theodorus, can never pass away; for there must always remain something which is antagonist to good. Having no place among the gods in heaven, of necessity they hover around the earthly nature, and this mortal sphere. Wherefore we ought to fly away from earth to heaven as quickly as we can; and to fly away is to become like God, as far as this is possible; and to become like him is to become holy and just and wise' ('Theaetetus,' 176.) (Read 2 Tim. 2: 20-22.)

The sum-total of worldliness is expressed by John in these words: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (Cf. Gen. 3: 6; Luke 4: 1-13.) And John also says, "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." This definition of worldliness, along with the contrast it presents with God, offers the Christian a clear choice; he must make up his mind regarding his leader.

The practical lesson before us is concerned with those attitudes toward a way of life, and those practices which tend to draw people away from God. Paul alludes to such matters in the following statement: "If thou put the brethren in mind of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine which thou hast followed until now: but refuse profane and old wives' fables. And exercise thyself unto godliness: for bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come. Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe. These things command and teach." (1 Tim. 4: 6-11.)

The attitude therefore which should always characterize Christians

may be expressed as follows: They should always make it their aim to please God. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 9, 10.) This, of course, means that we must strive to be faithful to the Lord in all areas of our living. (See Rom. 14: 8, 9.) The success of any worthwhile Christian endeavor depends upon our committing ourselves

whole-heartedly to Christ. (Cf. 2 Cor. 8: 5.) This kind of an attitude is a direct result of our determination to be well-pleasing to God. The Lord's people should always be found trying to "make it as sure as ye can." There is never any time for relaxation in this respect. (Cf. Luke 21: 34-36.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Under what circumstances did John write the composition we are now studying?  
What is always essential to pleasing God?  
What did John mean by commandments new and old?  
How can the same commandment be both new and old?  
Discuss the general contents of the Bible and its relevancy to all situations of life.

### The Golden Text

Why will man always need a Saviour?  
What is the condition of the person who says that he knows God, but does not obey him?  
What kind of a test, then, does the golden text make?  
What does it mean for one to know the Lord?  
Why are so many professed Christians content to do so little in the kingdom of Christ?  
How should every professed follower of Christ regard his life?

### The Lord's Commandments and Brotherly Love

What did John say regarding the writing he was then doing?  
Why isn't the gospel subject to change?  
In what sense may a commandment be regarded as old? as new?  
What did Jesus say regarding this same subject?

How does one's attitude toward his brother determine where he is walking?  
Why is this lesson so important?

### John's Reasons for Writing

What are the threefold divisions into which John divides his readers?  
How do we know that he was not referring to mere children in physical age?  
What difference did the apostle make in tense—"I write" and "I have written"?  
What did he say regarding each of the three classes to whom he wrote?

### The Christian Attitude toward the World

What was John's purpose in writing this section of the lesson text?  
Why is the subject he is discussing such an important one?  
What is the world which Christians are forbidden to love? Give reasons for your answer.  
What is the popular definition of worldliness?  
What is the New Testament teaching regarding it?  
What does it mean to "mind" earthly things?  
What shows the seriousness of this subject?  
Why can't the love of God dwell in a man who loves the world?  
What, then, should every child of God seek to do?  
How does John sum up the meaning of worldliness?  
What does this definition and the apostle's statement regarding it offer the Christian?  
What is the practical lesson which we should get from this consideration?  
What attitude, then, should always characterize the Lord's people?

## Lesson III—April 18, 1965

# WARNINGS REGARDING FALSE TEACHERS

## Lesson Text

### 1 John 2: 18-29

18 Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that an'-ti-christ cometh, even now have there arisen many an'-ti-christs; whereby we know that it is the last hour.

19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but *they went out*,

that they might be made manifest that they all are not of us.

20 And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

22 Who is the liar but he that de-

nieth that Je'-sus is the Christ? This is the an'-ti-christ, *even* he that denieth the Father and the Son.

23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that confeseth the Son hath the Father also.

24 As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son. and in the Father.

25 And this is the promise which he promised us, *even* the life eternal.

26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that would

lead you astray.

27 And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as his anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in him.

28 And now, *my* little children, abide in him; that, if he shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves"* (Matt. 7: 15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Tim. 4: 1-16.

### Daily Bible Readings

Apr. 12. M. .... Normal People Are Responsible Beings (Acts 17: 10-12)

Apr. 13. T. .... They Must Take Heed As to *What* They Hear (Mark 4: 21-25)

Apr. 14. W. .... They Must Take Heed As to *How* They Hear (Luke 8: 16-18)

Apr. 15. T. .... They Must Take Heed As to *Whom* They Hear (Matt. 17: 1-8)

Apr. 16. F. .... Not All Teachers Are Honest before God (Matt. 7: 15-23)

Apr. 17. S. .... Some Teachers Preach a Perverted Gospel (Gal. 1: 6-10\*)

Apr. 18. S. .... The Motives of Some Teachers Are Not Pure (Phil. 1: 15-18>

TIME.—Probably about A.D. 90.

PLACE.—The letter was written in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—John and Christians.

### Introduction

False teaching has been a problem for the Lord's people since the day it was started by Satan in the garden of Eden. "And Jehovah God took man. and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And Jehovah God commanded the man. saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2: 15-17.) This commandment was simple, and easy to be understood; but the serpent, inspired by the devil, beguiled the wife of Adam, by telling her that she should not surely die; "for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil." The rest of the sad story is told in the third chapter of Genesis. This evil work was continued on down through the Old Testament period, as may be seen by the activities of the false prophets.

Jesus calls the devil the father of

lies, and says that he was a murderer from beginning. He further implies, what John later affirms, that all false teachers receive their inspiration from him. (See John 8: 44-47.) "My little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous: he that doeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3: 7, 8.) And in a further warning against false teachers, John says, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works." (2 John 9.)

One of the strongest warnings against false teachers is that which

is given by Jesus in Matt. 7: 15-23, which shall be considered later. In his address to the Ephesian elders, Paul said, "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 disciples after them." (Acts 20: 29, 30.) The Books of Timothy and Titus make a good commentary on Paul's prediction in the passage just quoted. Furthermore, the apostle to the Gentiles gives a vivid illustration of just how the devil goes about his vicious work

of deceiving people: "For sin, finding occasion, through the commandment beguiled me, and through it slew me." (Rom. 7: 11.) The principle is simply this: Just as the serpent took God's commandment in Gen.

2 and used it to beguile Eve, just so do false teachers take the very commandments of the Lord today, and use them to deceive people. For example, read Mark 16: 15, 16, and then consider how false teachers, in preaching on baptism, endeavor to show that baptism is not essential to salvation from alien sins. (Cf. Gal. 1: 6-9.)

## The Golden Text

*"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves"* Jesus had just spoken of the necessity of choosing a way, when the words just quoted were uttered. (See Matt. 7: 13, 14.) He, of course, by such teaching would not be popular with the multitudes; for people all through the ages have wanted to have their own way, to a very large extent. Many, indeed, want to be religious, and make a pretense of following the Lord; but they are not always willing to do so, if the requirements are against their own wishes. Paul understood this principle, when he charged Timothy to preach the word: for, said he, "the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will hearken to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables." (Read 2 Tim. 4: 1-5.)

False teachers, who desire the praises of men more than the favor of God, take advantage of the unpopularity of New Testament teaching regarding some questions, and endeavor to become "preachers of smooth things," which is another way of saying that they are "time-serving prophets." The whole aim of these false teachers is to get people to be satisfied with less than that which the New Testament enjoins. Jesus declares that such prophets shall be known by their fruit; and that is the criterion which can be applied today, and it never fails. Their purpose in appearing to look like

sheep is to gain the confidence of the people, by endeavoring to make it appear that they are harmless teachers of the word. The original word for "ravening" is the same from which we have the term "extortioners" in 1 Cor. 5: 10; 6: 10; and the meaning is *one who snatches away*. (Read again Acts 20: 29, 30.)

Later on in the letter which we are now studying, John is going to charge the brethren to put teachers to the test, that is try them, so that they can determine whether or not they are from God. (See 1 John 4: 1.) This was because many false prophets had gone out into the world. Luke cites an example in the experience of Paul which gives a good idea of how the Lord's people should seek to discover whether or not teachers are speaking the truth. "And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Beroea: who when they were come thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. 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: 10-12.) When people manifest the proper disposition toward the truth themselves, and are willing to make a fair examination of the teaching of others in the light of the revealed word of God, they will have little trouble in seeing whether or not the truth is being taught.

## The Text Explained

### Antichrists and the Last Hour

(1 John 2: 18-21)

*Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they all are not of us. And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*

*1 have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and because no lie is of the truth.*

When Jesus said to his disciples, "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (*aion*, marginal, "age"), the obvious reference was to the period of time, known as the Christian dispensation. But when John said, "We know that it is the last hour," he used an entirely different word for "hour," namely, *hora*, the meaning of which is a definite hour or season. The term *hora* is found in the New Testament more than a hundred times, and in no instance is it ever applied to a period of time which is equal or equivalent to the Christian dispensation. At anytime the word is used with reference to the present age, it always signifies, not the whole, but a definite period within the whole. (See John 16: 2, 4; of. John 5: 35; 2 Cor. 7: 8; Phile. 15.)

Thus, when John speaks of the last hour, he has no reference to the Christian dispensation, as such; but rather to a specific period within it. And, too, this particular period could not refer to the end of the age, prior to the coming of Christ; for that period was not present at the time when John wrote. The reference was to the period of the antichrists—the antichrists about whom the brethren had heard, the antichrists who were to come. The original term for "antichrist" (*antichristos*) is found only in the writings of John (1 John 2: 18, 22; 4: 3; 2 John 7), but it appears that the *idea* of these enemies and opposers of Christ occurs in other parts of the New Testament. (Cf. 2 Thess. 2: 1-

12; 2 Cor. 6: 15; Rev., chapters 13, 17.) In speaking of the antichrists, The New Bible Dictionary says,

"The concept as introduced in John is already well known ('ye have heard that antichrist shall come,' 1 John 2: 18). But though he does not dispute the fact that at the end of this age there will appear an evil being called 'antichrist,' John insists that there is a temper, an attitude, characteristic of antichrist, and that already exists. Indeed, he can speak of 'many antichrists' as already in the world (1 John 2: 18). He gives something in the nature of a definition of antichrist when he says, 'He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son' (1 John 2: 22). This becomes a little more explicit when the criterion is made the denial that 'Jesus Christ is come in the flesh' (1 John 4: 3; 2 John 7). For John it is basic that in Jesus Christ we see God acting for man's salvation (1 John 4: 9f.). When a man denies this he is not simply guilty of doctrinal error. He is undercutting the very foundation of the Christian faith. He is doing the work of Satan in opposing the things of God. At the end of the age this will characterize the work of the supreme embodiment of evil. And those who in a smaller way do the same thing now demonstrate by that very fact that they are his henchmen." (Page 40.)

If John wrote the epistle we are now studying around A.D. 90, then the Christian dispensation had been in existence for more than fifty years; and it is hardly reasonable to conclude that Christians who knew the truth (verse 21) needed proof that they were then in the dispensation of Christ. More will be said regarding the "anointing" (verse 20) when we reach the closing section of the lesson text for today.

Jesus predicted that false Christs would arise (cf. Matt. 24: 5, 23-28), and attention has already been called to the fact that Paul not only warned that false teachers would arise from among the Ephesian elders, but it appears practically certain that that prediction was literally fulfilled in Paul's day. (See again the epistles to Timothy and Titus.) John says that the antichrists about whom he

was writing "went out from us," which shows that they were at one time regarded as members of the church; but the remainder of the verse makes it plain that they were not faithful to the truth—"but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they all are not of us." (Cf. 1 Cor. 11: 19.)

### The Antichrist Further Identified

(1 John 2: 22-26)

*Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, even he that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also. As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise which he promised us, even the life eternal. These things have I written unto you concerning them. that would lead you astray.*

We usually think of John as the apostle of love, as indeed he was; but it is also a fact that no New Testament writer uses the word lie, liar, and related terms more than the beloved disciple who lay in the bosom of Jesus. Paul also used these terms frequently. All of this is true, because there is no compromise between truth and error. Anything which opposes the truth is a lie; and any one who denies that which the truth sets forth is a liar. We have already noticed that "if we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." God says that all men are sinners, (cf. Rom. 3: 10, 23); therefore any man who says that he has not sinned is in direct contradiction with God, with the result that he makes him a liar. Anything which opposes the truth is a lie, and those who advocate such are liars.

God repeatedly said that Jesus Christ is his Son (cf. Matt. 3: 17; 17: 5), and any one who denies that truth is a liar. The background of the denial which John discusses was based on a system of religious teaching, prevalent then, known as Gnos-

ticism. Paul discussed this system in its embryonic stages in his letter to the Colossians. The poison of this heresy lay in its dualism, and it struck at the very foundation of the truth of the gospel. Instead of the incarnation—God manifested in the flesh (John 1: 14)—there was merely an aeon or angelic intermediary. This pernicious doctrine held that Jesus was not born of a virgin, but was the son of Joseph and Mary—a man like other men, but who in time became wiser and more righteous than others.

It was further alleged that at his baptism, Christ, a different entity from Jesus, descended into Jesus, coming as he did from God; and that following that event, Jesus proclaimed the Father and wrought miracles. But as Jesus finished his mission, Christ withdrew from him, and Jesus then was crucified, buried, and raised up; but that Christ, being wholly spiritual, has remained throughout unmoved and untouched. This distinction between the human Jesus and the Divine Christ who, according to the theory, were two separate personalities, meant that Jesus and Christ were associated together only for the duration of the public ministry of Jesus. This, of course, was an outright denial of the truth that Jesus Christ, who was God's Son, came in the flesh. The Gnostics flatly denied that "Jesus is the Christ;" and they are the ones whom John called liars and the antichrists.

But when one denies the Son, he also denies the Father; for the Father gave his testimony regarding his Son. John also said in John 5:

23 that any one who fails to honor the Son does not honor the Father. Furthermore, no one who denies the Son can have the Father; for only those who receive the Son are given the right to become children of God. (See John 1: 11, 12.) John also wrote, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son." He then goes on to say, "If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting; for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his

evil works." This injunction evidently referred to the attitude which they should manifest toward the Gnostics, as may be seen from the following, "For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward." (Read 2 John 7-U.)

The people to whom John wrote, like all other well informed Christians, had been taught the truth; and as long as the truth abides in one, he will continue to abide in the Father and in the Son. (Cf. John 15: 1-7.) A continual abiding in the truth will result in eternal life with God in the world to come, as has been promised by the Father. There are two aspects of eternal life set forth in the Bible, namely, (1) the quality of life which is eternal and which we must have here and now, and (2) the duration of eternal life which will be continued in the world to come. We can lose our life as long as we are here in the flesh; but when this life is over and we are safe on the other side, our life cannot be taken from us. John's purpose in writing was to warn against those who would lead the Lord's people astray.

#### An Assurance and an Exhortation (1 John 2: 27-29)

*And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as his anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in him. and now, my little children, abide in him; that, if he shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of him.*

The "anointing" mentioned here is the same as that referred to in verse 20 above. "And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things." The reference is to the reception of the Holy Spirit when they were baptized into Christ. (Cf. Acts

2: 38, 39.) There are some today who talk about the "ordinary measure of the Spirit," given to all who obey the gospel, and the "miraculous measure," given to some during the age of miracles; but the only thing which the New Testament says about measures of the Spirit is found in John 3: 34, where the inspired writer says that God "giveth not the Spirit by measure."

The original word for "anointing" is *chrisma*, and it is found in the New Testament only in 1 John 2: 20, 27. It is derived from the verb *chrizo* which occurs in the following passages: Luke 4: 18; Acts 4: 27; 10: 38; 2 Cor. 1: 21; Heb. 1: 9. All of the references are to Christ, except the one in 2 Corinthians; and there the context makes it plain that all Christians are anointed and sealed with the Holy Spirit, and are given the earnest of the Spirit, all of which means that they were given the Holy Spirit when they obeyed the gospel. There is nothing miraculous about the matter, that is, in the sense that we understand miracles with reference to people today. Both Paul and John teach that Christians are anointed with the Holy Spirit, which is, of course, a figurative way of saying that the Holy Spirit is given to them or is bestowed upon them.

The reception of the Holy Spirit implies acceptance with God (cf. Acts 5: 32). and as long as people maintain an attitude of mind in keeping with their relationship with the Lord, they are in position to understand and know the truth. Jesus says in John 7: 17, "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." This simply means that when a man is morally and spiritually in tune with the will of God, he is in position to recognize the truth. Westcott notes that if there is no sympathy with God's will there can be no understanding; and this is emphasized over and over in the New Testament. (Cf. Matt. 13: 10-17.) All of this adds up to the fact that there must be moral and spiritual harmony between man's purpose and God's will, if man is to understand and know the truth.

There is no essential difference in saying "he shall know of the teach-



mg" (John 7: 17), and 'ye know all things' (1 John 2: 20). The apostle makes it plain in verse 24 that they had been taught the truth; and as long as that truth abode in them, they did not need any one to teach them. John says in verse 21, "I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and because no lie is of the truth." Neither John nor any other New Testament writer taught that such people needed inspiration in order for them to understand the

truth. Paul taught essentially the same thing that John says here in Phil. 3: 15: "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, this also shall God reveal unto you." Paul's statement, "this also shall God reveal unto you" is equivalent to John's words, "but as his anointing teacheth you concerning all things." God is willing to help any one who maintains the proper attitude toward him. (Cf. Acts 17: 10-12; 1 Cor. 2: 14-16.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What has been the extent of false teaching during the history of the world?

Under what circumstances did it begin?  
Who is responsible for it? Give reasons for your answer.

Discuss the warnings which Christ and Paul gave regarding false teachers.

What is one of Satan's chief methods of seducing people?

### The Golden Text

Against what background did Jesus give his warning against false prophets?

Why are so many people susceptible to false teaching?

What is the aim of teachers of error?  
How may Christian people put teachers to the test in order to determine their worth?

### Antichrists and the Last Hour

What did John mean by the "last hour"?  
Give reasons for your answer.

Who were the antichrists of whom he spoke?

Were they the only such opposers of Christ? Give reasons for your answer.

In what sense did the presence of antichrists make the people know that it was the last hour?

What relation did these false teachers sustain to the church?

### The Antichrist Further Identified

Why does John use the terms "lie" and "liar" so often?

Why were the antichrists called liars?  
What was the background of their denial of Christ?

Why does the denial of Christ also deny the Father?

What did the Gnostics teach with reference to Jesus and Christ?

What responsibility do Christians have with reference to false teachers?

How does the abiding truth in one insure eternal life?

What two aspects of eternal life are set forth in the Scriptures?

### An Assurance and an Exhortation

What was the anointing which the people to whom John wrote received? Give reasons for your answer.

How do we know that it was the same which all Christians receive?

What does the reception of the Holy Spirit always imply?

Why are people who are in God's favor in a position to understand the teaching of the Bible?

How had the people of the Lord to whom John wrote come into a possession of the truth?

Is there any other way to learn the truth? Give reasons for your answer.

How then did the anointing teach them? What is the Christian attitude toward the teaching of the Bible?

## Lesson IV—April 25, 1965

# RIGHTEOUSNESS AND BROTHERLY LOVE

## Lesson Text

### 1 John 3: 1-12

1 Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

2 Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if

he shall be manifested, we shall be like him: for we shall see him even as he is.

3 And every one that hath this hope *set* on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

4 Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness: and sin is lawlessness.

5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away sins; and in him is no sin.

6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him.

7 *My* little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous:

8 He that doeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

9 Whosoever is begotten of God

doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God.

10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

11 For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another:

12 Not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you"* (John 15: 12.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—John 15: 1-15.

### Daily Bible Readings

Apr. 19. M..... Jesus Came to Fulfill All Righteousness (Matt. 3: 13-17)  
 Apr. 20. T..... Jesus Also Loved His Brethren (John 15: 9-17;  
 Apr. 21. W..... People Become Righteous by Doing God's Will (Rom. 10: 1-4;  
 Apr. 22. T. No One Can Do God's Will Who Does Not Love His Brother (1 John 3: 13-18)  
 Apr. 23. F..... Brotherly Love Is One of the Christian Graces (2 Pet. 1: 5-11)  
 Apr. 24. S..... Brotherly Love Is the Badge of Discipleship (John 13: 34, 35)  
 Apr. 25. S..... Brotherly Love Is a Continuous Process (Heb. 13: 1-6)

TIME.—Probably about A.D. 90.

PLACE.—The letter was written in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—John and Christians.

### Introduction

The term "righteousness," in a broad sense, indicates the state of one who is what he ought to be, or, which is the same thing, a condition which is acceptable to God. "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." (Acts 10: 34, 35.) 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.)

While Paul uses the term "righteousness" in a somewhat peculiar sense, as opposed to the view of Jewish teachers generally, there is

in reality no practical difference, so far as we are concerned. *Righteousness*, according to the Jewish conception of the term, was secured by conforming to the requirements of the law. But the law required perfect obedience (cf. Gal. 3: 10-12); and since no mortal man ever attained such obedience (Rom. 3: 10, 23), righteousness can never be attained in that manner. It is therefore on this account that "Paul proclaims the love of God, in that by giving up Christ, his Son, to die as an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of men he has attested his grace and good-will to mankind, so that they can hope for salvation as if they had not sinned. But the way to obtain this hope, he teaches, is only through faith, by which man appropriates that grace of God revealed and pledged in Christ; and this faith is reckoned by God to the man as *dikaïosune* [righteousness]; that is to say, *dikaïosune* denotes the state acceptable to God which becomes a sinner's possession through that faith by which he embraces the grace of God offered him

in the expiatory death of Jesus Christ." (See Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 149.)

Any person who would be righteous in God's sight must make every effort to be correct in thinking, feeling, and acting; and that means that he must seek to know God's will, and then do it. (Cf. Matt. 3: 15; 5: 6; Tit. 2: 11, 12.) One of the requirements for righteousness, so far as God's people are concerned, is the proper attitude toward one's brethren. No man can be right with God and at the same time be wrong with respect to his brethren. Further-

more, Jesus laid down the principle that the state of the heart will determine one's standing before God. (Cf. Matt. 5: 27, 28; 12: 33-37.) And John declares, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." (1 John 3: 15.) "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." (1 John 4: 20, 21.)

### The Golden Text

"This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you." One has only to look about him in order to see how flagrantly this injunction of the Lord is disregarded. If one would only stop to think of what the love of the Lord has meant to him, it would not be difficult for him to see what love can mean in the life of some one else. A world without love would be a veritable hell; and if no one would want to live in a world like that, why can't he see the need for allowing his own love to flow out to as many as will accept it? It was Walter Scott who said, "True love's the gift which God has given, to man alone beneath the heaven. The silver link, the silver tie, which heart to heart, and mind to mind, in body and in soul can bind."

The commandment which is expressed in the golden text may well be called the supreme commandment of Christ; and the singular number indicates that it summarizes all other commandments. "And if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfillment of the law." (Rom. 13: 9b, 10.) The literal rendering of the words of Christ, now under consideration, is "that ye keep on loving one another;" and when that is done, one partakes of the quality of the love of Christ. One has only to read John's record of the final hours which Jesus spent with his disciples before he went to the

cross, in order to see something of the magnitude of his love for them. "Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end"—to the uttermost margin. (John 13: 1.)

The reason why love can be commanded is because of its nature. Two of the words most frequently used in the New Testament for love are *phileo* and *agapao*. (Cf. John 2: 15-17, and the marginal note in the American Standard Version.) *Phileo* is based on emotion and expresses natural affection, such as a parent feels for a child, or one close friend feels for another. But *agapao* does not depend upon emotion for its effectiveness, but rather on moral choice. That kind of love therefore is loftier and less impulsive than the love which is indicated by *phileo*; and it is for this reason that such love can be commanded. (Read again 1 John 4: 20, 21.) When Jesus taught, "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you" (Matt. 5: 43, 44), he was talking about love which is indicated by *agapao*, the love that wishes for and will do that which is best for another, even an enemy. *Phileo* expresses a love which will give itself up to another, while *agapao* voices a love which will give itself for another.

## The Text Explained

### God's Love Inspires Hope and Makes Us Pure

(1 John 3: 1-3)

*Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is. And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

The writer of the words just quoted wants all Christians to know what a glorious thing it is for them to be children of God; but the future of the believer is even more wonderful than his present. It is wholly beyond the ability of any human being to conceive of the glory which shall be his when he is finally made into the complete likeness of Christ. All those who are redeemed in Christ are made into new creatures (2 Cor. 5: 17; Tit. 3: 5, 6; Eph. 2: 8-10), but their transformation into his complete likeness will not be finished until they shall see him even as he is. In becoming a Christian, one is made a partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1: 4), and he must continue to grow into the divine likeness the rest of his life here upon the earth. (See 2 Pet. 1: 5-11.) This is what John means when he says. "And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (Cf. Matt. 5: 8; Col. 3: 1-4.)

Beginning with this knowledge which has been vouchsafed to all believers—"We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is"—we can turn to the Lord's own transfiguration for a glimpse of that which we may expect when he comes. Peter, one of the three disciples who were privileged to be present on that occasion, refers to that which happened as the Lord's "majesty;" and Luke describes the scene in these words, "And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling." (Luke 9: 29; cf. 2 Pet. 1: 16-18.) It is probably not out of

place to think of the transfiguration of Christ as a "preview" of his glory when he comes again; and it will be in that day that his faithful disciples shall with him be glorified together.

Face to face with Christ my Saviour.  
Face to face—what will it be,  
When with rapture I behold him.  
Jesus Christ who died for me?

Only faintly now I see him,  
With the darkling veil between;  
But a blessed day is coming,  
When his glory shall be seen.

What rejoicing in his presence,  
When are banished grief and pain.  
When the crooked ways are straight-  
ened,

And the dark things shall be plain!

Face to face! O blissful moment!  
Face to face—to see and know;  
Face to face with my redeemer,  
Jesus Christ, who loves me so.

Face to face shall I behold him,  
Far beyond the starry sky;  
Face to face, in all his glory,  
I shall see him by and by.

—Mrs. Frank A. Breck.

### Conduct Shows Who a Man's Spiritual Father Is

(1 John 3: 4-10)

*Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. And ye know that he teas manifested to take away sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him. My little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous: he that doeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*

After the call to purification in the closing part of the preceding section of the lesson text, it was natural for

John to pass on to a clarification of just what sin is; and he does this by presenting a contrast between sin and righteousness. The term "lawlessness" in the expression "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness" is from the same original word which is translated "iniquity" in Matt. 7: 23. Its meaning, according to Thayer, is one without law—either because he is ignorant of it, or because he violates it; one who holds law in contempt and violates it. Thus, any person who acts without regard to God's law is a sinner; and it doesn't matter whether he is ignorant of it, or deliberately violates it. This should cause every thoughtful person to examine his life daily, and see whether or not he is in harmony with that which is set forth in the New Testament. (Cf. John 12: 48-50.)

This section of the lesson text has often been misunderstood, and one of the reasons for the misunderstanding is a failure to take into consideration the grammatical construction. Practically everything which is said about sin is in the present tense; and the idea which is thereby expressed is that of a continuous life of sin. In commenting on verse 6, The Wycliffe Bible Commentary says, "Both words [*abideth . . . sinneth*] are in the present tense and indicate the habitual character of the person. The person who is abiding in Christ is not able to sin habitually. Sin may enter his experience, but it is the exception and not the rule. If sin is the ruling principle of a life, that person is not redeemed (Horn. 6); thus a saved person cannot sin as a habit of life. When a Christian does sin, he confesses it (1 John 1: 9) and Perseveres in his purification (3: 3). The continuous sinner has not known God and is therefore an unregenerate person."

Jesus was manifested to take away sin—to destroy the works of the devil; and it is therefore inconceivable that his people can continue in the service of the evil one. The contrast between Christ and Satan is so great that no person who serves the one can be in the favor of the other. This viewpoint is vital to Christian living, and no one should permit any false teacher or other would-be leader to deceive him. The only way for one to be righteous is

to practice righteousness, that is, live according to God's revealed will; and when that is done, the one so living will be like the Lord. And the same principle is true with reference to those who live in sin; they are of the devil.

Those who are begotten of God are his children who have been born again, and who remain so. Vincent calls attention to the fact that "the perfect participle indicates a condition remaining from the first: he who hath been begotten and remains God's child." Such people have been and remain begotten. (Cf. 1 John 2: 29; 4: 7; 5: 1, 4, 18.) The reason why such people do not go on living a life of sin is because their "seed" remains in them: and they cannot sin, that is, go on living a life of sin, because they are begotten of God. The seed, according to Vincent and other Greek scholars, is "the divine principle of life," which was imparted to them when they were made new creatures. (See again 2 Cor. 5: 17; Tit. 3: 5, 6; 2 Pet. 1: 4.)

Paul taught this very same truth in Eph. 2: 1-10, which read. People are dead while in their alien sins, and it is necessary that they have life, that is, the principle of life imparted to them when they are begotten of God through his Spirit. This is also what Jesus referred to when he said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3: 5.) That which is spoken of the "birth" or *bringing forth* is not that which imparts the life to the person who is born. Life must always exist *before* the bringing forth takes place, if the birth is to be normal. The birth simply introduces the life into a sphere or condition suited to its needs, and where it can grow, develop, and function as God intends that it should; and as long as this life remains in Christ (Col. 3: 1-4), the person possessing it cannot go on sinning, that is, he cannot live a life which is predominantly sinful. This is what John says makes the difference between a child of God and a child of the devil. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." (Verse 10.)

## Divine Sonship Is Impossible Apart from Brotherly Love

(1 John 3: 11, 12)

*For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another: not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*

Westcott calls the clause "neither he that loveth not his brother," not a mere explanation of that which precedes, but the expression of it in its highest Christian form. A professed Christian either loves his brethren, or he does not love them; and it is his attitude toward them which determines his sonship. Love of the brethren is a principle of Christianity, and it has been preached from the beginning. Brotherly love was one of the distinguishing marks of the early church, as may be seen by reading the first few chapters of Acts; and the writer of Hebrews says, "Let love of the brethren continue." He then goes on to show ways in which love can manifest itself. "Forget not to show love unto strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; them that are ill-tempered, as being yourselves also in the body." (See Heb. 13: 1-3.)

The division of men into two classes, according to their relationship to God or the devil, continues to dominate the thought of John in this section of the lesson text; but love and hate replace righteousness and sin as their respective traits. However, these traits do issue forth in works which are righteous and evil. The example of Cain and Abel is used by John to illustrate the point he is making here. Both the attitude and the action of these two brothers were completely different. Hate in the heart of one caused him to murder his brother. It is interesting to note that the original word for "slew" means to slaughter or butcher. Vincent says that originally

it meant to slay by cutting the throat. The term later came to mean simply to slay or kill.

But the important lesson for us is the state of the heart. It is always true, as the writer of Proverbs observes, that "as a man thinketh within himself, so is he." (Prov. 23: 7.) Jesus taught the same lesson when he said, "Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by its fruit. Ye offspring of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The good man out of his good treasure bringeth forth good things: and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." (Matt. 12: 33-35.)

Judas, one of the disciples of Christ, furnished a good example of the principle we are now discussing. It is clear from Matt. 26: 6-13 that he entertained in his heart some sinful lusts, particularly avariciousness and resentment; and it is significant that immediately after the Lord rebuked him, the inspired writer says, "Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said, What are ye willing to give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they weighed unto him thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to deliver him unto them." (Matt. 26: 14-16.) Benedict Arnold also harbored resentment in his heart, and following a reprimand by General Washington, after a court-martial trial, he too became a traitor.

A heart filled with love for God and one's fellow men will not often be found guilty of wrongdoing toward either; for he will have God's glory and the good of others as his goal. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13: 34, 35.) "Keep yourselves in the love of God." (Jude 21.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What is the meaning of "righteousness"?

How does one go about becoming righteous?  
In what peculiar sense does Paul use the term "righteousness"?  
In what way are the heart and a righteous life related?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Christ speak the words of this text?

Why is the injunction so often flagrantly disregarded by professed Christians?

Why is this commandment of the Lord so important?

In what way did Jesus emphasize and enforce it?

In what sense can love be commanded?

God's Love Inspires Hope and  
Makes Us Pure

What was John's purpose in writing the words of this section of the lesson text?

What is the moral and spiritual condition of all who are in Christ Jesus?

What does Christian hope lead its possessor to do?

What is the basis of such a hope?

Give some idea of what it will mean to meet the Lord in peace.

Conduct Shows Who a Man's  
Spiritual Father Is

In what way is this section of the lesson text related to the preceding one?

How does John go about showing just what sin is?

What does he mean by saying that sin is lawlessness?

Illustrate what it means to be a "lawless" person.

Why is this section of the lesson text so often misunderstood?

What is the force of the use of the present tense of most of the verbs?

Why did Jesus come into the world?

How did he accomplish his mission?

How alone can a person be righteous?

Why is it impossible for God's people to live a life of sin?

What is the "seed" which remains in them?

How did they come into possession of this life-giving principle?

What conclusion did John draw in this section of the lesson text?

Divine Sonship Is Impossible Apart  
from Brotherly Love

What application did John make of the clause "neither he that loveth not his brother"?

Why can't a person be a child of God apart from brotherly love?

What impression should this fact make on our minds?

How does John enforce his lesson in this section of the text?

What is the important lesson here for us?

What does the Bible teach regarding the state of the heart?

Give some examples of this lesson.

## Lesson V—May 2, 1965

### LOVE IN WORD AND IN DEED

#### Lesson Text

#### 1 John 3: 13-24

13 Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you.

14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death.

15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

16 Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

17 But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?

18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth.

19 Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him:

20 Because if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God:

22 And whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.

23 And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Je'-sus Christ, and love one another, even as he gave us commandment.

24 And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us.

Golden Text.—*"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"* (John 13: 35.)

Devotional Heading.—1 Pet. 3: 1-12.

#### Daily Bible Readings

Apr. 26. M..... God Shows What It Means to Love in Word and Deed (Rom. 5: 6-8)

Apr. 27. T..... All Christian Activity Must Be Motivated by Love (1 Cor. 13: 1-3)

Apr. 28. W.....	.....The Nature of True Love (1 Cor. 13: 4-7)
Apr. 29. T.....	.....The Supremacy of Love (1 Cor. 13: 8-13)
Apr. 30.	F. If We Grieve Our Brethren We Are Not Walking in Love (Rom. 14: 13-23)
May 1. S.....	We Should Abound in Love toward One Another (1 Thess. 3: 11-13)
May 2. S.....	There Is One Sure Way to Demonstrate Our Love (1 John 5: 1-3)

Time.—Probably about A.D. 90.

Place.—The letter was written in Ephesus.

Persons.—John and Christians.

## Introduction

The transition from our last lesson to this one is both easy and natural. The command to love one another is grounded in the message of truth, the message which Christians have heard from the beginning. "For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another: not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous." (1 John 3: 11, 12.) Love for the brethren is the exact opposite of hate *of* the brethren, and both attitudes come directly from the heart of those who manifest the traits just mentioned. It is impossible for an evil heart to love God's children: and, conversely, it is not possible for a true follower of Christ to hate his brethren. Love of the brethren, in the New Testament sense of the term, is not optional with God's people; it confronts them as a categorical Christian imperative. "And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." (1 John 4: 21.)

The people who are commanded to love are those who compose the church of the Lord; and it is a truth, set forth in the Scriptures, that God gives those who are thus brought together in Christ of his Spirit. "Hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." (1 John 4: 13.) Paul says, "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit."

(1 Cor. 12: 13.) God is a God of love, and it is inconceivable therefore that his people, who have his Spirit dwelling within them, can be destitute of love. But love is not a mere abstraction, a lifeless visionary notion. In the words of Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, love is going to manifest itself in its various relationships with others. (See 1 Cor. 13: 1-7.) Luther said, "Love is an image of God, and not a lifeless image, but the living essence of the divine nature which beams full of all goodness."

When Peter set forth the "seven Christian graces" (see 2 Pet. 1: 5-11), he placed brotherly kindness and love last. "Brotherly kindness" is the love which Christians cherish for each other as brethren (Thayer), while "love" is for all humanity, as distinct from, or in addition to, the love of the brethren. It is in this way that the Christian acknowledges in every man one who has a claim on his soul and service. No child of God, with the love of God in his heart, can live unto himself. "Love tempers duty into opportunity." It should be emphasized, however, that the love we are now considering is not directed by sense and emotion, but by deliberate choice; it seeks its object's highest good. The Italian poet Petrarch says, "Love is the crowning grace of humanity, the holiest right of the soul, the golden link which binds us to duty and truth, the redeeming principle that chiefly reconciles the heart of life, and is prophetic of eternal good."

## The Golden Text

*"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"* It is, of course, impossible to separate love of the brethren from the love of God, but it is our purpose in our study for today to place the emphasis on the love which God expects his people to show

toward each other. Some one has observed that the astonishing spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire was not merely nor mainly due to the intellectual ability nor the organizing capacity of the early Christian missionaries, nor even to their devotional zeal. All of these.



of course, were contributing factors, in a very real sense; but that which counted most was the kind of life which the brethren themselves demonstrated. (Cf. Col. 4: 5, 6; 1 Pet. 3: 1, 2, 15.) Thoughtful people of the world were, in many instances, dissatisfied with the coarseness, selfishness, and ineffective intellectualism which characterized their society; and when they saw in the followers of Jesus an atmosphere of thought and feeling, and modes of life and conduct, they recognized that there was something to which their nobler natures could respond.

These pagan people gradually became aware that what they were seeking was in their midst—little communities of men and women living together as members of a united family, tending to their sick, caring for their poor, teaching their ignorant, consigning their dead with reverent hopefulness to the grave, and always ready to place their beneficent activities at the disposal of those outside their own fold who were in need of them and who were willing to receive them. And so

these outsiders were attracted, and the attraction gradually became stronger till at length they found themselves swept into the current of the new movement, and ready to live and die in promoting it. Such is the motivating force of love when it fills the hearts of God's people for each other. In the words of J. Swain,

How sweet, how heav'nly, is the  
sight,  
When those that love the Lord  
In one another's peace delight.  
And so fulfill 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.

When, free from envy, scorn, and  
pride.  
Our wishes all above,  
Each can his brother's failings hide,  
And show a brother's love.

Love is the golden chain that binds  
The happy souls above;  
And he's an heir of heav'n who finds  
His bosom glow with love.

## The Text Explained

### Brotherly Love Is the Mark of a Christian

(1 John 3: 13-18)

*Marvel not, brethren. if the world hateth you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth.*

Those who are familiar with the Gospel of John are aware of the many parallel thoughts and passages which are found in this and that record of John's writings. There is hardly a paragraph in the First Epistle of John which does not call one's attention to a similar idea

which the Fourth Gospel contains. When the apostle says, "Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you," we immediately think of that which Jesus said just before his crucifixion. "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." (John 15: 18-20; cf. 17: 14; Matt. 10: 24, 25.) There was and there is therefore no reason to marvel or wonder at the attitude of the world toward the Lord's people, for the simple reason that evil people do not love the good; and so John, in effect, is saying, "Cease marvelling, stop wondering, and do not be astonished at the attitude of the world toward you; for after all that is not the important thing: the world's hatred of you is only natural."

The important thing is that "we know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death." Love therefore means life, while hate means death; and the test of our relationship with God is not that the world hates us, but that we are filled with love for the brethren. This is the reason why John goes into such great detail to explain the true meaning of love of the people of God; it is so important to our own spiritual well-being. The first thing which John does is to show what love is not, namely, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." Love is benevolent, while hate is destructive. The reason why one who hates his brother is a murderer is because he has in his heart that which is potentially capable of murder. "The thought is father of the deed." Hatred which issues forth in actual murder differs from incipient hatred, felt but restrained, only as a mild attack of some malady differs from a virulent attack of the same thing, (cf. Matt. 5: 27, 28.)

The apostle John next shows how we may know the true meaning of love: "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Before he left his disciples, Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15: 13.) Jesus, in the passage just quoted, was evidently talking about the greatest love which human beings are capable of manifesting, and for the moment he was measuring his love by that standard; but if we turn to Rom. 5: 6-8, we shall see that his love was infinitely greater than that. One has only to read such classic love stories as that of Damon and Pythias in order to see the effect which such devotion has on the world; but when we take into consideration the matchless love which Christ enjoined upon his followers, we are completely overwhelmed by its intensity. To lay down one's life is to give it up in death, or at least to be willing to do so.

But there are not many instances in which people in this day and time

are called on to give their lives for their brethren; but there are other ways in which we can demonstrate our love for our fellow Christians, namely by the application of the great principle of self-sacrifice. Westcott expresses the matter in this way: "There is a danger in indulging ourselves in lofty views which lie out of the way of common experience. We may therefore try ourselves by a far more homely test. The question is commonly not of dying for another but of communicating to another the outward means of living." (Cf. Gal. 6: 1, 2, 10; James 1: 27.) We can live, not for our own pleasure, but to make gladness more possible for those who walk in the shadows of great sorrow, in order to make goodness more possible for those who stand in the tense darkness of great temptations. By assuming this kind of an attitude we pass into the life of the world each day, not to be ministered unto, but to minister unto its needs; and those who do these things have heard the voice of the greater love.

### An Infallible Test of Our Christianity

(1 John 3: 19-20)

*Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him: because if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God; and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.*

When the Lord's people put into practice the truths which are taught in the preceding section of the lesson text, that is, when they demonstrate their love for the brethren in deed and in truth, they may be sure, or be persuaded, that they are living according to the truth. The original word for "assure" is *peitho*, and it means, according to Arndt-Gingrich, to conciliate, pacify, set at ease or rest. Any one therefore who is certain that he is doing that which the Lord commands should have no doubt regarding his standing before him. This is the same thing as having a good conscience. This confident attitude results from our having acted according to the revealed will

of God, and not merely because we feel good. We do indeed feel good, but that is because our conscience is clear, and we can point to the fact that we have a sound basis for clear conscience.

But that is only one side of the question. Suppose that our attention is called to the teaching of the Lord regarding the love of the brethren, and we are compelled to admit that we are not faithful in that respect, or that we realize that we only pretend that we love them—what then? Why, our heart, that is, our conscience would condemn us. Some of the people who heard Peter preach on Pentecost were conscience-stricken, for Luke says that they were pricked in their heart (Acts 2: 37); and anyone who has had that experience realizes the seriousness of it. But there is something which is far worse than to be condemned by one's heart, and that is to be condemned by God; for he is infinitely greater than our heart, and knows all things; nothing can be hidden from him. (Cf. Heb. 4: 12, 13.)

However, if our heart does not condemn us, and there is sufficient reason for it, then we have boldness toward God and can expect our prayers to be answered; because we keep his commandments and do the things which are pleasing to him. The writer of Hebrews says, "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: 16.) God has not promised to answer the prayers of those who are not faithful to him; and when professed Christians feel that their prayers are not being answered, it would be good for them to inquire regarding their living. However, we should remember that we are not the ones to judge as to which prayers should be answered. (Cf. Matt. 26: 36-46; Heb. 5: 7-9; 2 Cor. 12: 7-10.)

### **The Divine Criterion for Measuring Our Faithfulness**

(1 John 3: 23, 24)

*And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christy and love one another, even as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in*

*him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us.*

Verse 23 has been called the theme of the entire epistle, and it puts in concise form the content of the message of eternal life which John refers to again and again. The command to "believe" is aimed at those heretics who denied that Jesus Christ was one and the same person, or, as John states the matter, "that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." (See 1 John 4: 2.) The command to "love" apparently was intended for the false teachers of antinomianism, who held that since salvation was already assured, there is no need for active Christian effort or morality. (Cf. Phil. 3: 12-4: 1.) The term "antinomian" is not a New Testament word, but its etymology is easily recognized, namely, *anti*, against, and *nomos*, law. Antinomianism therefore means the doctrine which held that the moral law was made void through faith, and that faith alone is the only requirement for salvation, a teaching which both Paul and James, along with John, denounced. It should be noted, however, that neither of these inspired writers limited the application of his teaching to the time in which he wrote: the truth which they taught is still needed now.

To believe in the name of Jesus Christ is to accept that which the Scriptures teach regarding him; and to love one another is to wish and work for the best which can come to God's children. With this kind of faith and love motivating one, there is no principle of Christianity which would be deliberately ignored by any sincere and dedicated follower of the Lord. (Cf. Acts 2: 42.) All who endeavor to live as this section of the lesson text teaches will abide in Christ, and Christ will dwell in them. (Cf. John 15: 1ff.) This same truth is set forth in John 14: 23, where Jesus says, "If a man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." This language makes it plain that the Divine Presence will not be temporary. As long as loving obedience continues, the Father and the Son will remain. (Cf. Eph. 2: 19-22.) The original word for "abode" is *monē*; and it is the very same word

which is used for "mansions," *abiding-places*, margin, in John 14: 2. These two are the only occurrences of the word in the New Testament. Our consciousness of the presence of these Divine Guests, and of our exalted abiding-place in them, should inspire us with a greater determination to make their abode with us pleasing to them. Bede, in commenting on 1 John 3: 24, says, "Therefore let God be a home to thee, and be thou a home of God: abide in God, and let God abide in thee." (See Vincent, *in loco*.)

"And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us." (Cf. 1 Cor. 3: 16, 17; 6: 19, 20.) The Spirit which dwells in God's people is not some abstract influence, but the Third Person in the Trinity. When we think of the Second Person in the Trinity, we naturally think of God's Son, who before the Incarnation was the Word, and who with the Incarnation appeared in history as Jesus Christ. (See John 1: 1, 2, 14.) Both the Word (God's method of expressing himself) and the Spirit (the very life principle of God and the Divine Energy with which he always carries on his varied activities) are integral parts of God; and they can no more be separated from him, than a normal living man can be divorced from his spirit and his means of expressing himself.

When the time came for God to begin the great work of redeeming the human race, he personified his Word as his Son, who is known as Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer. He also personified his Spirit, and assigned him the work of bringing to fulfillment in human ex-

perience the total meaning of Jesus Christ as God's Son and Redeemer of the world. Thus, there are three Persons in the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—God, his Word, and his Spirit; and they are all active in the work of saving the lost, not in a miraculous sense, as we understand that term, but in keeping with God's revealed will. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18-20; Rom. 8: 1, 2.) It is needless for us to try to explain how the Holy Spirit dwells in Christians: we can't even explain how our own human spirit dwells in us. We simply accept by faith the truth of the Bible which teaches us that we do have the Spirit as an abiding Guest. When John says that "ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things"; and again, "And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as his anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in him," he is referring to the Holy Spirit which God's people receive when they obey the gospel. (See Acts 2: 38, 39; of. 5: 32.) The teaching referred to here is not *original teaching* (cf. 1 John 2: 21, 24), but to *continuous instruction* (cf. Psalm 119: 18, 99). If the Spirit "helpeth our infirmity" with reference to our prayers (Rom. 8: 26, 27), is it unreasonable to conclude that he will do the same thing with reference to our desire to learn more accurately God's will for us?

More about Jesus let me learn.

More of his holy will discern;

Spirit of God, my teacher be,

Showing the things of Christ to me.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Show something of the relation of this lesson to the preceding one.

What do "love" and "hate" with reference to God's people reveal?

Why is it essential that love dwell in the hearts of Christians?

Give a practical definition of brotherly love.

### The Golden Text

How is it that love of the brethren identifies people as being people of the Lord?

What impression did the mutual love of

the early church have on the world about them?

### Brotherly Love Is the Mark of a Christian

In what way is 1 John related to the Gospel of John?

Why didn't John want the brethren to marvel regarding the hatred of the world?

How do Christians know that they have passed out of death into life?

How is it that the love of the brethren proves this?

Why is one who hates his brother a murderer?

How does John go about showing the true meaning of love?

What practical way do we have of showing our love for others?

**The Infallible Test of Our Christianity**

What gives us confidence that we are the Lord's people?  
What is the meaning of the term "assurance"?  
What else happens when our heart condemns us?  
What if our heart does not condemn us?  
What does John mean by saying that we have boldness toward God?  
What effect should this have on us?  
What should be the nature of the prayers of Christian people?

**The Divine Criterion for Measuring Our Faithfulness**

Why is verse 23 sometimes called the theme of the entire epistle?

What was the immediate application of the commands to "believe" and "love"?

What application do the terms have today?

What does it mean to believe in the name of Jesus Christ?

What promise is made to those who keep these commandments?

What effect should the consciousness of the Divine Presence have on us?

What further evidence does John give of the truth that the Lord abides in his people?

What is the meaning of the term "Spirit"?

What is the relation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

**Lesson VI—May 9, 1965**

**GOD IS LOVE**

**Lesson Text**

**1 John 4: 1-11**

1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Je'-sus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

3 And every spirit that confesseth not Je'-sus is not of God: and this is the *spirit* of the an'-ti-christ, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already.

4 Ye are of God, *my* little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

5 They are of the world: therefore speak they *as* of the world, and the world heareth them.

6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us: he who is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God.

8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

9 Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to *be* the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

**Golden Text.**—*"But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;"* (Rom. 5: 8.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—1 Tim. 6: 11-15.

**Daily Bible Readings**

May 3. M.	..... God Is a God of Love (1 John 4: 16-21)
May 4.	..... T. God Is a God of Mercy (Neh. 9: 26-31)
May 5. W.	..... God Is a God of Justice (Psalm 37: 21-28)
May 6. T.	..... God Is No Respector of Persons (Acts 10: 34, 35)
May 7.	..... F. Nothing Can Separate Us from the Love of God (Horn. 8: 31-39)
May 8. S.	..... The Love of God Should Fill Our Hearts (Rom. 5: 1-5)
May 9. S.	..... We Must Keep Ourselves in the Love of God (Jude 17-23)

**TIME.**—Probably about A.D. 90.

**PLACE.**—The letter was written in Ephesus.

**PERSONS.**—John and Christians.

**Introduction**

In previous lessons of this quarter, attention has been called to the fact

that the love which should fill the hearts of Christians is that which is

based on moral choice—the love which God commands for his people. This love must not be confused with the love which is based on sentiment. The reason why we must manifest the love of moral choice is because in that way only can we be like God. This is the lesson which Jesus emphasizes when he says, “Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matt. 5: 43-48.)

D. S. Govett points out that love is the mightiest power in the heavens above or in the earth beneath, pure and overflowing at the heart of the universe. It may be compared to another attractive force in the universe, that of gravity. Remove this single binding influence, and chaos will be the result. And likewise, remove the single bond of spiritual love, and society will immediately be plunged into social chaos. As we look at the universe, we are told that the sun is the principal seat of that force which holds the planets and other material bodies together, while each in turn exercises a lesser force of the same nature. In a similar manner, God who is love is the center of the greatest

binding force of which we can conceive, and that same power, to a lesser degree, must characterize all of his people. It is on this principle that the spiritual world is held together.

The great chapter in the New Testament on the subject of love is, of course, the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians; and it is a noticeable fact that even there the apostle Paul does not attempt a formal definition of love. There are some things, even among the simplest and most elemental, which are not definable; and there are times when to attempt a definition is, for all practical purposes, to destroy. No one questions the beauty of the sunset but who can define it? The artist can paint it, and the chemist can describe its colors; but no one can define its beauty. And so, there are no analyses, no abstractions, and no speculations in Paul's great statement about love. We are not even asked to consider such things, but rather to walk with love, a kindly kingly presence, and to hear how love says that which must be said day by day, and to see how love does that which must be done, if we are to please God. It is here that we are able to see how love endures that which must be endured, and to observe how love stoops beneath the burdens of others, in order to lend a helping hand, while all the time maintaining that silence which is more full and availing than speech. Surely this is the best way to learn love's true meaning; for to find out what anything is, we simply watch that which it does. This is our best way to learn the meaning of the truth that God is love.

## The Golden Text

*“But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* The Speaker's Bible notes that Christian love is deliberate correspondence with the declared mind and purpose of God. The root Christian principle, incomparably the most difficult, and also the most attractive, of Christian doctrines, is the doctrine that God is love; which is not an obvious truth by any means, but is the central point of that positive self-disclosure of God which the

Bible conveys to us, and the central meaning of the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. The meaning of the Incarnation is that the real character of the Being who made and rules the world has been translated for us out of that which we cannot comprehend, into the intelligible lineaments of a human character which all can understand, namely, the character of Jesus of Nazareth. And it was he who said, “All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son,

save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him." (Matt. 11: 27.) The Speaker's Bible continues,

"The love of God is impartial and universal; there is no single human being whom God created for any other reason than because he loved him, and truly wills his good, and proclaims him redeemable, a possible son of God, made for sonship and communion with him. The question whether the structure of our civilization is to totter and fall seems to be at the bottom of the question whether men will return to recognize and seek to obey the law of God, or how many men in our society which calls itself Christian, will seriously do this. If not, as the prophets and our Lord tell us, we must fall under judgment." And then, in the words of Toyohiko Kagawa, "Love is the supreme sovereign. Love above can subdue the world. All those men who dreamed of world empire have failed: the first Emperor of China, Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Julius Caesar, Napoleon, the Kaiser—all have vanished like a dream. Conquest by the sword is but for the

moment; it has no validity whatever. Love binds society together from within. It is both linchpin and girdle, and Love can never be annihilated."

The passage which serves as the golden text for today may very properly be called the argument of God's own love for his lost people. In it we are brought face to face with the cross of Christ, and we are able to behold it in the divine light which glorifies it; for when God sends forth his light, we can see the cross as the masterwork of grace. And as long as time continues, men will be able to behold the glories of the crucifixion; for that central cross forever stands in the light of a Sun which never sets. Not only is this cross the symbol of self-denial and the gateway into an eternal peace with God; but over and above everything else for which it stands, we can see the one triumphant argument for God's love. Or, to state the same thing in another way, the cross is the unanswerable proof that God is not willing "that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (See 2 Pet. 3: 9; of. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4.)

## The Text Explained

### The Hearer's Responsibility with Reference to Teaching

(1 John 4: 1-3)

*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the spirit of the antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already.*

The words of John which we are to study today had a special application for the people to whom they were originally addressed, as we shall see further on in this lesson; but the principle is just as applicable to us. We are under as much obligation as they were to test any teacher who proposes to instruct us with reference to the will of the Lord. Every responsible person will have to give an account to God for himself, and

no one who does not make an honest effort to see to it that he understands and respects the word of the Lord can rightly claim that he was deceived with reference to it, if it turns out that he did not know what it teaches. This is a most important question, and it should always have our undivided attention.

It does not make any difference how sincere a person may be, faith in a falsehood will not commend him to God. The writer of Hebrews says, "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.) The reason why faith is so important is because a person's whole life will be affected by that which he sincerely believes to be true. (Cf. Prov. 23: 7.) But there is a world of difference when it comes to the proposition which is believed; for it is a well known fact that a false report, and the faith which is based upon it, may have the same

effect upon a person that would have been produced, had the report been true. (Cf. Gen. 37: 1-36.) And, too, the reception of a falsehood may unfit the mind for the reception of the truth. (See Gen. 45: 25-28.)

Jesus commended "the angel of the church in Ephesus" for testing false teachers (see Rev. 2: 2); and one has only to read the Second Corinthian letter in order to see something of the disastrous consequences which can come upon people when they permit false teachers to come into their midst (cf. 2 Cor. 11: 4; 2 John 9). No finer example of the spirit and method of testing a teacher can be found than the one contained in Acts 17: 10-12. There are three exhortations regarding hearing which should always be firmly fixed in our minds, namely,

(1) "Take heed *what* ye hear" (Mark 4: 24). This should include the nature of that which one hears; and if the claim is that it comes from God, an effort should be made to test it. One should never show disinterest in or contempt for teaching, until he knows from whence it comes. (Cf. John 6: 44, 45.)

(2) "Take heed therefore *how* ye hear" (Luke 8: 18). We must listen to God's word, whether it pleases us or not (cf. Isa. 55: 8, 9); and before anything is rejected, one should be certain that it is not scriptural teaching. (Contrast Balaam's attitude. Num. 22: 19, with that of Cornelius. Acts 10: 33.) It is easy for people to get into the habit of rejecting anything which is taught, if it is not in accordance with that which *they* think is right. (3) Take heed *whom* ye hear. (Matt. 17: 1-5; of. Luke 10: 16; John 12: 48-50; Acts 3: 22, 23.) If one's moral purpose is in sympathy with the divine will (John 7: 17), and if he is willing to follow the simple rules which are listed above, it is doubtful if he will go very far astray.

When one therefore is sure of his own attitude with reference to teaching which purports to come from God, he is then in position to test the teacher. The reason which John assigns in the text now under consideration for "proving" teachers is "because many false prophets are gone out into the world." These are identified as the "antichrists" which

were then roaming the world. People at the time John wrote were, to a large degree, dependent upon inspired teachers who wrote to them or who told them the truth by word of mouth; and they had to use those means, along with the "anointing" which they had (cf. 1 John 2: 18-27), to make the necessary test. But today we have the full Canon of the New Testament in our hands; and we can make the test by diligently comparing that which is taught with that which is contained in the Book. This should give us some idea of the great need for being familiar with the teaching of God's word. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.) The reaction which one manifests toward the teaching of the New Testament will enable the one who is making the test to ascertain whether or not he is a true or false teacher. (1 John 4: 2, 3a; of. Gal. 1: 6-9.)

#### "The Spirit of Truth, and the Spirit of Error"

(1 John 4: 4-6)

*Ye are of God, my little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they as of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not. By this ye know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*

It is both interesting and profitable to observe the dualism of John's thought throughout the epistle from which these lessons are taken, namely. (1) God versus the world, (2) Christ versus the antichrist, (3) truth versus error, (4) love versus hatred, (5) belief versus denial, and so on. These are but expressions of great conflict which was predicted in Gen. 4: 15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This conflict actually began when Jesus was tempted by Satan, following his baptism by John. (See Matt. 4: 1-11; Luke 4: 1-13; of. Heb. 4: 14-16.) It continued on through the personal ministry of Christ, and ended for all practical purposes when Christ arose from the dead, when the power of the devil



was broken. (Cf. John 12: 27-33; Heb. 2: 14, 15.) This does not mean that there has been no struggle between Christ and Satan since then, but it does imply that the victory is always on the side of those who put their trust in the Lord. This is the force of the statement made by John in this section of the lesson text. God's people always overcome, "because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

Any victory assumes a previous struggle, and the test of the character of those who are involved in it is with reference to leadership. Those who are of God listen to the Spirit's message, and those who are of the world listen to the spirit which actuates the false teachers, that is, the spirit of the devil. It is not the will of the Father that any one should be lost (cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; £ Pet. 3: 9); but it is essential that those who are saved take part in the contest. In fact, every man must enter the conflict, or declare himself no man. The gospel gives assurance of victory, but does not prevent the strife. Paul describes this situation in this way, "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; withal taking up the shield of faith, whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints." (Eph. 6: 10-18.)

But when we give our lives to God and do our best to obey him,

there is absolutely no doubt regarding the result. "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? Even as it is written,

For thy sake we are killed all the day long;

We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8: 31-39.) This is the meaning of the expression "because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

### The Place of Brotherly Love in the Divine Economy

(1 John 4: 7-11)

*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that ice might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

The term "love," either as a noun or a verb, is used more than twenty-five times in the paragraph from which this section of the lesson text is taken: and it is clear that the entire concept of love owes its origin

to God. Or, to state the same thing in another way, if it were not for God, the idea which we have regarding love would not and could not exist. It is from this premise that John pleads for brotherly love. While God is himself the very essence of love, and that which he did for sinful humanity is the greatest manifestation of love which is known to man, it appears safe to say that Christian love is the highest and greatest demonstration of love of which the human race is capable.

Christ teaches us that we are to love all men, even our enemies, but especially our brethren. We are taught, in fact, to love our neighbor as our selves. (Cf. Rom. 13: 8-10.) Looking at the question from a broad viewpoint, we are to love all with whom we come in contact. In the words of another, "Nor are we justified in watering down that phrase. Our Lord says, Love. He does not say merely, Be considerate to these people. He does say, Love them; love them as yourselves; surround your uninteresting and uninterested neighbor with the same warm feeling and sympathy that you give to your own selves. But surely that is impossible. To unaided human nature it is ridiculously impossible. The practical man, the common-sense, businessman must simply laugh at the idea. It is so impossible. And yet the thing has been done. The impossible has happened. There have been men, and women, who have achieved this unachievable, and have lived this love. And how do you account for that? . . . We fall back on the explanation of St. John, 'If we love one another, God dwelleth in us.' That seems to be the secret—'God dwelleth in us,' Whenever we love—not with the sham love that is but self love in disguise, but really, genuinely, self-forget-

fully—then the very Spirit of Love is abiding in us, and we are inspired, affectionately inspired by him." (Cf. Phil. 2: 13.)

It is a noticeable fact that John frequently repeats himself, but that should only serve to impress his lesson upon us. "Beloved, let us love one another: . . . Beloved, if God so love us, we ought to love one another." In the preceding chapter he said, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth us his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth." (1 John 3: 14-18.) And then in the last part of the fourth chapter, "if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." (1 John 4: 20, 21.)

Who seeks for heaven alone to save his soul,

May keep the path, but will not reach the goal;

While he who walks in love may wander far,

But God will bring him where the blessed are.

—Henry van Dyke,

*The Story of the Other Wise Man*

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What is the nature of the love which we are studying today?

Why is such love so great and powerful?

Why isn't this kind of love definable?

### The Golden Text

How is the love we are now considering related to God?

How did he manifest it?

How alone can we manifest our love to God?

Why is it that this love can never die?

In what sense is it an argument for God's love for sinful humanity?

### The Hearer's Responsibility with

#### Reference to Teaching

Why is it essential that we test those who propose to instruct us?

How should teachers themselves feel about this?

Why is faith so important in one's life?

What are some of the disastrous consequences which result from false teaching?

What important exhortations should always be heeded in this connection?

When is any one in the proper frame of mind to put teachers to the test?

How may we know that teachers are safe to listen to?

“The Spirit of Truth, and the Spirit of Error”

Discuss the dualism of John’s thought throughout this epistle.

What is the nature of the great conflict between God and the evil one?

What can you say of the origin, progress, and victory with reference to it?

Why is it necessary for the lost to take part in the contest?

What are we suppose to do about it?

What assurance do we have regarding the final result?

What effect should this have on us?

The Place of Brotherly Love in the Divine Economy

What can you say as to the importance which John attaches to love?

What is his real aim in writing of the love of God?

What is the highest manifestation of love which is possible on the part of men?

How is it possible for Christians to love others as they do themselves?

What is the value to us of John’s frequent repetitions?

According to this apostle, what is the real test of our love for our brethren?

Why can’t Christians love God without loving their brethren?

Lesson VII—May 16, 1965

WHAT LOVE DOES FOR US

Lesson Text

1 John 4: 12-20

12 No man hath beheld God at any time: if we love one another, God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us:

13 Hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

14 And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent he Son *to be* the Saviour of the world.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Je-sus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God.

16 And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love

abideth in God, and God abideth in him.

17 Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, even so are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love.

19 We love, because he first loved us.

20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen.

Golden Text.—“*Let love of the brethren continue* (Heb. 13: 1.)

Devotional Reading.—Heb. 12: 14-17.

Daily Bible Readings

- May 10. M..... Love Makes Us Want to Do the Will of God (John 14: 15-24)
- May 11. T..... Love Makes Us Love Our Neighbor As Ourselves (Mark 12 : 28-34)
- May 12. W..... Love Makes Us Love Our Enemies (Matt. 5: 43-48)
- May 13. Th..... Love Makes Us Share Our Blessings with Others (1 John 3: 13-18)
- May 14. F..... Love Suffers Long and Is Kind (1 Cor. 13: 4-7)
- May 15. S..... Love Causes Us Not to Love the World (1 John 2: 15-17)
- May 16. S..... Love Leads Us to Try to Fulfill the Law (Rom. 13: 8-10)

Time.—Probably about A.D. 90.

Place.—The letter was written in Ephesus.

Persons.—John and Christians.

Introduction

The entire concept of Christianity is based on the principle of love. In our last lesson, we learned

why we should love one another. “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one

that loveth is begotten of God. and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (1 John 4: 7, 8.) The greatest manifestation of God's love, of course, was in the giving of his Son to die for the sins of the world. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3: 16.) The same truth is expressed by Paul in these words: "For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for per adventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5: 6-8.)

It is only when we learn the meaning of love and manifest the proper attitude toward it, that we are influenced by his great spiritual force. One morning after breakfast, so we are told, Elizabeth Barrett Browning left her husband and went upstairs, while a servant cleaned the table where he expected to work. "After the servant had left, soft footsteps sounded behind him and his wife's hand on his shoulder kept him from turning so he could see her face. She slipped a manuscript into his pocket, saying, 'Please read this, and if you do not like it, tear it up.' Then she fled back up stairs, while Robert Browning sat down to read the noblest love sequence ever written by a woman to the man of her choice." These "love songs" were later published under the title of *Sonnets from the Portuguese*; and it is said by F. G. Kenyon, in his edition of Mrs. Browning's *Letters*, that "with the single exception of Rossetti, no modern English poet has written of love with such genius, such beauty, and such sincerity, as the two who gave the most beautiful example of it in their own lives."

There are forty-four in the series of *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, and the opening lines of the seventh are.

### The Golden Text

"Let love of the brethren continue" The words of this exhortation imply that there was no reason for the writer to reprove the Hebrew

The face of all the world is changed.

I think,  
Since first I heard the footsteps of  
my soul.

This is but a faint illustration of what happened to the disciples of Christ following his resurrection from the dead; for it was then that they again heard his footsteps in their soul, and found that the face of all the world had been changed for them. And, realizing what the Lord had meant to them, they went out with undying zeal to change the face of the world for others. This is the spirit of true Christianity. (Cf. Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15; Col. 1: 23.) This is also a demonstration of what genuine love does for dedicated followers of the Saviour of men. However, there are those who claim to be followers of the triumphant Christ who adhere to a certain type of religion which has been described as "saccharine Christianity." It is sweet and light, but it has no moral power whatsoever. It makes delightful souls of those who adhere to it, but it gives them no great transforming or redeeming tasks. It can loudly sing, "Floods of joy o'er my soul like sea billows roll, since Jesus came into my heart," but this "personal appearance" completely satisfies them. It brings about no wonderful change in their lives, which drives them forward to accomplish with joy the work which the Lord has set before them. The man whose life is thoroughly motivated by the love of Christ may be described by the words of John Dryden.

Happy the man, and happy he alone.  
He who can call today his own:  
He who, secure within, can say,  
"Tomorrow, do thy worst, for I have  
lived today.

Be fair or foul, or rain or shine,  
The joys I have possessed, in spite  
of fate, are mine.  
Not heaven itself upon the past has  
power;  
But what has been, has been, and  
I have had my hour."

brethren for a lack of brotherly love. That spirit characterized the church in Jerusalem from the beginning, as may be seen by reading Acts 2: 44,

45: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need." And then in Acts 4: 32, we read, "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."

Brotherly love is one of the Christian graces which Peter says is essential to an acceptable life to the Lord. (Read 2 Pet. 1: 5-11.) And Jesus calls such love the badge of discipleship (John 13: 34, 35), while John shows its supreme importance by such statements as we have already noticed in these lessons (cf. 1 John 3: 14-16), and which we shall consider in this lesson. The Lord's people need to remind themselves that they are indeed brethren. This close fellowship belongs to them, not as men in the flesh, but as believers in Christ. They were baptized into Christ, with the result that they have in common all that goes to make up the most perfect fellowship. This spiritual brotherhood is more sovereign and enduring than the brotherhood which is based on flesh and blood. The tie which binds

them all together is their love for their common Lord and for each other.

The church has been described as a great mutual benefit society, the greatest which has ever existed among men, and the salvation which is ours as members of this church is no selfish or solitary thing. If we realize what is involved in being members of the Lord's body, we cannot rest until we are doing something, however little it may be, toward making this mutual helpfulness more real than it has been before. The New Testament comes to us with lessons on this subject on practically every page. "For we are members of one another." (Eph. 4: 25.) "For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." (1 John 3: 11.) "And if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law." (Rom. 13: 9, 10.) "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." (Gal. 6: 2.) "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death." (1 John 3: 14.)

## The Text Explained

### The Proof That God Dwells in Us and We in Him (1 John 4: 12-15)

*No man hath beheld God at any time: if ice love one another. God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us: hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God.*

In saying that no man hath beheld God at any time, John was but repeating that which he declared in John 1: 18, namely, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Paul says that God dwells "in light unapproachable;" and that, in a meas-

ure, explains why no human being can see him. But this truth does not imply that we do not have any close relationship with the Father. On the contrary, John emphatically declares that God dwells in his people, and that his people dwell in him; and he says that the proof of this is that God's love is perfected in us. In a previous verse (8), he tells his readers that God is love, and when people who claim to be God's children manifest the same character of love in their hearts and lives, that is evidence enough that God is with them.

Furthermore, we know that God dwells in his people, because of the presence of his Spirit in them. The proof that God's Spirit dwells in his people is seen from the following considerations, namely, (1) the Spirit is promised to all who obey him. John 7: 37-39; Acts 2: 38, 39; 5: 32; Gal. 3: 14; (2) the New Testament

positively declares that the Spirit does dwell in Christians, 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20; Rom. 8: 9; 1 John 2: 20, 27; and (3) by the fruit of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law. And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts thereof." (Gal. 5: 22-24.) Both the love of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit in his people are living evidences that God is in his people, and the only way that any one can truthfully claim either is for them to be manifested in his life. The word of Jesus, "Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7: 20), is a criterion which never fails; and it is also one which is absolutely essential for the establishment of the claim now under consideration.

The personal testimony of John, along with the other apostles, is that the Father sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world; and those who confess this truth are assured of the fact that God abides in them, and they in him. Jesus taught the same truth in his last talk with his disciples before he went to the cross. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him. Judas (not Iscariot) saith unto him, Lord, what is come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 14: 21-23.) Reading John's statement in the portion of the lesson text now under consideration in the light of the passage just quoted, one can easily see that to confess that Jesus is the Son of God is equivalent to keeping the commandments of Jesus; for they both lead to the same end, namely, the abiding presence of the Father and the Son. The term "confess" literally means to say the same thing. God declares that Jesus is his Son, and those who confess that truth say the same thing. That very

truth was denied by the antichrists against whom John was writing.

### The Perfection of Love

(1 John 4: 16-18)

*And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us [in our case, marginal]. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, even so are we in this world. There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

There is no greater manifestation of the divine love than that which was manifested in the scheme of human redemption, John, along with other followers of Christ, knew and believed that great demonstration of love; and it is therefore no wonder that he continues to dwell on that theme. If God's people, and all others, as for that matter, would bring themselves to realize something of the meaning of God's love for the human race, they would experience a power in their lives which would sustain them in all the trials and hardships which could come upon them. If one is willing to accept that which the Bible says about God (and he cannot please him if he does not, of. Heb. 11: 6); and if he believes that God is good and only good, and that he is all-wise, ever-present, and has the power to bless beyond his ability to ask or think, how can he doubt such inspired statements as those found in Matt. 28: 20; Rom. 8: 28; and many similar passages? In writing to some Christians for whom he had just been praying, Paul said, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to that power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen." (Eph. 3: 20, 21.)

To say that love is made perfect with us is to say that our love is what it should be. It is comparable to fruit which has matured. An apple or a peach is delightful food, only when it has ripened into that state or condition which God ordained for

it. When our love has become what it should be, it is then that we can have boldness in the day of judgment. Paul's experience is a splendid commentary on this passage. "For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing." (2 Tim. 4: 6-8; of. Phil. 1: 23f.) Jesus makes it plain that if one loves him, he will keep his commandments (John 14: 15, 21); and John says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5: 3).

The reason that there is no fear in love is because the one who loves is forever trying to do that which is pleasing to God; and if one does that which God commands, what is there for him to fear? John has already said, "Ye are of God, my little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." (1 John 4: 4.) Fear and love are mutually exclusive, and it is certain that they both cannot dwell in the same heart with God's approval. Fear has torment because of its painful and distressing emotion. Fear dreads a person or a force who or which is certain to harm, and it is for that reason that fear has punishment. It is only when the Christian sins, either by commission or omission, that he has cause to fear; and when this is done, he has not been made perfect in love.

The "fear which we are considering here must not be confused with godly fear or the reverence which we must always have for Jehovah. The fear about which John is writing is stirred by our wrongdoing or from ignorance, which usually results in wrongdoing. A person, for example, who is unacquainted with the operations of a complicated machine probably would consider it dangerous, and would therefore be afraid of it; but a skilled engineer would experience no such fear. Again, even a good man who had

done no wrong might fear to be called before a judge in court to answer a false charge which had been made against him, if he did not know the judge and have confidence in him; but if he knew that the judge was a man of high principle and integrity, and was thoroughly informed regarding the situation at hand, the accused man would have no reason to fear. Just so, when people are familiar with the teaching of the Bible regarding the character of God, they have no fear of punishment when they are called before him. (Cf. the parables and the picture of the judgment in Matt. 25.)

### **The Impossibility of Loving God While Hating One's Brother**

(1 John 4: 19-20)

*We love, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.*

The editor of *The Great Texts of the Bible* calls the nineteenth verse of the text just quoted "The Ray and the Reflection;" and he quotes C. H. Spurgeon as saying, "I think I might say of this sentence what the poet says of prayer: it is 'the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try,' and yet it is one of the 'sublimest strains that reach the majesty on high.' Take a little believing child and ask her why she loves the Saviour, and she will reply at once, 'Because he loved me and died for me;' then ascend to heaven where the saints are perfect in Christ Jesus and put the same question, and with united breath the whole choir of the redeemed will reply, 'He hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.' When we begin to love Christ we love him because he first loved us; and when we grow in grace till we are capable of the very highest degree of spiritual understanding and affection, we still have no better reason for loving him than this, 'Because he first loved us.'"

Practically any professed Christian will readily admit that God's people must love him, but not every

one stops to realize that he must also love his brethren. Attention has already been called to the fact that this kind of love is not mere sentimental; it is, rather, love which is the result of moral choice and it always seeks the best for its objects. It is not always possible for Christians to have a sentimental feeling for some people, but it is always possible for them to love even their enemies. Jesus says, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. 5: 44-48.)

Attention has already been called to the fact that John, in the epistle from which these lessons are taken, repeats himself over and over again, especially on the question of love.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What is the relation of Christianity to love?

Why should Christians love one another?

In what way did God manifest his love to his people?

How may one know that the principle of love has a place in his life?

Discuss the manifestation of this principle of love in the life of the early Christians.

What satisfaction comes to the person who lives his life well?

### The Golden Text

What is implied in the exhortation of the golden text?

In what ways did the early Christians demonstrate this way of life?

In what way does Peter emphasize brotherly love?

Discuss the nature of the great spiritual brotherhood of the Lord's people.

What are some of the mutual obligations which grow out of it?

### The Proof That God Dwells in Us and We in Him

Why is it that no man has ever seen God?

How do we know that God dwells in his people?

In what way does the Father dwell in his people?

Christianity is founded on the principle of love, and it is utterly impossible for any one to live the Christian life on any other basis. When Jesus asked his disciples what they did more than others, he was talking about the principle of love, and especially as it applies to one's enemies. He wants his people to be distinctive, and this is one of the chief ways in which that distinctiveness is accomplished. This is also the foundation for the New Testament teaching regarding cross-bearing, which Jesus says is essential to discipleship. (Cf. Luke 9: 23.) Cross-bearing is not some inevitable trouble or burden which may come to saint and sinner alike; it is something in addition to that which *must* be borne—something which is taken up voluntarily. It is therefore within the power of the Christian to refuse to touch it, but he cannot please God with that attitude. We bear our cross when we voluntarily make a sacrifice, or in some way suffer for the good of others. "And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God loveth his brother also."

What proof must the Christian give that the Lord is in him?

What personal testimony did John give regarding the Father and the Son?

Why is it essential that people confess the truths which John bore witness to?

What does one's confession of Christ lead him to do, that is, if he is sincere?

What is the literal meaning of the term "confess"?

### The Perfection of Love

What love does John have in mind in this section of the lesson text?

What change does the realization of this love bring about in the lives of people?

In what ways are we made to realize the greatness of God?

What effect should this have in our lives?

In what sense is our love mad; perfect?

In what way will our perfect love give us boldness in the day of judgment?

What always happens when people love the Lord as they should?

Why is there no fear in love?

Discuss the difference between love and fear.

Why does fear have punishment?

What is the nature of the fear which we must avoid?

### The Impossibility of Loving God While Hating One's Brother

What is the basis of Christian love?

Why can't a man love God while hating his brother?

What makes it possible for Christians to love the unlovely?



Show that Christianity is founded on the principle of love.  
 What does this kind of love always try to do for its objects?  
 How is brotherly love related to cross-bearing?

What is the essential meaning of cross-bearing?  
 Discuss some practical ways in which we can bear our cross?  
 How is it possible for love to be commanded?

## Lesson VIII—May 23, 1965

### THE WITNESS OF GOD

#### Lesson Text

#### 1 John 5: 1-11

1 Whosoever believeth that Je'-sus is the Christ is begotten of God: and whosoever loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

2 Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do his commandments.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

4 For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, *even* our faith.

5 And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Je'-sus is the Son of God?

6 This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Je'-sus Christ; not with the water only, but with the

water and with the blood.

7 And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth.

8 For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one.

9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for the witness of God is this, that he hath borne witness concerning his Son.

10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son.

11 And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

**Golden Text.**—*"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater"*(1 John 5: 9.)

**Devotional Reading.**—John 5: 30-47.

#### Daily Bible Readings

May 17. M..... God Bore Witness Concerning Jesus At His Baptism (Matt. 3: 13-17)  
 May 18. T..... God Endorsed His Son At His Transfiguration (Luke 9: 28-36)  
 May 19. W..... The Testimony of God Is Always Certain (Psalm 19: 7-14)  
 May 20. T..... Paul Proclaimed the Testimony of God (1 Cor. 2: 1-5)  
 May 21. F..... We Should Not Be Ashamed of His Testimony (2 Tim. 1: 3-11)  
 May 22. S..... God's Witness Is Greater Than That of Man (John 5: 30-37)  
 May 23. S. The Scriptures Bear Witness of Jesus (John 5: 37-47)

**Time.**—Probably about A.D. 90.

**Place.**—The letter was written in Ephesus.

**Persons.**—John and Christians.

#### Introduction

One of the chief aims of John in writing the letters from which these lessons are taken was to prove that Jesus Christ, who came in the flesh, was indeed God's Son. This truth was being denied by the antichrists, and if their contentions were allowed to go unchallenged, then the very foundation of Christianity would be threatened. And too, the very nature

of Christianity is such that only those who are motivated by love can have a vital part in it. One of the marvels of our time is why so many people who profess to be Christians deny so many things which the New Testament say about Jesus, and who manifest such little love toward their brethren. There are preachers today in so-called "Christian pulpits"

who positively deny that Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary; and even the superficial observer beholds only too well the hatred among "Christians" which is abroad in the land.

The gospel record which bears the name of John may have been written a few years before he wrote his first epistle, but it is easy to see that the same problem with reference to faith in Christ was present at that time. God manifest in the flesh is the theme of the doctrine of the incarnation, and John boldly affirms that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. He also says that the Word was God, and if language means anything, it means that God's Word appeared in history as Jesus Christ; and any one who denies that truth denies the basic truth of the Christian system. (Read John 1: 1-14.) When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, God said of him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3: 17); and the same heavenly Father declared above the mount of transfiguration, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17: 5).

Just before Jesus left the earth to return to his Father, he said, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." (Matt. 28: 18.) This was in keeping with the commission which had been given to him. He came to the earth to rescue men from sin, and, accordingly, all the resources of heaven and earth were placed at his command. He is both God's agent and representative in the great work of human redemption. So necessary is the work of Jesus in this great effort that he was able to say, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father but by me." (John 14: 6.) The Jewish leaders tried desperately to get rid of Jesus, and to forestall any claim that he had

been raised from the dead; but when the time came for the first gospel sermon in fact to be preached, they were confronted with the truth that they would have to reckon with the name of Jesus Christ if they made peace with God. (Cf. Acts 2: 38.) Peter, in fact, said, "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." (Acts 4: 12; of. Eph. 1: 22, 23; 5: 23; 2 Tim. 2: 10.)

And when Peter came to preach his second great gospel sermon, he said to his hearers, "Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me; to him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you. And it shall be, that every soul that shall not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3: 22, 23; of. Deut. 18: 15-19.) Jesus pointed out to his critics the abundance of the testimony which was borne in his behalf (cf. John 5: 30-47); and when he came to close his personal ministry here among men, he said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak." (John 12: 48-50.) This kind of testimony could be multiplied from the pages of the New Testament, but this is sufficient to show that any one who denies the inspired truth regarding Jesus, denies both the Father and his revelation to the human race.

### The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is in the main text, and it will be considered in its regular order.

### The Text Explained

#### Love Is Proved by Obedience

V (1 John 5: 1-3)

*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God: and*

*whosoever loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love*

***God and do his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.***

Every Christian should make it his daily aim to improve his life before God. He is building a character which will have to stand in judgment, and he will certainly not want to be disappointed in that day. We are going to be tested, as the Bible clearly shows, and if we are wise we will make frequent checks regarding our progress. The lesson which we are considering today furnishes us with a wonderful opportunity to see something of the progress, or lack of progress, which we are making toward an acceptable life before God.

While probably no violence is done the Scriptures when we take the first verse of this section of the lesson text as a basis for a study of the new birth, we should, nevertheless recognize the fact that that was not John's purpose in making this statement. This is one of the many instances in the Bible where the chapter divisions are misleading. John had just pointed out in the closing verses of chapter four the impossibility of loving God while hating one's brother; and he then said, "And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." And then comes the question, Who is one's brother? John answers, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God;" and it follows that those who love the Father will also love the son. It is assumed here, of course, that the son is like the Father, in that he is endeavoring to live as he should. Love for God and love for his people therefore are inseparable, and we can prove our love for God by our love for our fellow Christians.

But how does one know that he loves his brethren? "Hereby we know that we love the children of God, ***when we love God and do his commandments.***" Without this divine standard, we might be mistaken about our love for our brother and sisters in Christ. But when our love for God is clear, that is, when it issues forth in active obedience to his will, we know by the same token that our love for his children is real. The

one great test of our love for God is given in verse 3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." (Cf. John 14: 15, 21, 23.) A. R. Fausset says that the reason why believers feel any degree of irksomeness in God's commandments is, they do not realize fully by faith the privileges of their spiritual life. What better practice could Christians engage in than to read the commandments of the Lord, and make an honest appraisal of their own attitude toward them?

### **Victory over the World and the Threefold Witness**

(1 John 5: 4-8)

***For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God. This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood.***

In the expression, "For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world," the neuter instead of the masculine is used, according to Robertson and other Greek scholars, to express sharply the universality of the rule. The term "world" has reference to the sum of all the forces which are antagonistic to the spiritual life. (Cf. Gal. 1: 4; 2 Tim. 4: 10.) It includes such things as endowments, riches, advantages, pleasures, and the like, which stir desires, seduce from God, and which are obstacles to the way in which Christians should live. And it should be observed that the world does not always appear the same to every generation (cf. the world of Nero with that of our day); but whatever the difference in its appearance, the principle of opposition is always the same. (Cf. Eph. 6: 10-12.) The world is a gigantic power, and it is not easily resisted. Having flowed through the ages, it is charged with the force of an accumulated prestige; and with each generation adding something new to this great tradition of regulated ungodliness, none but the most vigilant can escape its clutches.

**In the statement, "and this is the**

victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith," the verb "hath overcome" is in the aorist tense, which is literally *overcame*. Vincent, in commenting on this passage, says, "The aorist is to be held here to its strict sense. The victory over the world *was*, potentially, won when we believed in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. We overcome the world by being brought into union with Christ. On becoming as he is (4: 17) we become partakers of his victory (John 16: 33). 'Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world' (4: 4)." The faith about which John is speaking is equivalent to being a Christian, or, to state the same thing in another way, it is a conquering principle of Christianity which is ours as a result of our having obeyed the gospel. (Cf. Acts 6: 7; Gal. 1: 23.) Again, "our faith" is that force within the soul which enables us to turn our back upon the world and cling to those realities which are revealed by God. (Cf. Heb. 11: 7, 8; 24-26.) The virtue of the faith we are now considering lies in its object; for faith in and of itself is no better than an organ or an instrument. It is our Christ-centered faith which makes possible the victory; for it is that faith which marks the difference between overcoming the world and being overcome by it. But with our faith in the Lord, the world loses its power over us; for we are continually looking to him to make all things work together for our good. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28; 1 Cor. 15: 57, 58; Rom. 8: 31-39.)

"And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Only those who are obedient believers in Christ have the assurance of ultimate victory over the world. Some one has said, "Survey the whole world, and show me even one of whom it can be affirmed with truth that he overcomes the world, who is not a Christian, and endowed with this faith." Plummer calls our faith our spear and shield. The article with the participle (*ho nikon*—he that overcometh) denotes that which is habitual, that is, a continuous overcoming. Robertson points out that there is a sharp antithesis between "Jesus" (humanity) and "the Son of God" (deity) united in one per-

sonality. (Cf. 1 John 5: 1; 2: 22.) The antichrists denied that Jesus and Christ were united in one personality.

The identity of Christ Jesus is further set forth in verse 6: "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with water only, but with the water and with the blood." As is so often the case, Bible students differ widely regarding the meaning and use of the terms "water" and "blood" as they are here used with reference to the identity of Christ. But since faith in the Incarnate Son of God is the victory which overcomes the world, it appears both reasonable and natural to understand the two terms in question to refer to two of the prominent incidents in the Incarnation—water to baptism which marked the beginning of his public ministry, and blood to his death on the cross at the close of that ministry.

After giving explicit and redemptive meaning to the Incarnate life of Jesus, John goes on to cite the evidence which attests its validity. This is done by naming the three prominent witnesses, namely, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood. The Spirit is called the truth, probably because it is he who revealed the truth regarding the Son of God, and especially the truth regarding the water and the blood. (Cf. John 15: 26, 27; 16: 13, 14.) The present participle indicates that the testimony of these three witnesses is continuous. John says that "the three agree in one," which is to say that their testimony is for one purpose, namely, to declare that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. (Cf. Matt. 16: 16.) Vincent notes that "they converge upon the one truth, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, come in the flesh."

#### The Testimony of Men *versus* the Testimony of God

(1 John 5: 9-11)

*If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for the witness of God is this, that he hath borne witness concerning his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath*

*borne concerning his Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*

The use of the indicative mood—"if we receive"—assumes that such a reception is a fact, as Vincent points out. It is as if John is saying, "If we receive the witness of men, as indeed we do, the witness of God is greater." Any person who has any conception of the character of God should certainly realize this truth. If human testimony is accepted, there certainly is no ground for rejecting divine testimony; for it is certainly superior to the human on every count. God has borne witness concerning his Son, and that should be sufficient for every person who believes in God. In speaking of the Son, the Spirit, and the Father in verses 6-9, Westcott observes that the Son came, the Spirit bears witness, and the Father hath borne witness. Jesus frequently referred to the witness of the Father during his public ministry here upon the earth, as has already been pointed out.

While John may have used the testimony of men to mean the testimony of humanity as such, it is possible that he was alluding to the human element in presenting the gospel. If he had the latter in mind, then that would be the testimony of the apostles and other Christian teachers. The informed person, of course, accepts the word of authorized and faithful teachers as speaking the truth as it comes from the Lord. But whatever may have been in the mind of John, we have before us the testimony of men in contrast with the testimony of God; and if we are willing to hear the former, we should be more impressed with the latter. The argument runs like this, Since we should receive divine testimony more readily than human, and inasmuch as God has borne witness concerning his Son, we should therefore accept him as the Christ.

The result of the acceptance or the rejection of the God-given witness is stated in verse 10: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the

witness that God hath borne concerning his Son." He who believes in the person of Christ has the witness of inward experience. External evidence is always essential, but it can never take away the need for inward experience. Some one has said that there are some religious truths which we cannot understand until we believe them; and there are likewise some truths which we cannot experience until we believe them. This is substantially the lesson which Jesus sought to impress when he said, "If any man willet to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself." (John 7: 17.) Unless one is in sympathy with the divine purpose, he is not in a position to understand the divine will, the inward assurance is always brought about by faith. Reason and logic can never bring men to the final truth of the Incarnation.

But any one who does not believe that which God has said regarding his Son makes him a liar; and, as the Interpreter's Bible points out, those words should frighten the man who ignores or rejects the gospel, for they convict him of blasphemy and insult. His very attitude in rejecting the truth of the Incarnation is ridiculous, as if the little man were shaking his fist in the face of God, and crying, "Liar, liar." The terrible consequences of rejecting the gospel is set forth in the following passage: "And to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believe (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day." (2 Thess. 1: 7-10; of. 1 Pet. 4: 17-19.)

"And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." When Jesus offered his intercessory prayer, just before his betrayal, he said, "And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and

him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." (John 17: 3.) A pertinent question is, What do Jesus and John mean by the expression "eternal life"? The average person would probably answer, "A life which will last forever; a life which will never end." But if one will only take the time to read all that is said in the New Testament on the question, he will soon see that Jesus and John were not talking about merely life which will never end, but rather about a certain *kind* of life. All men, both good and bad, have a life (soul) which will always exist; but mere duration of existence is not necessarily desirable.

Furthermore, *duration* is not the only feature which belongs to the meaning of eternal; *quality* also enters into the definition of the term. God is eternal, not simply because he will always exist; but he will always exist because of the quality of his being. Even God himself, and we say it with reverence, would not always exist if he were not what he is. Jesus and John want us to understand that the former came to give us something more than an eternal existence. If we expect to live with God for ever, we must have a *quality* of life which will endure for ever. "Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some unto honor, and some unto dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor,

sanctified, meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work." (2 Tim. 2: 20, 21.)

There are two types of character described in the verses just quoted, namely, one which will always endure, and one which is only temporary. Gold will endure because of its nature; it cannot be destroyed because of what it is (cf. Job 23: 10); but the materials which are placed in contrast with silver and gold do not possess this enduring quality and will, of course, be destroyed when the testing time comes. (Cf. 1 Cor. 3: 12-15.) There would be little satisfaction in mere endless continuation of life, even in heaven, apart from the question of its quality. When the New Testament talks about eternal life, the reference is primarily to the life which is imparted by the Father, following a complete surrender to the will of God, as revealed in the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. (Cf. John 3: 3-5; Rom. 8: 1, 2.) This kind of life can and must be ours, here and now; and it must be continued if we expect to enter heaven at the last day. It is not enough to say that we have eternal life in prospect; for any person who stops to think knows that a person does not have to wait until he gets to heaven to "know" the Father and the Son. (See John 17: 3 again.) Furthermore, John's statement employs the aorist tense ("God *gave* unto us eternal life") which indicates a completed act in the past, in this instance, at our conversion.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What was one of the principal aims of John in writing his first epistle?  
Why is his discussion so important?  
What is the meaning of the Incarnation?  
What is the total meaning of Jesus to the human race?  
Why must every person who expects to be saved recognize and respect him?

### Love Is Proved by Obedience

What should be the daily aim of every Christian? Why?  
**How can this best** be accomplished  
What is John's purpose in the statement of verse 1?  
How does one know that he loves his brethren?  
How may one be sure that he loves God?

### Victory over the World and the Threefold Witness

Why does John say "For *whatsoever* is begotten of God overcometh the world"?  
What is the meaning of the term "world"?  
In what sense has the Christian overcome the world?  
What is "our faith" which is the victory over the world?  
Who is it who overcomes the world? In whom must he believe?  
What marks of identification does John give regarding Christ?  
In what sense did he come by the water and by the blood?  
Discuss the threefold witness regarding Jesus Christ.

### The Testimony of Men *versus* the Testimony of God

How does John go about making his argument regarding the two types of testimony?

In what way should every one feel about the divine testimony?  
 What is the result of the acceptance, or the rejection, of the God-given witness?  
 What rule does Jesus give for being able to recognize his teaching as being true?  
 What is the plight of every one who does not accept the truth of the gospel?  
 Why aren't people, generally speaking, impressed with these truths?  
 What is the witness which God has given regarding his Son?

In what way did Jesus define life eternal?  
 What is the usual definition which people give of eternal life?  
 What does the New Testament teach on the subject?  
 Discuss the two aspects of eternal life—duration and quality.  
 In what way does Paul illustrate the difference between the two types of character?  
 When do we *know* the Father and the Son?

## Lesson IX—May 30, 1965

# THE SIN UNTO DEATH

## Lesson Text

### 1 John 5: 12-21

12 He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life.

13 These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, *even* unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.

14 And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us:

15 And if *we* know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him.

16 If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and *God* will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There

is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request.

17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

18 We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but he that was begotten of God keepeth himself, and the evil one toucheth him not.

19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one.

20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Je'-sus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

21 *My* little children, guard yourselves from idols.

Golden Text.—*"Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God"* (Heb. 3: 12.)

Devotional Reading.—Heb. 6: 1-8.

## Daily Bible Readings

May 24.	M.	Sin Is a Reality in the World (Rom. 3: 9-20)
May 25.	T.	Unforgiven Sin Will End in Death (Rom. 6: 19-23)
May 26.	W.	It Is Possible for People to Be Guilty of an Eternal Sin (Mark 3: 22-30)
May 27.	T.	Some People Cannot Be Brought to Repentance (Heb. 6: 4-6)
May 28.	F.	There Is No Further Sacrifice for Wilful Sin (Heb. 10: 26-31)
May 29.	S.	Any Unconfessed Sin Will End in Death (1 John 1: 8-10)
May 30.	S.	God Does Not Want Anyone to Be Lost (2 Pet. 3: 8-13)

Time.—Probably about A.D. 90.

Place.—The letter was written in Ephesus.

Persons.—John and Christians.

## Introduction

The two principal words in the subject of today's lesson go hand in hand, and they demand careful consideration on the part of any person who has any desire to live in the

world which is to come. It was never the will of God that either sin or death should have any place in the experience of mankind. We learn from Gen. 1: 26, 27 that man was

created in the image of God, which evidently means that the moral nature of his soul or spirit was like God, or, which is the same thing, his original righteousness. Satan, who had previously fallen from his holy estate, was directly responsible for introducing sin into the world as we know it, and man himself with the devil's encouragement has continued the process. The writer of Ecclesiastes expresses the matter in these words: "Behold, this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." (Eccles. 7: 29.) There can be no question regarding man's original purity; his sinful condition was not due to his Creator, but to his own wicked devices. There is no better illustration of his moral departure from God than Paul's statement in Rom. 1: 18-32.

The statement just referred to, along with the nature of God, is sufficient to show that it was never God's purpose for man to live in sin. Paul says that God "made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; *that they should seek God*, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17: 26-28a.) "The great thought of the passage," as Meyer notes, "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 to his object *touches* and grasps it, and has now in really *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.

But if man chooses to continue in sin, death will be the inevitable result. This is the inexorable law of the harvest, as may be clearly seen by reading the following inspired statement: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life." (Gal. 6: 7, 8.) Even God himself is powerless to save the person who does not want to be saved. "And ye will not come to me, that ye may have life." (John 5: 40.) It is not God's will that any one should be lost (cf. 2 Pet. 3: 9; 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4); but since man is endowed with the power of choice, it is up to him to respond to the call of mercy. Regardless of the sinful state which may characterize man, God is willing to give him a new start, and look upon him as if he had never sinned, if the man in question is willing to do his part. (Cf. Eph. 2: 8-10; 2 Cor. 5: 17; Tit. 3: 3-7.)

### The Golden Text

*"Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God"* The warning given in these solemn words derives its force from the historical example mentioned in the context, and which is meant to illustrate the relation which God's children today have toward him as they journey toward the heavenly land of promise. The Israelites failed miserably, because of unbelief; and the writer of Hebrews makes it clear that the same danger confronts every Christian today who does not take heed to the teaching of the Lord. There are some very valuable lessons therefore for us, and we

should consider them well. The first, as has just been mentioned, is the fact that we stand in precisely the same kind of danger which characterized the Israelites. Furthermore, we know that the people under Moses did fall away, and Peter makes it plain that the same thing can happen to people under Christ. (Cf. 2 Pet. 2: 20-22.)

A second lesson to be learned from the golden text concerns the reason for the fall of the people of the Old Testament period, namely, "an evil heart of unbelief." When people begin to distrust the Lord and his way for them, it is then that they start on the way of the evil one. That is



exactly what happened to the Israelites, and the principle is no different from that which is seen at work with Eve in the garden of Eden. Eve knew exactly what Jehovah had said to her and her husband, but she allowed the tempter to persuade her to venture on another route. The writer of Hebrews states the question of the proper attitude toward God in these words: "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.) Thus, it is not enough to believe that there is a God; those who are pleasing to him must demonstrate their trust or confidence in him.

Another lesson to be learned is that any child of God can avoid the tragic departure from the way of righteousness, by making use of the means which have been provided for him. If he will do his part, then God will always do the rest. This truth is

emphasized over and over in the New Testament. (Read Rom. 8: 1-39; 2 Pet. 1: 1-11.) Both of these writers mention specifically the triumphant victory which comes to any one who will do his part—"Yea, and for this very cause adding on *your* part all diligence." The Lord is doing his part, now you do yours! God's part is stated in these words: "Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust." (2 Pet. 1: 3, 4; of. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.) God's word is sufficient to meet the needs of any situation which may arise in the life of a Christian, but each individual must learn to keep his heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. (See Prov. 4: 23.)

## The Text Explained

### The Certainty of Eternal Life

(1 John 5: 12, 13)

*He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life.* This verse, as may be seen by the arrangement in the American Standard Version, belongs to the preceding section of the lesson text, that is, the closing section of our last lesson. John says in verse 11, "And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." And then, as if commenting on the statement just made, the apostle adds, "He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life." These words remind us of a similar statement in John's gospel record: "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: out 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.)

It is apparently very difficult for some people to conceive of eternal life, except in terms of its *duration*; it seemingly never occurs to them that its duration always depends

upon its *quality*. If the quality of one's life is not eternal, there is no possible way for it to endure for ever. Tit. 1: 2 and 1 John 2: 25 are often cited in an effort to show that eternal life is always in the future, so far as we are concerned. It was pointed out in last week's lesson that the verb "gave" in verse 11 is in the aorist tense, which indicates a completed act in the past; and with this in mind, we must understand John as saying that God *did* give eternal life to his people, that is, he gave them a quality of life which is eternal. The apostle is not discussing the question of duration, but of quality. The Bible nowhere teaches that people have this life eternally, while they are in the flesh; but it does teach that the life which God's people have is eternal. There is therefore a vast difference between having eternal life, and having it eternally. The question of duration, of course, will not be settled until this earthly sojourn is over. Eternal life is precious, but it is not eternally secured until this life is over. We must prove our faithfulness.

The life which John is discussing is in the Son of God, and it is the

life which is imparted by the Father to those who have been made new creatures in Christ. "Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses; ... If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. *When Christ, who is our life*, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory." (Col. 2: 12, 13; 3: 1-4.) God therefore makes those who obey the gospel alive with Christ, and the new life which is imparted to them is in Christ. It is this life which has the quality of endurance; and if it is maintained as God intends that it shall be, it will never be taken away from the child of God. (Cf. Rom. 6: 3, 4; Col. 3: 9b, 10; John 11: 25, 26.)

*These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.* If John had said, "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have the remission of your sins, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God," no one would misunderstand his meaning. The verb in the expression "that ye have eternal life" is in the present indicative mood, which denotes a fact. (Cf. John 3: 36.)

### The Christian's Confidence toward the Lord

(1 John 5: 14-17)

*And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him.*

If God gives eternal life unto his children, then they are certainly in fellowship with him, for the life is in Christ, or, as Paul expresses the matter, Christ is our life; and if we

are thus related to the Lord, we certainly can have the confidence which will permit us to make known our petitions to God. "In nothing be anxious; but in everything with 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.) "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.)

There is nothing which encourages the child of God more than to have the feeling that his life and his prayers are acceptable to his heavenly Father. But this great confidence should always humble us, and we should never presume to go beyond the will of God. Our first effort should be to see that our will is lost in the will of God, and when that is done we can depend upon him to bless us according to his will. Some one has said, "Do his will as if it were thine, that he may do thy will as it were his." Both petitionary and intercessory prayer are among the greatest privileges which the child of God can enjoy; and they are both cited here by John—our petitions and praying for the brethren, which comes next.

*If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.*

In commenting on verse 16, The Expositor's Greek Testament says, "After the grand assurance that prayer is always heard, never unanswered, the apostle specifies one kind of prayer, *viz.*, Intercession, in the particular case of a 'brother,' i.e. a fellow-believer, who has sinned.

Prayer will avail for his restoration, with one reservation—that his sin be 'not unto death.' The reference is to those who had been led astray by the heresy, moral and intellectual, which had invaded the churches of Asia Minor. They had closed their ears to the voice of Conscience and their eyes to the light of the Truth, and they were exposed to the operation of that law of Degeneration which obtains in the physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual domain." The editor then goes on to say that a bodily faculty, if neglected, atrophies, disregard for truth in the moral domain destroys veracity; and that acts make habits, and habits character. The same principle also operates in the intellectual realm. "And so in the spiritual domain. There are two ways of killing the soul: (1) the benumbing and hardening practice of disregarding spiritual appeals and stifling spiritual impulses. . . .

(2) A decisive apostasy, a deliberate rejection. This was the case of those heretics. They had abjured Christ and followed Antichrist. This is what Jesus calls blasphemy against the Spirit (Matt. 12: 31, 32; Mark 3: 28-30). It inflicts a mortal wound on the man's spiritual nature. He can never be forgiven because he can never repent. He is 'in the grip of an eternal sin,' (Cf. Heb. 6: 4-6.) This is 'sin unto death'."

"Life and death in the passage," observes Vincent, "must correspond. Bodily death and spiritual life cannot be meant. The passage must be interpreted in the light of John's utterances elsewhere concerning life and death. In verse 12, he says. *He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.* In 3: 14, 15, he says that *he that loveth not abideth in death: that he that hateth his brother is a manslayer, and that no manslayer hath eternal life abiding in him.* These canons of interpretation point to the explanation, in which some of the best authorities agree, that the sin unto death does not refer to a specific act, but to a class or species of sins, the tendency of which is to cut the bond of fellowship with Christ. Hence the passage is in the key-note of fellowship which pervades the Epistle. Whatever breaks the fellowship between the soul and

Christ, and, by consequence, between the individual and the body of believers, is *unto death*, for there is no life apart from Christ. It is indeed true that this tendency inheres in *all* sin. Sin is essentially death. But a distinction is to be made, as Canon Westcott observes, between sins which flow from human imperfection and infirmity, and sins which are open manifestations of a character alien from God. 'All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not unto death.' It must be carefully borne in mind in the study of the passage, that John is speaking of sinful acts as *revelations of character*, and not simply in themselves."

It should be noted that Jesus says, "Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven." (Matt. 12: 31.) If therefore the "sin unto death" is different, in principle, from the "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit," then there are *two* fatal sins referred to in the New Testament. But since Jesus says that all will be forgiven, except the sin against the Holy Spirit, we must conclude that they are, in principle, one and the same thing. This is to say that the principle is the same, whether the sin was committed by the unbelieving Pharisees or by a believer who proved untrue to his Lord. It should also be noted that John does not forbid nor enjoin prayer for those who sin unto death. We can't always know when the deadline has been crossed; but we can pray for sinful brethren, so long as we have any hope for them.

### Some Great Facts of the Christian Faith

(1 John 5: 12-21)

*We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not: but he that was begotten of God keepeth himself, and the evil one toucheth him not. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. My little children, guard yourselves from idols.*

John closes his first letter with three ringing affirmations, which we are to consider in this section of the lesson text. (1) "We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but he that was begotten of God keepeth himself, and the evil one toucheth him not." This is a reaffirmation of 1 John 3: 9, where the idea is that of habitual sinning or a life of sin. The child of God does not continue to live a life of sin. This is entirely different from isolated acts of sin, through momentary failure or thoughtless weakness of the flesh, and which we are encouraged to confess and seek forgiveness. (Cf. 1 John 1: 8-10.) The Christian "keeps" himself when he does his part in the fight against the evil one. (Cf. Jude 21.) When we do our best to keep ourselves from harm, we make it possible for God to do that which we are unable to do. The same great truth is taught in Rom. 8: 31-39. The term "toucheth," which occurs in the New Testament only here and in John 20: 17, carries with it the idea, not of a mere or superficial touch, but that of laying hold of or grasping. The evil one cannot hold the faithful child of God in his clutches. This is one of the consequences of the binding of Satan, mentioned in Rev. 20: 1-3. (Cf. Matt. 12: 22-29.)

(2) "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one." Here is the great contrast between the child of God and the non-Christian. The former lies in the arms of God, while the latter lies in the arms of the enemy of all righteousness. These are dreadful words, so far as the world is concerned; but they are true words. The devil has a grasp on those who are out of Christ so strong that only

the power of God can rescue him. (Cf. Rom. 1: 16, 17; Eph. 1: 19-2: 6; 2 Cor. 5: 17.) The fact that those who have been redeemed belong to God (cf. 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20) suggests to us the New Testament teaching regarding providence.

(3) "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ." This is a reference to the central thought of the epistle, namely, that of the reality of the Incarnation, which has been described as an overwhelming demonstration of God's interest in us and his concern for our highest good. (See The Expositor's Greek Testament, in *loco*.) But not only has Christ come; he has also made it possible for us to grasp the truth, possess an inner understanding of the great issues of life. (Cf. Psalm 119: 18, 99; 1 John 2: 20, 27; Matt. 11: 25-30.) Our faith is not a matter of intellectual theory, but of personal and growing acquaintance with God through the enlightenment of the Spirit.

That which John has been saying is here described as being a true revelation of God, or, to say the same thing in another way, the God whom he has been describing is the true God, and the life which he has given us in Christ is eternal life. And his final exhortation is, "My little children, guard yourselves from idols," that is, do not allow any false claim lead you to substitute anything which occupies the place which belongs to God. The term "guard" is from a different word from that from which we have "keepeth" in verse 18. Here the idea is to stand guard as soldiers on duty do.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Why are the two principal words in the lesson subject so important?

In what way was sin introduced into the world as we know it?

How has mankind perpetuated sin?

What was God's original purpose concerning man?

Why is death inevitable for the human race?

What responsibility does man have with reference to his present condition?

Why is God willing to give him a new chance and how is this done?

### The Golden Text

What circumstances gives meaning and force to the words of this text?

What does the Bible teach with reference to the possibility of apostasy?

What three important lessons should we learn from this portion of the lesson?

How should we regard the word of God as it respects our needs? Give reasons for your answer.

### The Certainty of Eternal Life

In what way is our life related to the Son?

What does Jesus say that eternal life is?  
What two essential aspects of eternal life should we always recognize?  
Which one of these aspects characterizes our life now?  
How and when does one come into possession of eternal life, so far as its quality is concerned?  
What effect should the realization of this have on Christians?  
Why did John say that he wrote the things in this epistle?

The Christian's Confidence toward the Lord

What is the basis of our confidence toward the Lord?  
What effect should this feeling produce in our lives?  
What application does John make of this relationship as it respects sinful brethren?  
What distinction does the apostle make with reference to sin?  
What is the sin unto death?

What light does the teaching of Jesus throw on the question of the sin unto death?

Some Great Facts of the Christian Faith

What is the first of these great facts?  
In what sense does the child of God not sin?  
How is it that the evil one touches him not?  
What is the second of these facts?  
What contrast does John draw here?  
What encouragement should this give us?  
What is the third great fact which John mentions?  
What great truth is affirmed here?  
What is the understanding which the Lord has given his people?  
What application does John make of his teaching in the closing part of verse 20?  
What are the idols from which Christians should guard themselves?  
What is the essential meaning of the term "guard"?

Lesson X—June 6, 1965

JOHN'S EPISTLE TO THE ELECT LADY

Lesson Text

2 John 1-13

1 The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the truth;

2 For the truth's sake which abideth in us, and it shall be with us for ever:

3 Grace, mercy, peace shall be with us, from God the Father, and from Je-sus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

4 I rejoice greatly that I have found *certain* of thy children walking in truth, even as we received commandment from the Father.

5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

6 And this is love, that we should walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it.

7 For many deceivers are gone

forth into the world, *even* they that confess not that Je'-sus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the an'-ti-christ.

8 Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward.

9 Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son.

10 If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into *your* house, and give him no greeting:

11 For he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works.

12 Having many things to write unto you, I would not *write them* with paper and ink; but I hope to come unto you, and to speak face to face, that your joy may be made full.

13 The children of thine elect sister salute thee.

Golden Text.—"And *this is love, that we should walk after his commandments.*" (2 John 6.)

Devotional Reading.—1 Cor. 16: 15-18.

Daily Bible Readings

May 31. M..... Faithful Women in the Lord (Phil. 4: 1-3)  
June 1. T..... The Church As the Bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11: 1-3)  
June 2. W..... The Relationship of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5: 22-33)

June 3. T.....	The Church As the Fulness of Christ (Eph. 1: 22, 23)
June 4. ....	F. Women Were the First Members of a Great Church (Acts 16: 11-15)
June 5. S.....	A Woman Who Was the Servant of a Church (Rom. 16: 1, 2)
June 6. S.....	The Description of a Worthy Woman (Prov. 31: 10-31)

TIME.—Probably about A.D. 90.

PLACE.—The letter was probably written in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—John, the elect lady, and her children.

## Introduction

There has been, all through the years, wide disagreement among Bible scholars with reference to the author and the recipient of this short letter, especially with reference to the latter. Most conservative Bible students regard John, the apostle of Christ and son of Zebedee, as the author, the same John who wrote the gospel record which bears his name, the three epistles of John, and the Revelation; but it is only fair to say that there are some who deny that he wrote any of these five books. However the question is not important, or the author would have signed his name; but for all practical purposes, we need not hesitate to regard the apostle John as the writer of the letter now under consideration; and when we do we will be in good company. But the question as to the identity of the "elect lady" is not so simply resolved. After calling attention to the fact that some students have concluded that one or the other of the terms "elect" and "lady" should be regarded as a proper name, Guy N. Woods says,

"Others have thought that a *church* is thus figuratively designated by the apostle, using the allegory of a woman in keeping with the mystical use of Rev. 12. This, however, is highly improbable. To reach this conclusion, one must translate the Greek word *kuria* as 'lady,' interpret the word 'lady' as a church, and then construe the Greek word *tekna*, children, as members of the church! Only in the highly figurative portions of the scriptures is the church ever referred to as a woman; and it seems very unlikely that the apostle, in this brief treatise, should have used the word thus figuratively. Moreover, other serious difficulties in the way of such a rendering are immediately apparent. If the 'lady' was the church, who were the children of the lady addressed? The church has no existence apart from

those who constitute its membership. The elect lady had a sister who also had children. (Verse 13.) On the assumption that the elect lady was the church, who then was the sister, and what did she and her sister represent? From all the facts in the case, the preponderance of evidence seems logical to lead to the conclusion that the terms under consideration are to be literally interpreted; that the elect lady was some faithful sister known to John; and that she may have borne the name Cyria. More than this it is not possible to know." (*A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude*, p. 398.)

Neither Brother Woods nor any other thoughtful commentator wants to be dogmatic about the identity of the elect lady, and, as has already been pointed out, there is no way to be absolutely certain about the question. If it had been vital to our understanding the subject matter of the epistle, the identity of the "elect lady" would have been revealed. However, if the reference is to a church, then the idea is that of a *congregation*, and not to the church as a whole; and in that case the "children" would be the members of the congregation, both the "lady" and the "children" being used figuratively. And by the same token, the "sister" would be another congregation, and her children its members. Findlay thinks that the church to whom the letter was sent was Pergamum (*Fellowship in the Life Eternal*, p. 31); and if that is true, then the church in Ephesus, probably John's home congregation, would be the "elect sister" whose children saluted the former. (Cf. Gal. 4: 21-31 for a similar use of the relation of the terms women and children.)

The original word for "elect" is *eklekte*, while the Greek term for "lady" is *kuria*. Transliterated, the words are thought by some to be used as proper names, namely, (1)

Eclecta, (2) Cyria, or (3) Eclecta Cyria. This view, of course, is possible, but hardly probable. It seems more reasonable, as *The Interpreter's Bible* points out, to regard the terms as indicating a gracious personification of a particular church, especially in view of the contents of the letter in which they are found. The church of the New Testament is frequently referred to as the bride of Christ and is, in such instances, in the feminine gender in keeping with the idea of a woman or "lady."

(Cf. Eph. 5: 22-33; 2 Cor. 11: 2.) It can be seen, from the two references just cited, that the application is the same, whether the reference is to the church as a whole, or to a single congregation. When Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it," the pronoun "it" is in the feminine gender, and the statement therefore literally says, "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against *her*" meaning, of course, the church.

## The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is a part of the principle text, and it will be considered in its regular order.

## The Text Explained

### The Salutation

(2 John 1-3)

*The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the truth; for the truth's sake which abideth in us, and it shall be with us for ever: Grace, mercy, peace shall be with us, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.*

The term "elder" (*presbuteros*), in and of itself, means either older in years (cf. Luke 15: 25) or as an appointed officer in the church (Acts 20: 17). We have no way of knowing whether John used the term, merely because of his advanced age, or because of his relationship to the church. Peter was an elder in the church, and it is entirely possible that John was too. (Cf. 1 Pet. 5: 1.) Paul referred to himself as "Paul the aged" *presbutos* (Phile. 9; of. Luke 1: 18; Tit. 2: 2, the only other instances of the use of this word in the New Testament). The marginal reading of Phile. 9 is "ambassador," and some Bible students think that that is what Paul had reference to (cf. Eph. 6: 20; 2 Cor. 5: 20), where the word is *presbeuo*. This, however, is a question for textual critics; hut, as Robertson observes, there is no real reason why Paul should not properly term himself as "Paul the aged."

The high and affectionate manner in which John addressed those to whom he wrote is in keeping with

the exalted relationship which Christians have with Christ. They are members of his body, whether as individuals or as a congregation. In commenting on the expression "unto the elect lady and her children," *The Interpreter's Bible* asks, "Doesn't this gracious phrase rebuke the want of dignity and good taste with which people so often speak of the church? A group of the Lord's people, bound together in Christian fellowship, is more than simply a congregation. They are, indeed, a congregation, but compare that term with the exalted language in which the New Testament speaks of the church. "Fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." (Eph. 2: 19.) "Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof." (1 Cor. 12: 27.) "That he might present the church to himself a glorious church." (Eph. 5: 27.) And then John, as he was permitted to see the Lord's people in their final glory, wrote, "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." (Rev. 22: 2.)

John's entire attitude toward the elect lady and her children is based on the solid foundation of truth, which makes love for each other possible. As long as the truth abides in the Lord's people, they will remain loyal to each other and to him. The elder assured those to whom he wrote of his own love for them, based on truth, but he did more than that: he told them that all who

knew the truth loved them too. And it should be observed that this truth shall be with the Lord's people for ever. John is about to warn against false teachers, but he has no fear for the elect lady and her children, while the truth remains with them; for to be forewarned is to be forearmed. No one who loves the truth will object to having it called to their attention. It is interesting to note that John says, "Grace, mercy, peace *shall be* with us, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, *in truth and love*."

### The Call to the Way of Love

(2 John 4-6)

*I rejoice greatly that I have found certain of thy children walking in truth, even as we received commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we should walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, even as you heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it.*

While John does not mention the circumstances under which he found certain of the elect lady's children walking in the truth, it is very probable that the information came to him in somewhat the same way, as that referred to in 3 John 3, 4: "For I rejoiced greatly, when brethren came and bare witness unto thy truth, even as thou walkest in truth. Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth." We also know that Paul evidently received information regarding the activities of some of his disciples in this manner. (Cf. 1 Cor. 1: 11; of. 16: 17, 18.)

The use of italics in the American Standard and some other versions of the Bible indicates that there is no corresponding word in the original for the term in question. In some instances, the word is supplied in order to complete the meaning, as the translators conceive it to be; but it sometimes happens that what they are doing is to add another idea to the inspired text. (See John 3: 34, Kings James Version, of. the American Standard Version; Acts

2: 41.) But in the case now before us, it is evident that the reading of the original text makes some additional word necessary, to make intelligible the translation in another language—the English which is our version. Instead of saying "thy children," which would have implied *all* of them, John actually says, "I rejoice greatly that I have found 'of thy children' [*ek ton teknon*] walking in truth." "Of thy children" certainly implies some of them or less than all of them, and so the translators inserted the term "certain" which indicates the actual meaning, without regard to the precise number. Many present-day versions use the term "some" instead of *certain*, as for example Williams: "I am happy to find that some of your children are living by the truth, just as we have been commanded from the Father to do."

The exhortation contained in verses 5, 6 is substantially the same as that which is set forth and emphasized in the first epistle. The commandment to love one another is not new in the sense that it had not been given before; but since all true obedience is based on love, no one can please the Lord who does not make love the ruling principle of his life. This is essential, whether with reference to those who are closest to us in the bonds of Christian fellowship or family ties, or with reference to those who have remained in or who have fallen into the clutches of sin. It is God's will that all men be saved, and he expects his people to do that which they can in order to bring about the salvation of the lost. This can be done only as we endeavor to live our own lives according to the commandments of the Lord.

### Warning against Error and Concluding Remarks

(2 John 7-13)

*For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward. Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that*



*abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works.*

It was pointed out earlier in these lessons that when people walk in the way of loving obedience, they are in less danger of being led astray; or, to state the same thing in another way, people who have the proper attitude toward the Lord and others, will themselves be more secure in the way of righteousness. The reason why this is so essential is that many false teachers have gone out into the world. The particular brand of false teachers referred to by John were those who denied the New Testament teaching concerning the Incarnation. The inspired record plainly says that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, which is another way of saying that the Word of God appeared in history as Jesus Christ. This, however, has been denied from the very beginning; and it was particularly against the Gnostics that John wrote his epistles. No thoughtful person has ever denied that Jesus lived as a man, but the Gnostics and others denied that he was the Christ. That was the claim which the Jews of the time of Christ made.

As John continues his warning against false teachers, he says, "Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward." It is always in order for the Lord's people to keep check on themselves, that is, to see to it that they themselves are taking full advantage of the blessings and opportunities which come their way. Unless we keep ourselves in the proper attitude and condition, it is possible for us to lose the very thing for which we *think* that we have been working. (Cf. 1 Cor. 9: 27.) Bible students, generally speaking, are not sure whether the pronoun in the expression "which we have wrought" should be "we" or "ye." (See marginal reading.) Either reading would set forth a true picture of the situation, depending on where the emphasis is placed. Certainly John did not want his

labors in their behalf to be lost, and they themselves should make every effort to conserve the efforts of their own endeavors. (Cf. Phil. 3: 12.) A full reward can be obtained only when one has done his best.

It is not enough, however, for one to keep an eye on himself; he must likewise examine those who profess to be teachers of the word. (Cf. Acts 17: 10-12.) While John evidently had the Gnostics in mind, his word "whosoever" includes any person in any age of the world. We are not bothered with Gnostics today, but there are many, many teachers who advance beyond the limits of the doctrine of Christ; and they are the ones who should concern us. The only way in which one may be sure that he does not go beyond that which Christ teaches is to make certain that he says and does only those things which have been authorized by Christ. Jesus, for example, says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7: 21-23.)

When Jesus says at the judgment day, "I never *knew* you," he will be saying, "I never recognized you who did not act in harmony with my Father's will." The term "iniquity" means to act without authority, whether in ignorance or by deliberate choice. (See Thayer, *in loco*.) Those who follow the teacher must, of course, share in his fate. (Cf. Matt. 15: 13, 14.) Thus, if a teacher goes beyond the teaching of Christ in presenting the plan of salvation, he will be condemned for his action; and all who accept his teaching must likewise suffer. In what were probably the closing remarks of his final public address before his betrayal and crucifixion, Jesus said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I spake not from myself; but the Fa-

ther that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak." (John 12: 48-50.)

We usually think of "going onward" as making progress, and so it is; and it is for this reason that many progress beyond the bounds of the will of the Father. However, going forward is not the only way to disobey the Lord; people can go backward or refuse to do that which has been commanded. (Cf. Heb. 2: 1-3; James 2: 10; 4: 17.) We should learn therefore that it is just as wrong for people to refuse or neglect to do the Lord's will, as it is for people to progress beyond that which he has said. Unauthorized progression and retrogression are alike unacceptable to the Lord. He will not tolerate any change whatsoever in his revealed will. This is made abundantly clear by the following statement from Paul: "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 prevent the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than 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.)

Any one therefore who shows any

sympathy for erroneous teaching, will himself be identified with it; and he must, as a result, suffer the consequences which false teachers must suffer. *Living Letters—The Paraphrased Epistles* renders verses 10, 11 in these words: "If any one comes to teach you, and he doesn't believe what Christ taught, don't even invite him into your home. Don't encourage him in any way. If you do, you will be a partner with him in his wickedness." It is probably true that the "greeting" of John's day involved much more than a simple "Good day"; but the whole idea seems to be that faithful Christians must not under any circumstance leave the impression that they indorse or in any way encourage erroneous teaching. There does not seem to be any prohibition to ordinary kindness and hospitality, so long as they can be shown without leaving the impression that sympathy is being shewn for the error involved.

*Having many things to write unto you, I would not write them with paper and ink; but I hope to come unto you, and to speak face to face, that your joy may be made full. The children of thine elect sister salute thee.*

The Interpreter's Bible thinks that John knew when to close a letter. His purpose had been accomplished: he had encouraged his readers to follow the truth, walk in love, and abide in the doctrine of Christ; and he had also pointed out to them the consequences of encouraging false teaching. There were other things about which he would like to speak, but he preferred to do that in person. The children of the elect sister who sent greeting were evidently in Ephesus, from which place John was writing.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Why do Bible students disagree regarding the author and recipient of the letter on which this lesson is based?

Who was the "elect lady"? Give reasons for your answer.

What can you say of the relative importance of the question?

### The Salutation

What is the literal meaning of the word

"elder" and in what sense did John apply the term to himself?

Discuss the high and affectionate manner in which John addressed his readers.

What lesson should we learn from this?

What are some of the ways in which New Testament writers speak of the Lord's people?

What was the basis of John's attitude toward the elect lady and her children?

What are some of the consequences of abiding in the truth?

Why did John say that he and others loved her and her children?

Why do those who love the truth also love other Christians?  
 How do those who love the truth feel about all gospel teaching?  
 What peculiar point does John make in his salutation?

#### The Call to the Way of Love

What brought great joy to the heart of John?  
 Why was this true?  
 Discuss the use of italics in the version from which the lesson text is taken.  
 Why is it important that we know these facts?  
 Why was it necessary for the translators to supply a word in the lesson now before us?  
 How may one know that he loves the Lord?  
 What does it mean to walk in the commandment of the Lord?  
 Why is it important that love be the ruling principle in one's life?

#### Warning against Error and Concluding Remarks

Why was John so insistent that those to whom he wrote walk in love?  
 Who were the false teachers against whom John wrote?  
 What was the nature of their error?  
 What denial did they make regarding Jesus?  
 What particular exhortation did John give the brethren?  
 Why is self-examination so important?  
 What things were "wrought" and by whom?  
 How may we be sure of a full reward?  
 What attitude should Christians have toward all professed teachers of the truth?  
 Why is this true?  
 In what way did Jesus illustrate this principle?  
 What often prevents people from abiding in the teaching of Christ?  
 Discuss other ways of being unfaithful to the Lord.  
 How do we know that he will not tolerate any changes in his revealed will?  
 How did John close the letter from which this lesson is taken?

### Lesson XI—June 13, 1965

## JOHN S LETTER TO GAIUS

### Lesson Text

3 John 1-14

1 The elder unto Ga'ius the beloved, whom I love in truth.

2 Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

3 For I rejoiced greatly, when brethren came and bare witness unto thy truth, even as thou walkest in truth.

4 Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

5 Beloved, thou doest a faithful work is whatsoever thou doest toward them that are brethren and strangers withal;

6 Who bare witness to thy love before the church: whom thou wilt do well to set forward on their journey worthy of God:

7 Because that for the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing of the Gen'-tiles.

8 We therefore ought to welcome such, that we may be fellow-workers for the truth.

9 I wrote somewhat unto the

church: but Di-ot'-re-phes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

10 Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he forbiddeth and casteth *them* out of the church.

11 Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

12 De-me'-tri-us hath the witness of all *men*, and of the truth itself: yea, we also bear witness; and thou knowest that our witness is true.

13 I had many things to write unto thee, but I am unwilling to write *them* to thee with ink and pen:

14 But I hope shortly to see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace *be* unto thee. The friends salute thee. Salute the friends by name.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth"* (3 John 2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 4: 14-21.

## Daily Bible Readings

June 7. M.....	John's Great Privilege As a Christian Writer (Rev. 1: 1-3)
June 8. T.....	John's Message to Christian People (1 John 1: 5-10)
June 9. W.....	John's Reason for Proving the Spirits (1 John 4: 1-6)
June 10. T.....	John Tells Why Christ Came into the World (1 John 3: 1-5)
June 11. F.....	John Explains Why True Christians Do Not Live in Sin (1 John 3: 6-12)
June 12. S.....	John Explains Why Christians Should Love Each Other (1 John 4: 7-13)
June 13. S.....	John Writes Regarding Eternal Life (1 John 5: 9-13)

**Time.**—Probably about A.D. 90.

**Place.**—The letter was probably written in Ephesus.

**Persons.**—John, Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius.

### Introduction

Third John is one of the two purely personal letters of the New Testament which have come down to us, the other one being Philemon, unless indeed Second John falls into that category. If the "elect lady" of that epistle was an individual, then it too is a private letter; but if the expression was a figurative expression for a church, then the letter cannot be regarded as a private communication. It was pointed out in the study last week that Bible students are not agreed regarding this question, and no one therefore should attempt to be wise above that which is written. The best that any one can do is to present the known facts, and then attempt to draw his own conclusion. If the question as to whether or not the *elect lady* was an individual or a congregation was a vital one, John would have made the matter clear; but the very fact that there is doubt regarding it, should help us to see the need for being cautious about such subjects.

In writing an introduction to the third epistle of John, Prof. M. B. Riddle says, "This letter and the second also are of great historical value, revealing as they do the inner life of the Christian communities of Asia Minor at the close of the first century. There are evidences of speculative error, personal ambition, occasional insubordination to apostolic authority, and of an opposition on the part of local leaders to traveling evangelists. The recently-recovered Teaching of the Twelve Apostles' shows a similar state of things." (*Teacher's New Testament with Notes and Helps*, p. 609.) To this we might add a similar state-

ment from *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*: "This epistle presents one of the most vivid glimpses in the New Testament of a church in the first century. The characters, Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius, are sketched with bold strokes of the apostle's pen. Characteristics of church life are also clearly seen in the epistle. The independence of the believers is outstanding, and their personalities, as well as their doctrinal problems, are patent. This brief and very personal letter shatters the notion that the state of things was ideal, or nearly so, in the first century. Contrariwise, it reveals the problems of a vigorously growing faith." (P. 1483.)

As already indicated, the letter on which this lesson is based was private, that is, a personal letter which was sent from one individual to another. There is no reason to think that John intended it for publication for public consumption; but, in the providence of God, that is exactly what did take place. Any private or personal letter, of course, usually implies situations which are known to the writer and the person or persons to whom he wrote, but which are not always known to others and especially those who are far removed both in time and space from those directly involved. But we should not overlook the fact that personal letters are very important as sources of information and as historical documents, especially for the time from which they came. Indeed, we are told by eminent scholars that "there are no better sources known to the historian." We should therefore be grateful for these letters, and for the opportunity of studying them.

### The Golden Text

This part of the lesson is found in the principal text, and it will be considered in its proper order.

## The Text Explained

### Greeting and Commendation

(3 John 1-8)

*The elder unto Gaius the beloved, whom I love in truth.* The "elder" here is the same John who wrote 2 John, where he also referred to himself as the "elder." It was pointed out in last week's lesson that we have no way of knowing whether John used the word "elder" with reference to his age, or as an elder in the church. It could well have been either, or both. John was in the neighborhood of ninety years old when he wrote these two letters, and there is no reason for thinking that he was not also an elder in the church; and there is, of course, no proof that he was. This is simply an untaught question, and there should therefore be no contention regarding it.

The name "Gaius" occurs several times in the New Testament (Acts 19: 29; 20: 4; Rom. 16: 23; 1 Cor. 1: 14; 3 John 1). Some of the references may refer to the same person, but, as *The New Bible Dictionary* observes, they may very well represent different persons. It seems reasonable to assume that the Gaius of the lesson now before us was one of John's converts. The basis of the apostle's love for him was the truth; and that evidently means about the same thing that Paul had in mind when he referred to some of his disciples as his children in the faith, that is, in the gospel. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 2; Tit. 1: 4.)

*Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when brethren came and bare witness unto thy truth, even as thou walkest in truth. Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.*

It is very probably that Gaius was one of the influential members of one of the churches in Asia Minor, who took particular interest in the work, and especially with reference to itinerant preachers of the gospel. He was using his "health" and his "means" for the good of the cause of Christ, and the apostle wishes or prays for him continued good health and financial prosperity, commensu-

rate with the prosperity of his soul. Williams renders the passage in these words: "Dearly beloved, I am praying for you to continue to prosper in everything, and to keep well, just as your soul is prospering." When people manifest the proper attitude toward the Lord and keep their heart (soul) with all diligence, it is always in order that interested brethren pray that they may have the necessary health and means to accomplish their soul's desire in the work of the Lord. The good report which some of the brethren brought to John regarding Gaius caused the old man to rejoice greatly, and to be thankful that his child was walking in the truth, along with others in the same relationship.

*Beloved, thou doest a faithful work in whatsoever thou doest toward them that are brethren and strangers withal; who bear witness to thy love before the church: whom thou wilt do well to set forward on their journey worthily of God: because for the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to welcome such, that we may be fellow-workers for the truth.*

Some Bible students regard the pronoun "I" in the expression "whom I love in truth" (verse 1) as being emphatic, and if this is true, the implication is that there were some who did not love Gaius and who were opposed to the work which he was doing, and for which John commended him. The general tone of the letter seems to confirm this view. This section of the lesson text is translated by Phillips in these words: "You are doing a fine piece of work, dear friend, in looking after the brothers who come your way, especially as you have never seen them before. They have testified of your love before the church. It is a fine thing to help them on their way—it shows you realize the importance of what they are doing. They set out on this work, as you know, for the sake of 'the Name' and they accept no help from non-Christians. We ought to give such men a real welcome and prove that we too are cooperating with the truth."

This commendation by John makes us think of a similar one by Paul,

also rendered by Phillips in these words: "Since, then, I have heard of this faith of yours in the Lord Jesus and the practical way in which you are expressing it toward fellow Christians, I thank God continually for you and I never give up praying for you." (Eph. 1: 15, 16.) G. G. Findlay (*Fellowship in the Life Eternal*) thinks that Gaius may have been the one link which held the congregation in which he had membership to the other faithful churches in that area of the land. It often happens that such is the case, even in this age of the world. The devotion to the cause of Christ by even one faithful brother or sister may stimulate others to greater loyalty to the Lord. The reason why the preachers referred to here took nothing of the Gentiles, that is, of non-Christians, to whom they preached, was doubtless to keep the latter from misconstruing their motives. This also was the plan which was adhered to by Paul.

### Diotrephes and Demetrius

(3 John 9-12)

*I wrote somewhat unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he forbiddeth and casteth them out of the church.*

Nothing is said of any official position which Gaius may have occupied in the church. He may or may not have been a fellow-elder with Diotrephes, but there is one thing of which we may be certain, namely, their characters were the exact opposite. Diotrephes made every effort to counteract the good work which Gaius and others were endeavoring to do. When Paul wrote to Timothy regarding the qualifications of elders, he said that the bishop must not be self-willed. (Tit. 1: 7.) The self-willed man seeks to have his own way, regardless of the law of God, and the wishes of his fellow-elders and the congregation. Such a spirit will often lead its possessor into vicious interpretations of the Scriptures, in an effort to justify

his course and to accomplish his purpose. Instead of gently caring for the weakest member of the church, like a good shepherd would do, an elder of this type lays the foundation for, if he does not actually bring about, a split in the body of Christ; all because of his determination to have his own way. And, too, such a person does not hesitate to blame someone else for the result of his ungodly conduct.

In saying, "I wrote somewhat unto the church," it is possible that John was referring to his letter which we know as 2 John. Again, this may have been a reference to a letter of introduction which John gave to some of the itinerant preachers who wanted to visit the church in question; but whatever the communication was, it apparently did not get to the congregation. Diotrephes probably either intercepted it, or refused to allow it to be acted upon. Some one has called Diotrephes one of the first experiments in the episcopacy, while another, in commenting on the character in question, says that in the orchestra of life the second violin is a very difficult instrument to play, and that Diotrephes, one of the minor characters of the New Testament, never succeeded in playing it at all. He resented the authority of the apostle John, and flatly refused to receive his message and messengers.

The trouble with Diotrephes was that he wanted to have the preeminence. In view of his earlier experience with Jesus (cf. Matt. 20: 20-28), John probably well understood the motive which actuated Diotrephes; but it is exceedingly unfortunate that the spirit did not die with him. In his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, A. T. Robertson says, "Some forty years ago I wrote an article on Diotrephes for a denominational paper. The editor told me that twenty-five deacons stopped the paper to show their resentment against being personally attacked in the paper." (Vol. VI, p. 263.) In commenting on the desire to dominate, *The Speaker's Bible* notes that "in the life of the church there is a great deal of work to be done behind the scenes which can hardly ever be recognized publicly, and there are always some elect souls

who are willing to undertake this work neither expecting nor desiring the praise of men; but there are others who are hurt if their efforts are not publicly praised, and who will only do the work that brings them into prominence so that they may be seen and heard of men.

"And still worse there are churches which are afflicted with members who, by reason of their wealth or social influence, claim the right to dictate the policy of the church and to dominate its activity. Here and there men possessed of such gifts, ascend naturally, by virtue of their beautiful Christian character, to the place of preeminence, occupying it with ease and to the great advantage of the congregation; but in other cases those who claim the pre-eminent place have not sufficient weight of Christian character to sustain the position into which they thrust themselves. They recall Bishop Blougram:

There's power in me and will to  
dominate  
Which I must exercise, they hurt  
me else:  
In many ways I need mankind's  
respect,  
Obedience, and the love that's born  
of fear."

Not only did Diotrephes refuse to receive the brethren whom John recommended; he even forbade those who wanted to welcome them and cast them out of the church. Some may wonder why a congregation would permit a man to manifest such an attitude; but there are scores of others who will testify to the fact that such is often the case. Diotrephes did not content himself with merely talking—"prating a g a i n s t us with wicked words;" he acted, as the remainder of the verse shows. The original word for "prating" (*phluarō*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and it means, according to Thayer, Arndt-Gingrich, et al, to utter nonsense, to bring idle or unjustified charges, to accuse one falsely with malicious words. (Cf. 1 Tim. 5: 13 where the kindred term for tattlers is found.) John threatened Diotrephes with the same type of treatment which Paul said that he would give the Corinthians. (See 2 Cor. 13: 1-3.)

*Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: he that doeth evil hath not seen God. Demetrius hath the witness of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, we also bear witness; and thou knowest that our witness is true.*

Before referring to Demetrius, John exhorts Gaius to imitate the good and not the evil, and thereby both please God and avoid being like Diotrephes. In other words, John's idea seems to be something like this, God's people must be like him; and in order to do this, they must make every effort to follow after the good. This, of course, requires that they not allow evil doers to influence their conduct. No child of God is at liberty to do wrong, in order to retaliate or get even with some one else. John's exhortation here reminds us of a similar one which Paul gave the Corinthians, namely, "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1 Cor. 11: 1.) As a practical example of what it means to avoid evil and do good, consider the following illustrations, one from the New Testament and the other from a thoughtful man of our day.

"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.) The following story is from *The Chicago Daily News* via *The Reader's Digest*, and is copied from the bulletin of the Central Church of Christ, Chattanooga, Tennessee: I walked with my friend, a Quaker, to the newsstand the other night, and he bought a paper, thanking the newsie politely. The newsie didn't even acknowledge it.

"A sullen fellow, isn't he?" I commented.

"Oh, he's that way every night," shrugged my friend.

"Then, why do you continue to be so polite to him?" I asked.

"Why not?" inquired my friend, "why should I let *him* decide how I'm going to act?"

As I thought about this incident later, it occurred to me that the important word was "act." My friend *acts* toward people. Most of us *react* toward them.

He has a sense of inner balance which is lacking in most of us. He knows who he is, what he stands for, how he should behave. He refuses to return incivility for incivility, because then he would no longer be in command of his own conduct.

When we are enjoined in the Bible to return good for evil, we look upon this as a moral injunction—which it is. But it is also a psychological prescription for our emotional health.

Nobody is unhappier than the perpetual reactor. His center of emotional gravity is not rooted within himself, where it belongs, but in the world outside of him. His spiritual temperature is always raised or lowered by the social climate around him, and he is a mere creature at the mercy of these elements.

Praise gives him a feeling of euphoria, which is false, because it does not last and it does not come from self-approval. Criticism depresses more than it should, because it conforms to his own secretly shaky opinion of himself. Snubs hurt him, and the merest suspicion of unpopularity in any quarter rouses him to bitterness.

A serenity of spirit cannot be achieved until we become the masters of our own actions and attitudes. To let another determine whether we shall be rude or gracious, elated or depressed, is to relinquish control over our own personalities, which is ultimately all we possess.

The only true possession is self-possession.

The peculiar manner in which John commends Demetrius has led some Bible students to think that he was the possible bearer of the letter which Diotrophes refused to accept. The apostle's testimony concerning him is threefold, namely, (1) the witness of all men, (2) of the truth itself, and (3) that of John and those with him, possibly the church, or at least the leaders of the church in Ephesus. The character of Demetrius is placed in direct opposition to that of Diotrophes.

### Concluding Remarks

(3 John 13, 14)

*I had many things to write unto thee, but I am unwilling to write them to thee with ink and pen: but I hope shortly to see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be unto thee. The friends salute thee. Salute the friends by name.*

The concluding words of 3 John are substantially the same as those of 2 John, although there are some minor differences. Two of the fundamental themes of John's epistles are faith and love, and when they are the principles by which people live, the quality of their life is eternal and peace is their portion, even in this world. This is to partake of the ultimate reality and harmony of the universe, for which Paul prayed (cf. his letter to the Ephesians), and it is the peace which Jesus bequeathed to his disciples at the last supper. (John 14: 27; cf. Isa. 26: 3.) This peace is all the more remarkable, when we consider the fact that Jesus made his remarks about it as he faced Gethsemane and the cross. In exhorting Gaius to salute the friends by name, John was imitating the Good Shepherd's love and care for the individual. (Cf. John 10: 3.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What is the nature of the epistle which we know as 3 John?

What should be our attitude toward untaught questions?

Discuss the value of such letters as 2 and 3 John to us.

### Greeting and Commendation

Who is the "elder" and what probable reason did he have for referring to himself as such?

Who was Gaius?

For what did John pray with reference to Gaius?

What was his probable reason for this prayer?

What does all of this suggest regarding the life and character of Gaius?



What important lesson should we learn from this?  
 In what way was John affected by the report regarding Gaius?  
 What close relationship did John probably have toward him?  
 What is implied in the expression "Whom I love in truth"?  
 What kind of work was Gaius doing?  
 Why didn't the preachers take something from the Gentiles?  
 What should be our attitude toward this question? Give reason for your answer.  
 Give an overall view of the influence which Gaius must have had on the congregation.

#### Diotrephes and Demetrius

Why did John bring the name of Diotrephes into the picture now before us?  
 What was his general attitude toward the work which Gaius was doing?  
 What does Paul say about appointing such a man to the eldership?  
 What does it mean for one to love to have the preeminence?  
 In what way did Diotrephes show his resentment for John?

What modern application does his attitude have for our day?  
 Why do some people apparently want to dictate the policy of the church?  
 What else did Diotrephes do with reference to John?  
 What does it mean for one to "prate" against another?  
 What did John say that he would do about it?  
 What exhortation did he give Gaius regarding the matter?  
 Why is it wrong to retaliate for injuries or supposed injuries?  
 How alone may one know that he is doing good?  
 What is the difference between "acting" and "reacting" toward another?  
 Who was Demetrius and why was his name introduced in the letter?  
 In what way did John commend him?

#### Concluding Remarks

Compare the closing words of 3 John with the last part of 2 John and point out the similarities and differences.  
 What does John say about peace and why?  
 Why salute the friends by name?

## Lesson XII—June 20, 1965

# JUDE, SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST

## Lesson Text

### Jude 1-4, 17-25

1 Jude, a servant of Je'-sus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Je'-sus Christ:

2 Mercy unto you and peace and love be multiplied.

3 Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.

4 For there are certain men crept in privily, *even* they who were of old written of beforehand unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Je'-sus Christ.

\* \* \* \* \*

17 But ye beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Je'-sus Christ;

18 That they said to you, In

the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts.

19 These are they who make separations, sensual, having not the Spirit.

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Je'-sus Christ unto eternal life.

22 And on some have mercy, who are in doubt;

23 And some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

24 Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy,

25 To the only God our Saviour, through Je'-sus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore. A-men'.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Keep yourself in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*" (Jude 21.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—2 Tim. 4: 1-7.

## Daily Bible Readings

June 14. M.....	Jude's Relationship to Jesus (Matt. 13: 54-58;
June 15. ....	T. How Jesus' Brothers Felt toward Him During His Ministry (John 7: 1-9)
June 16. W.....	The Lord's Servants Are Bought with a Price (1 Cor. 6: 19, 20»
June 17. T.....	We Become His Servants by Obeying the Gospel (Rom. 6: 16-18»
June 18. ....	F. The Servants of Christ Are Obligated to No Other Master (Rom. 6: 19-23)
June 19. S.....	No Man Can Serve Two Masters (Matt. 6: 19-24†
June 20. S.....	The Father Will Honor the Servant of Christ (John 12: 20-26)

TIME.—Probably between A.D. 65 and 70.

Place.—The place of writing is unknown.

PERSONS.—Jude and Christians.

## Introduction

The Epistle of Jude is the last of the seven epistles of the New Testament which are usually referred to as the general or catholic letters. The term "catholic" is used in the sense of *general*, and should always be spelled with a small "c" except when for grammatical reasons a capital "C" is preferable. The reason for employing the term "general" or "catholic" is due to the fact that the epistles are not addressed to any particular congregation or individual, as may be seen by reading the opening words of each of them, with the exception of Second and Third John. First John is a general epistle, if indeed it may be called an epistle: it is more like a printed sermon or tract; and it appears that this apostle's second and third communications were simply grouped along with the first, and they all are made a part of the seven "general epistles."

The name "Jude" is a contraction of Judas. Judas of the New Testament and Judah of the Old Testament mean the same. In the New Testament the names of Judas, Judah, and Jude are all from the same original word. The name *Judas* was common among the Jews during the days of Christ and the early church. For example, Judas Iscariot (Matt. 10: 4); Judas the son of James (Luke 6: 16); Judas of Galilee (Acts 5: 37); Judas of Damascus (Acts 9: 11); Judas called Barsabbas (Acts 15: 22); and Judas the Lord's brother (Matt. 13: 55). We do not know how long it was after Judas Iscariot committed his infamous crime of betraying Christ, before people ceased to give the name Judas to their children; but we do know that no believer in Christ today would think of giving that name to his child. We sometimes wonder if

Jude used the abbreviation form of the name in order to dissociate himself from the traitor.

It has already been suggested that we do not have any direct information regarding the identity of the people for whom Jude intended his epistle; but when we compare it with James and 2 Peter, and especially the latter, we naturally infer that he probably wrote to Jewish Christians of the Dispersion. (Cf. 1 Pet. 1: 1.) We gather from 2 Pet. 3: 1 that both of the epistles of Peter were written to the same people. Many Bible students are of the opinion that either Jude or Peter had the other's letter before him when he wrote (cf. Jude 3-18; 2 Pet. 1: 5; 2: 1-8); but they are not sure as to which one wrote first. It is, of course, possible that they are correct in their thinking that one did have access to the other's epistle when he wrote; but that is by no means a necessary conclusion, since they both wrote under divine supervision.

In speaking of the general purpose of the Epistle of Jude, The *Wycliffe Bible Commentary* thinks that it was a general letter to Christians to warn them against the incipient heresy of Gnosticism, a philosophy which distinguished sharply between matter, as being inherently evil, and spirit, as being good. This is precisely the system which Paul condemned in his letter to the Colossians, later known as the *Colossian Heresy*, a system of thought which had serious consequences on both Christian life and teaching. It challenged the Biblical doctrine of creation, and gave rise to the idea that the body of Christ was not real, but only apparent; for had it been real, it would have been evil. This vicious teaching prompted two different results on Christian

ethics, namely, (1) antinomianism, that is, the belief that one is not under obligation to obey the moral law (cf. Phil. 3: 12-4: 1); and (2) a form of abuse of one's body in order to promote spirituality (cf. Col. 2: 20-23). The passages just cited, along with other scriptures, condemn both of the viewpoints. It may be inferred from Jude's epistle that many professed Christians of his day were guilty, in varying degrees, of rebellion against properly constituted authority, irreverence, presumptuous speech, and a libertine spirit. Jude's tone is polemic, for he rebukes false teachers who deceive unstable believers and seek to corrupt those who endeavor to worship the Lord.

It has already been pointed out that the time of Jude's writing is not definitely known, but there is an implication which does throw

some light on the question. It is generally thought by Bible students that John wrote his epistles about the year 90 A.D., and we have already seen that one of the chief subjects against which he wrote was that of Gnosticism. But it appears that when Jude wrote, he was primarily concerned, not with Gnosticism, but with the initial phase of that subtle philosophy which in later years came to be known as Gnosticism. It was with reference to the initial phase of the subject that Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians, probably in the spring of A.D. 62; and inasmuch as Jude wrote on the same general phase of the issue, his letter, in all probability, was not many years later. A. T. Robertson (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. VI, p. 185) says that "the date suggested, 65 to 67 A.D., is purely conjectural."

## The Golden Text

This part of the lesson is found in the main lesson text, and it will be treated in its regular place.

## The Text Explained

### General Salutation and Reasons for

#### Writing:

(Jude 1-4)

*Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: Mercy unto you and peace and love be multiplied.* Many conservative Bible students are of the opinion that Jude was a half brother of Jesus Christ, as may be seen by reading Matt. 13: 54, 55. The fact that Jude does not make any reference to his relationship with Jesus may be explained on the basis that natural relationship was, in his mind, subordinate to the spiritual. (Cf. Luke 11: 27, 28.) Furthermore, Jude would shrink, as did his brother James (James 1: 1), from emphasizing a distinctive relationship which not even the apostles themselves could claim, and especially in view of his former attitude toward Jesus. (Cf. John 7: 5.) The mention of his natural relationship to James was probably made because the latter was well known, and that fact would be helpful to Jude in getting his message before the people; or, to express the same thing in

another way, it would give him greater prestige. (Cf. Acts 15: 13-21; Gal. 2: 9, 11, 12; Acts 21: 17, 18.) James became one of the most influential men in the Jerusalem church of his day.

Three things are affirmed of the people to whom Jude wrote, namely, (1) they were called, (2) they were beloved in God the Father, and (3) they were kept for Jesus Christ. They were the "called" in the sense of having been invited to partake of the Lord's blessings (cf. Rom. 1: 6; 2 Thess. 2: 13, 14). It is true that the original words for "called" in these passages are not the same; but there does not seem to be any basic difference in their practical application. The "called" is the same as the *church*, that is, the called out ones. The word "beloved" expresses God's feeling for those who responded to the call of the gospel (cf. John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 6-8); while "kept" indicates that which is done to keep them safe (cf. John 17: 11, 12; Rom. 8: 31-39). If we do our part, God will surely do his. (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 3-11.)

Some one has observed that the richness of the language of Jude's

salutation has never been surpassed. The idea which it expresses is like a copious harvest, perpetually increasing; for from God proceeds, not only the communication of his blessings, but the ever increasing growth and augmentation of those blessings. *Mercy* is God's compassion in the forgiveness of our sins; *peace* is the tranquil state which is ours as a result of his mercy in the pardon of our transgressions; while *love* is the expression of God's feeling toward us which makes it possible for us to become his children. (Cf. 1 John 3: 1-3.)

*Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old written of beforehand unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*

From the statement just quoted, we learn that Jude had been diligently preparing to write a somewhat formal treatise on a subject which was of common interest to all of them, namely, the salvation which had been provided through Christ. But before Jude had an opportunity to finish that worthy undertaking, a situation arose which made it necessary for him to issue a severe warning and urge the brethren to defend their faith against certain insidious assaults which were being made upon it. It sometimes happens that even the best of people make plans of noble intentions, only to learn that they will have to be changed. (Cf. Acts 16: 6-10.) We do not know whether or not Jude was ever permitted to finish his treatise on our common salvation, but we do know that he wrote the letter which we are now considering. "I was constrained" literally means "I found it necessary" or "I was put to the necessity." The passage is rendered in *The New English Bible* in these words: "My friends, I was fully engaged in writing to you about our salvation—which is yours no less than ours—when it became urgently necessary to write at once and appeal to you to join the struggle in defence of the

faith, the faith which God entrusted to his people once and for all. It is in danger from certain persons who have wormed their way in,..."

This same situation has continued to present itself, even since the days of inspiration; for opponents of the truth continue to "worm" themselves into the midst of God's people, and those who are loyal to him must fight to preserve the faith, that is, the truth of the gospel. (Cf. Acts 6: 7; Gal. 3: 23; 2: 3-5.) The original word for "contend earnestly" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and it literally means to fight for. (Cf. Phil. 1: 27.) The faith of the gospel must be preserved; for no other revelation will be given. This is a strong motive for resisting all enemies of the Lord's purpose and plan for his people. We are not specifically told who the "certain men" were to whom Jude referred, but it is reasonable to suppose that they were the same as those who were described by Peter in 2 Pet. 2: 1-3: "But there arose false prophets among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose sentence now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not." (Cf. Acts 20: 28-30; Gal. 2: 4, 5.)

This is enough to show the urgency of the situation, and why Jude altered his plan. The obnoxious people to whom reference is made had sneaked in, or slipped in stealthily, instead of letting their real purpose be known; they had, as it were, come in by the side door. This is usually the way that false teaching gets its start among unsuspecting people; but the eternal punishment of such characters will not be turned aside. The fact that this matter had been foretold shows something of the character of God as the punisher of sin. The fact that they have been written of beforehand shows that they have already been doomed to destruction. They are therefore to be sternly opposed by the faithful,

rather than to be feared. They may seem dangerous, but they cannot succeed against God. The reference to "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness" was probably to the vicious teaching of antinomianism, which held that since the gospel had released them from the law, they were at liberty to give free reins to their fleshly desires. (Cf. 1 Cor. 6: 12-20.)

### A Call to Remember and a Final Charge to the Faithful

(Jude 17-23)

*But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; that they said to you, In the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts. These are they who make separations, sensual, having not the Spirit. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have mercy, who are in doubt; and some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.*

While the evidence here is not conclusive, it does, however, give sufficient ground for thinking that Jude was not an apostle. There is no direct evidence here or elsewhere which shows that he was an apostle; but there are strong reasons for thinking that he was not. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 1, 2.) Peter's language was that of an apostle, and the manner in which Jude speaks of the same situation strongly indicates that he was not an apostle. His brother James, however, is specifically declared to have been an apostle (cf. Gal. 1: 19); but he was not one of the twelve. Both Jude and Peter call attention to the fact that the people to whom they wrote heard the apostles deliver their warnings in person.

Peter makes direct reference to these things in his second letter, as we have already observed. (Cf. 2 Pet. 2: 1-3.) In writing of the false teachers and skeptics, Peter further says, "Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own

lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." (2 Pet. 3: 3, 4; of. 2 Tim. 3: 1-13.) The particular thing which Jude wanted the brethren to remember was that mockers would be present at the last day. Peter, as we have just seen, said that they would come with "mockery," and goes on to give one form of their mockery, namely, that of denying the second coming of Christ. Peter goes into greater detail regarding the matter, than Jude does, and answers their mockery in these words: "For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." (2 Pet. 3: 5-7.)

When ungodly men turn the grace of God into lasciviousness (verse 4), it is natural for them to mock at the narrowness and want of enlightenment, in their estimation, on the part of those who accept the word of God literally and are serious about their obedience to it. Furthermore, if the false teachers make light of authority and treat spiritual things with irreverence, if they foam out their own shame and utter proud and impious words, and if they deny both the Father and the Son, it will be natural for them to ridicule the idea of a judgment to come. This course is but the inevitable outcome of lustful living.

These and similar mockers can easily be identified by their fruits; that is a criterion which never fails. (Cf. Matt. 7: 20.) Those who make "separations" are those who divide the church into factions, or, as Vincent has it, those who draw a line through the church and set off one part from another. Paul expresses the same idea in Gal. 5: 20. (Cf. James 3: 14-16.) To be "sensual" is to be natural and unrenewed, that is, unregenerated, or, which is the same thing, to be governed by gross passions and appetites. People who live after this manner are in the

flesh, and are without the Holy Spirit; and such people, of course, cannot be pleasing to God. (Head Rom. 8: 5-17; 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20.)

The exhortations which are given to the faithful are in marked contrast with that which is found in the preceding paragraph of Jude's letter. The foundation on which Christians must build is "on your most holy faith." (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 5-11.) The work of building is our responsibility. To pray in the Holy Spirit is to pray as the Spirit directs and in accordance with his teaching. (See Rom. 8: 26, 27; Eph. 6: 17, 18.) Something of the results to follow may be learned from such passages as Eph. 3: 14-19. The Lord's people must not be content with the truth that God loves them; they must keep themselves in the love of God. This can be done only by living as God directs. (Cf. John 15: 10; 1 John 5: 3.) In the expression, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life," the term "mercy" appears to be a summation of all that which makes our final salvation possible. (Cf. Tit. 2: 11-14.) The ultimate goal of every faithful child of God is a life of eternal duration with him in the world to come.

"And on *some have mercy, who are in doubt*" If we expect the Lord to have mercy on us, then we must be merciful. (Cf. Matt. 5: 7; 18: 21-35; James 2: 13.) The "some" on whom we are to have mercy are described as being in doubt, that is, those who are wavering or hesitating—those who are not sure of themselves. This could refer to those who are in danger of falling away, or to some among the ungodly who might be won to the truth. (Cf. Gal. 6: 1, 2.) "And *some save, snatching them out of the fire.*" There are some people who are so steeped in error and sin, as to make their salvation comparable to snatching them out of the fire. This should be a lesson to those who are inclined to think that there is no need to try to save some. (Cf. Amos 4: 11.) "And *on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh*" This seems to refer to extreme cases, that

is, even in instances where there is most to fear, let your compassion go out to the lost, while you abhor the pollution of his sin. (Cf. Zech. 3: 1-4; James 5: 19, 20.) The original word for "spotted" occurs only twice in the New Testament—here and in James 3: 6. Its meaning is to stain or defile.

### Ascription and Benediction

(Jude 24, 25)

*Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore. Amen.*

Jude's doxology includes three parts, with three distinct ideas, namely, (1) Preservation; (2) presentation; and (3) praise; and we shall deal with them in this order. "Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling" Throughout the epistle, Jude has been dealing with apostates and ungodly men, and now as he nears the close of his letter, he wants his brethren to know that they have a Father who can keep them from stumbling, to say nothing of apostasy, that is, if they will do their part. (Cf. 1 Cor. 10: 12, 13; 2 Pet. 1: 3-11.) "And to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy" The idea here seems to be that God, like some great artist, having finished a work of art, sets it in some conspicuous place where it can be seen by every one—in this case in heaven. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 6-8.) "To the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore. Amen." This divine anthem is made up of four well known words of praise, namely, glory, majesty, dominion and power; and they are all ascribed to God who saves us through Christ. These words of praise are God's (1) "before all time," (2) "and now," and (3) "and for evermore." So may it be.

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

What designation is usually given to the group of epistles of which Jude is the last?

Why are they called "general" or "catholic"?

Discuss the name "Jude" in the light of the facts of the New Testament.  
Who was the Jude who wrote this epistle?  
Give reasons for your answer.  
To whom did Jude write?  
What was the purpose of his epistle?  
At what probable time did he write?

#### General Salutation and Reasons for Writing

In what way did Jude identify himself?  
Why call himself the brother of James and not of Jesus?  
In what ways did Jude describe his readers?  
Discuss Jude's salutation.  
Under what circumstances was Jude moved to write this letter?  
Discuss the urgency of the situation which confronted him.  
What is the faith for which people should contend? Why should they contend for it?  
How did the false teachers get in among the faithful brethren?

#### A Call to Remember and a Final Charge to the Faithful

Give reasons for thinking, or not thinking, that Jude was an apostle.  
What specific things did Jude call to the attention of his readers?

What confirmation do he and Peter give to each other's writing regarding them?  
What happens when ungodly men turn the grace of God into lasciviousness?  
Of what did the ungodly make light?  
What were some of the things which they denied?  
What does it mean to make "separations"?  
Name some ways in which this is done today.  
Who are "sensual" people?  
Why didn't they have the Holy Spirit?  
What did Jude exhort Christians to do?  
How may one keep himself in the love of God?  
What does it mean to look for mercy unto eternal life?  
In what three ways did Jude exhort his readers to deal with others?

#### Ascription and Benediction

What three ideas are included in Jude's doxology?  
What encouragement did he first give his readers?  
What responsibility do Christians have in this respect?  
What is suggested by setting them before the presence of God's glory?  
What words of praise does Jude ascribe to God?  
What does he say regarding their duration?

### Lesson XIII—June 27, 1965

## WARNINGS TO THE UNGODLY

### Lesson Text

#### Jude 5-16

5 Now I desire to put you in remembrance, though ye know all things once for all, that the Lord, having saved a people out of the land of E-gypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

6 And angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

7 Even as Sod-om and Go-mor'-rah, and the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over to fornication and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire.

8 Yet in like manner these also in their dreamings defile the flesh, and set at nought dominion, and rail at dignities.

9 But Mi'-cha-el the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Mo'-ses, durst not bring against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

10 But these rail at whatsoever things they know not: and what they understand naturally, like the creatures without reason, in these things are they destroyed.

11 Woe unto them! for they went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Ba'-laam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Ko'-rah.

12 These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

13 Wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever.

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

15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which

they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

16 These are murmurers, com-

plainers, walking after their lusts (and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*), showing respect of persons for the sake of advantage.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—*"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment"* (2 Pet. 2: 9.)

**DEVOTIONAL HEADING.**—2 Pet. 3: 1-13.

## Daily Bible Readings

June 21. M..... Christ Died for the Ungodly (Rom. 5: 6-8)  
 June 22. T..... Christ Is Willing to Justify the Ungodly (Rom. 4: 1-5)  
 June 23. W..... Salvation Implies a Rejection of All Ungodliness (Tit. 2: 11-14)  
 June 24. T..... The Ungodly Were Destroyed by the Flood (2 Pet. 2: 4-10)  
 June 25. F..... Jesus Frequently Issued Warnings (Luke 12: 1-5)  
 June 26. S..... Paul Warned of Grievous Times to Come (2 Tim. 3: 1-13)  
 June 27. S..... The Ungodly Have No Promise of God's Protection (1 Pet. 4: 17-19)

**TIME.**—Probably between A.D. 65 and 70.

**PLACE.**—The place of writing is unknown.

**PERSONS.**—Jude and Christians.

## Introduction

When Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, he said, "But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof: from these also turn away." (2 Tim. 3: 1-5.) It was and is God's intention that Christianity should make people better, but that is possible only if those who accept the Lord's teaching allow the principles of the truth to motivate and govern their lives. But if they fail in this respect, the result will not only be disappointing; it will be calamitous. And if this happens to those who once knew the truth but fell away from it (cf. Heb. 6: 4-6; 2 Pet. 2: 20-22), what shall be the end of those who never give their lives to the Lord? (Cf. 1 Pet. 4: 17, 18; Rom. 1: 18-32.)

It was pointed out in last week's lesson that Jude was making a diligent effort to complete a treatise on the general subject of our common salvation, when it became apparent to him that a crisis had developed which required that he exhort the brethren "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all de-

livered unto the saints." This is another way of saying that Christianity itself was in grave danger, and that immediate action was necessary if the truth of the gospel was to remain with them. (Cf. Gal. 2: 5.) The picture which Jude paints shows something of the desperate efforts which Satan is making to win as many people from the Lord as he possibly can. Peter, who also deals with the same situation in his second letter, gave this exhortation in an earlier epistle: "Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom withstand stedfast in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world." (1 Pet. 5: 8, 9.)

Evil is in this world to the extent that it is utterly impossible for any one to live the Christian life without being sorely tried. Paul says, "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3: 12.) This means that the closer one lives to the Lord, the greater will be the care which he must exercise in his efforts to avoid the evil one. Wicked men, and even the devil himself, can be withstood; they are all vulnerable. "Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye



doubleminded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you." (James 4: 7-10.)

The devil, of course, knows that he cannot stand against the truth; but that alone will not defeat him, that is, that knowledge on his part is not sufficient for the victory. Any child of God can defeat Satan with the truth, but the devil is crafty enough to cause the Christian to change his method of attack, if he is not ex-

remely careful. It is easy for the evil one to suggest that the child of God fight back with the devil's weapons, and this is the very point which Jude stresses in the lesson text for today. If Satan can get the Lord's people to harbor ill-will, bring railing accusations against their adversaries, and seek revenge, he has largely won the battle; but, like Paul, we should not be ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2: 11). The Lord's method of overcoming evil is set forth in such passages as Horn. 12: 17-21; Eph. 6: 10-18.

## The Golden Text

*"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment"*

The force of this passage can best be realized by reading the full context. "But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose sentence now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not. For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, having made them an example unto those that should live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds): the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment Unto the day of judgment; . . ." (2 Pet. 2: 1-9.)

Peter, in the passage just quoted, draws a contrast between the righteous and the wicked: and he uses the examples which he sets forth to illustrate how the Lord understands how to deliver the godly of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment. Wicked angels, along with the ungodly of Noah's and Lot's days, were cast down to hell (*Tartarus*, margin), that part of Hades where wicked spirits are kept "under punishment unto the day of judgment." Another classic example of this is that of the rich man of Luke 16: "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom: and the rich man also died, and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things: but now here he is comforted, and thou art in anguish." (Luke 16: 22-25.)

While Tartarus is that part of Hades where the wicked are held until the judgment day, Paradise is the other part of Hades where the righteous go for the same period. (Cf. Luke 23: 43; Acts 2: 27.) And notwithstanding the exceeding wickedness which was around them, Peter plainly shows that God did deliver Noah and Lot, which demonstrates

that he knows how to take care of the righteous; and the New Testament plainly teaches that he most certainly does that very thing. In his final letter before going to be with Jesus, Paul cited his own experience as an example of the Lord's taking care of his people. (See 2 Tim. 4: 14-18; of. 1 Cor. 10: 13; James 1: 2-8.) The confidence which Paul had in the Lord is the confidence which all Christians should have. Evil men are in the world,

and they will be here until the end of time; but God is able to protect all those who put their trust in him. The Lord has not promised to protect his people from the abuse of evil men, but he has promised to see that the welfare of their souls is not adversely affected, if they will only do as he tells them to do. We must not have an indifferent or a compromising attitude toward evil; instead, we must deal with it in the fear of God and in the Spirit of Christ.

## The Text Explained

### History's Warnings to the Ungodly

(Jude 5-7)

*Now I desire to put you in remembrance, though ye know all things once for all, that the Lord, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over to fornication and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire.*

The three cases which are cited in this section of the lesson text are intended to illustrate the impending judgment which is hanging over ungodly men of this age of the world. (Cf. verse 4.) When Jude says that they knew "all things once for all," he had in mind the things which they had previously learned, about which there was no doubt. It was his purpose therefore to refresh their memory regarding these unmistakable examples. God showed his mercy in delivering the Israelites from Egyptian bondage; but that was no guarantee that they would remain in his favor. Any one who is familiar with the Old Testament history is aware of the fact that all the men, with two exceptions, were destroyed in the wilderness, because of their unfaithfulness. (Cf. Num. 14: 26-38; Heb. 3: 7-4: 2.)

In speaking of the destiny of wicked angels, Peter says, "For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of dark-

ness, to be reserved unto judgment." (2 Pet. 2: 4.) Even angels themselves, while pure and holy at first, cannot remain in God's favor without being faithful to him. Their own "principality" means their own domain or sphere of influence, while their proper "habitation" was their place of dwelling. These angels, while in God's favor at first and having received their regularly ordained assignments, were, upon their rebellion against God, cast into pits of darkness to await the judgment of the great day, because they failed to keep within their own sphere of influence and retain their own place of dwelling. This is even a more striking example of the possibility of apostasy, than those involving human beings.

The historical account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is found in Gen. 19, while two of the "cities about them," Admah and Zeboiim, are mentioned in Deut. 29: 23. (Cf. Hos. 11: 8.) The two sins charged against the people of these wicked cities are fornication and going after strange flesh, the latter being what is today known as "sodomy," that is, carnal copulation which is both unnatural and forbidden. (Cf. Lev. 18: 22, 23; Gen. 19: 1-5; Rom. 1: 26, 27.) Jude says that the punishment of these cities is laid out in plain view, and held up as a warning of the eternal destruction of the wicked in hell fire. It is remarkable how any thoughtful person can doubt the possibility of falling from God's favor, so as to be eternally lost, in the face of these and many more unmistakable examples and affirmations which are set forth in the New Testament. Certainly, no one but those who are

blinded by a theory can doubt that the Scriptures declare such a possibility. (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 5-11; 2: 20-22.)

### The Arrogance of the Wicked

(Jude 8-10)

*Yet in like manner these also in their dreamings defile the flesh, and set at nought dominion, and rail at dignities. But Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. But these rail at whatsoever things they know not: and what they understand naturally, like the creatures without reason, in these things are they destroyed.*

The expression "yet in like manner" implies a connection between this section of the lesson text, and the preceding one, especially verse 7.

In the three preceding verses, that is, verses 5-7, Jude shows how punishment follows a departure from the Lord's favor; but those examples did not have any restraining effect on the sinners of his day. He makes it plain that they persisted in their vile deeds, notwithstanding the clear-cut evidence that their sins would be punished. Verse 7 actually mentions the vicious sins which the people of the cities of the plain committed; but the terrible example of their punishment did not deter the libertines of Jude's day. (Cf. 1 Cor. 6: 12-20; Rev. 3: 14, 15, 20-24.)

The dreamy state of the people about whom Jude wrote led them into three deadly sins, namely, (1) the defiling of the flesh; (2) the setting at nought of dominion; and (3) the railing at dignities. The term "dreamings" implies that their own inflated imaginations caused them to mistake the real for the unreal, or vice versa. They were deluded and blinded, and did not hesitate to engage in the basest sins of the flesh, including the assumption of authority outside their own rightful sphere of influence and service. The word "dominion" probably refers to angelic dignities (cf. Eph. 1: 21; Col. 1: 16; 2 Pet. 2: 10). It is possible, of course, that the term could include high authority, both human and divine; but whatever may have been in the mind of Jude, the libertines about whom he wrote did not

hesitate to refuse to recognize them, or reject them: for that is the meaning of "set at nought." *Dignities* also refer to "glorious angelic beings," and the ungodly men of the text did not hesitate to blaspheme them.

Michael is set forth as an example of the kind of restraint which should always characterize the Lord's people. (Cf. Acts 1: 25.) He was one of the archangels (cf. Dan. 10: 13, 21; 12: 1; Rev. 12: 7), in God's favor, and doubtless knew the truth regarding both the devil and the body of Moses: but even at that he did not dare pronounce a railing judgment against the evil one, but left the matter in the hands of God. There is no record as to when or where this dispute took place (cf. Deut. 34: 6). Some students have assumed that Jude was referring to some apocryphal writing, but that is not a necessary conclusion at all, that is, if we are to regard Jude as an inspired writer. Paul, more than once, put into his writings statements of fact, concerning which we have no further information regarding their origin. (See Acts 20: 35; 2 Tim. 3:

8 [the names of Jannes and Jambres are not mentioned in the Exodus record, or anywhere else in the Bible, of. Ex. 7: 11, 22; of. Acts 7: 22].) There are many professed Christians today, who are not nearly as high in the councils of heaven as Michael is, who do not hesitate to bring railing judgments against their own brethren, who are much better than the devil. Such a practice does not meet with God's approval, and we should all benefit by the example of the archangel now under consideration. (Cf. James 4: 11, 12; 2 Pet. 2: 10-12.)

### Their Wickedness Illustrated and Their Final End

(Jude 11-16)

*Woe unto them! for They went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah. These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame: wandering stars, for*

*whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever.*

The word "woe," as used here, is found frequently in the Gospels and Revelation, but it occurs in the epistles only here and in 1 Cor. 9: 16; it is an interjection, denoting pain or displeasure. The sins which Jude denounces in this part of the lesson text are illustrated by Cain, Balaam, and Korah. The way of Cain was the substitution of his own will and way for that of God's. He was the father of religious rationalism. (Cf. Gen. 4: 1-8.) Balaam's sin was his effort to seduce Israel, through Balak, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication, for his own personal gain. (See Num. 22: 1-25: 18; Rev. 2: 14; 2 Pet. 2: 15.) The gain-saying of Korah was rebellion against divinely constituted authority. (See Num. 16: 1-50.)

In speaking of Jude's denunciation of the ungodly people, some one has said, "It is an impassioned invective, in which the writer heaps epithet on epithet, and image on image, and returns again and again to the licentious apostates against whom he warns the church, as though all language were insufficient to give an adequate idea of their profligacy, and of his own abhorrence of their perversion of the grace and doctrines of the gospel." It appears that these false teachers used whatever gifts they may have had for the purpose of self aggrandizement, and endeavored to make their services attractive by excluding from religion all that is strenuous and difficult, thereby opening the door to every kind of indulgence. These ungodly men were described as hidden rocks in their love-feasts, implying real danger of wrecking the faith of the innocent. The "love-feasts" were common meals which members of the early church ate, either before or after the worship, as a means of fellowship with others, especially the poorer brethren. It was the abuse of this practice which called forth Paul's rebuke in 1 Cor. 11: 17-34. The false teachers, who should have been feeding the flocks, were, without fear, that is, reverence, feeding themselves. (Cf. Ezek. 34: 2.) The various illustrations which Jude uses are intended to show that these false teachers were mere professors with-

out practice. (Cf. Prov. 25: 14.) Since "wild waves of the sea" and "wandering stars" of the heavens are not governed by law, they must eventually be destroyed; and so with false teachers—"for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever."

*And to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord came with ten thousand of his holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their lusts (and their mouth speaketh great swelling words), showing respect of persons for the sake of advantage.*

Many Bible students are of the opinion that Jude got his information regarding the prophecy of Enoch from an apocryphal source, called The Book of Enoch, but no one has brought forth the proof that the *Book of Enoch*, which is in existence, is as old as the *Epistle of Jude*! It is altogether possible therefore, and entirely probable, that the author of the Book of Enoch copied from Jude, rather than that Jude got his information from the Book of Enoch. If Jude was inspired, as is here assumed, then it is easy for us to understand how Jude got his information regarding the prophecy of Enoch.

It was upon the assumption of Jude's so-called reference to apocryphal writing (verses 9, 14, 15) that led to the questioning by some scholars of the authority of the Epistle of Jude; but this only shows what an unfounded assumption will lead to. Jude wrote by inspiration, and he was not dependent upon any uninspired source for any information contained in his letter. It is also interesting to observe the play which Jude makes upon the term "ungodly." The reference is to an impious or wicked person, and the works of ungodliness, as the deeds which naturally flow from such a life. It is not difficult therefore to understand how such people would be capable of speaking harsh and unpleasant words against the Lord. But the day of reckoning is coming;

and that fact was made known in the days of Enoch, the seventh from Adam. (See Gen. 5.) Ungodly peo-

ple are never governed by principle, and that accounts for the attitude and conduct set forth in verse 16.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

In what way did Paul confirm the terrible description given by Jude?

Why do people lead such ungodly lives?

Why did Jude write this letter?

Why must the Christian always fight against evil?

What assurance do we have that we can overcome?

What is the weapon of our warfare against evil?

### The Golden Text

What is the best way to realize the force of the passage which serves as the golden text?

How do we know that the Lord understands how to deal with the godly and the wicked?

Give some illustrations.

### History's Warning to the Ungodly

What is Jude's purpose in this section of the lesson text?

What did they know "once for all"?

Discuss each of the three cases which he cites.

How do you account for the fact that some people deny the possibility of apostasy?

### The Arrogance of the Wicked

In what way is this section of the lesson text related to the previous one?

Why do such Bible examples as Jude gave have such little influence on sinful people?

What three deadly sins characterized the people about whom Jude wrote?

What valuable lesson do we learn from Michael?

Where did Jude get his information regarding the incident he mentions regarding Michael and the devil?

Why don't many professed Christians profit by Michael's example?

### The Wickedness Illustrated and Their Final End

Give some facts regarding the word "woe" as found in the New Testament.

What is its meaning and use?

In what way does Jude illustrate the sins described in this section of the lesson text?

What were the sins of Cain, Balaam, and Korah?

What seems to have been the motives which actuated the false teachers of the text?

What is the meaning of hidden rocks in their love-feasts?

In what way did the false teachers show their inconsideration for God's people?

What does Jude mean for the various illustrations to show?

From where did Jude get his information contained in his letter?

Why was it easy for the ungodly to manifest their attitude and conduct?



## THIRD QUARTER

### SELECTIONS FROM THE POETICAL BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

*Aim.—To consider carefully, prayerfully and studiously the sublime poetry of the Old Testament, to imbibe its vast spiritual content, and to observe its unparalleled literary characteristics.*

#### Lesson I—July 4, 1965

### THE VALUE OF AFFLICTION

#### Lesson Text

#### Job 5: 17-27

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>17 Behold, happy is the man whom<br/>    God correcteth:<br/>    Therefore despise not thou the<br/>    chastening of the Almighty.</p> <p>18 For he maketh sore, and bindeth<br/>    up;<br/>    He woundeth, and his hands make<br/>    whole.</p> <p>19 He will deliver thee in six trou-<br/>    bles;<br/>    Yea, in seven there shall no evil<br/>    touch thee.</p> <p>20 In famine he will redeem thee<br/>    from death;<br/>    And in war from the power of the<br/>    sword.</p> <p>21 Thou shalt be hid from the scourge<br/>    of the tongue;<br/>    Neither shalt thou be afraid of de-<br/>    struction when it cometh.</p> <p>22 At destruction and dearth thou<br/>    shalt laugh;</p> | <p>Neither shalt thou be afraid of the<br/>    beasts of the earth.</p> <p>23 For thou shalt be in league with<br/>    the stones of the field;<br/>    And the beasts of the field shall<br/>    be at peace with thee.</p> <p>24 And thou shalt know that thy tent<br/>    is in peace;<br/>    And thou shalt visit thy fold, and<br/>    shalt miss nothing.</p> <p>25 Thou shalt know also that thy<br/>    seed shall be great,<br/>    And thine offspring as the grass of<br/>    the earth.</p> <p>26 Thou shalt come to thy grave in a<br/>    full age,<br/>    Like as a shock of grain cometh in<br/>    in its season.</p> <p>27 Lo this, we have searched it, so<br/>    it is;<br/>    Hear it, and know thou it for thy<br/>    good.</p> |
|---|--|

*Golden Text.—“God dealeth with you as with sons; for what soil is there  
whom his father chasteneth not?” (Heb. 12: 7.)*

*Devotional Reading.—Heb. 12: 1-13.*

#### Daily Bible Readings

- June 28. M..... Those Who Suffer for Righteousness' Sake Are Blessed (Matt. 5: 10-12)
- June 29. T..... God Always Cares for Those Who Suffer for Him (2 Cor. 12: 7-10)
- June 30. W..... Those Whose Lives Are Godly Shall Suffer Persecution (2 Tim. 3: 10-12)
- July 1. T..... Trials of the Godly Purifies Their Lives (Job 23: 10-17)
- July 2. F..... Our Light Affliction Can Mean Our Eternal Good (2 Cor. 4: 16-18)
- July 3. S..... Affliction Brought Jonah to Repentance (Jonah 2: 1-10)
- July 4. S..... The Lord Chastens Those He Loves (Heb. 12: 4-13)

*Time.—The time of writing is uncertain.*

*Place.—The land of Uz, probably in the Syrian Desert, east of Palestine.*

*Persons.—Eliphaz and Job.*

#### Introduction

The Book of Job is one of the most remarkable books in that great body of ancient literature, known as the Hebrew Scriptures. Although rich in varied forms of expression,

the literature of the Hebrews developed no great drama. Perhaps the newest approach to the drama, especially in the Old Testament literature, is the Book of Job; but even

then it is probably more accurate to speak of that part of the Bible as "a drama without action." The interest in the book, however, is not simply its literary grandeur; its interest is a living interest. This is true because it deals with one of the greatest of all problems—that of human suffering. It should be quickly added, however, that the book is concerned with an even greater problem than that of human suffering as such; it deals with the problem of injustice in human suffering. Job's complaint was not so much that he suffered, but that he suffered unjustly. He well knew that he had lived, and was living, a righteous life; but he felt that he was being treated by God as if he were unrighteous. His erstwhile friends, too, regarded him as a sinner, and insisted that he should confess his sins; but Job was not conscious of any sins which he should acknowledge.

But instead of giving the answer which one would expect to the question. Why do the righteous have to suffer? the book shows that God can and does care for those who put their trust in him: and it endeavors to correct the current notion that misfortune and disaster are evidence of God's disapproval of one's life, while prosperity and good fortune are signs of his approbation and favor. No one therefore can read the Book of Job without realizing that its chief character had felt the iron of suffering pass deeply into his own soul. He had been driven by the cold words of well-meaning, but mistaken and unsympathetic, friends into open revolt against the God of popular imagination. He had

fought his way through despair and doubt, if not to clear light on the subject of human suffering, yet to a more genuine and nobler faith in the living God. Job opened his heart and gave utterance to the feelings which passed through his soul in the agony of his grief, until he found rest in God.

As he continued to suffer under the burden of accumulated sorrows, he came to regard death as the only possible release from his trouble. But as he gazed into the misty depths of Sheol, the unspeakable horrors of death seized him. (Cf. Job 10: 20-22.) And so, in the words which Shakespeare put into the mouth of Hamlet. "But that the dread of something after death,

The undiscover'd country from whose  
bourn

No traveller returns, puzzles the will  
And makes us rather bear those ills  
we have

Than to fly to others that we know  
not of."

Sheol therefore held no hopes for Job's vindication; but in his despair he began to wonder if there is another life after this one. (Cf. Job 14: 7-14.) The sorely wounded sufferer endeavored to move his friends to pity by the spectacle of his accumulated woes; and to us it would be difficult to find a more pathetic plea than the one he made in Job 19: 1-22. But his friends remained cold and pitiless, and it appeared to Job that God did too. In his desperation he turned to posterity for his vindication (Job 19: 23, 24); but since the desire expressed there was impossible, he turned again to Jehovah as his only Vindicator (Job 19: 25-27).

## The Golden Text

*"God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not?"* This passage is a part of the devotional reading for today, and the entire thirteen verses should be carefully read; and if this is done, it will be seen that there is a close connection between chapters 11 and 12. The general idea which the writer is trying to get his readers to see is with reference to the kind of faith which makes victorious living possible. The entire eleventh

chapter of Hebrews is devoted to the nature and sustaining power of the faith which pleases God, supported by examples which are seen in the lives of heroes of old and ancient worthies. This is followed by the supreme example of faith on the part of Christ (Heb. 12: 1-3), and then with the exhortation to his readers not to be discouraged by the prospects of sufferings; for whatever they endure, it will not be as great as the sacrifice which Christ made for them:



"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood [as Christ did], striving against sin." (Heb. 12: 4.)

The writer of Hebrews also told his brethren that they had "forgotten the exhortation which reasoneth with you as with sons,

My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord,

Nor faint when thou art reproved of him;

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,

And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

This quotation is from Prov. 3: 11, 12, and was adapted by the writer of Hebrews for his purpose here. The apostle then continues:

"It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastening, whereof all have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them: but he for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness. Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the palsied knees; and make straight paths for

your feet, that that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed."

In commenting on this passage. William Barclay says: "Here the writer to the Hebrews sets out still another reason why men should cheerfully bear trouble and affliction when it comes to them. He has urged them to bear it because the great saints of the past have borne it. He has urged them to bear it because anything we have to bear is a little thing compared with that which Jesus Christ had to bear. Now, he says that we must bear hardship and affliction because they are sent to us as a discipline from God, and no life can have any value apart from discipline. A father always disciplines his child. It would not be a mark of a father's love to let a son do what he likes and have nothing but an easy way. If a father did that it would not show that he loved the son; it would show that he regarded the son as no better than an illegitimate child to whom he felt neither love nor responsibility. We submit to an earthly father's discipline; we have only to do so for a short time, until we reach years of maturity. At the best there is an element of arbitrariness in an earthly father's discipline; the earthly father is the father to whom we owe our bodily life. How much more should we submit to the discipline of God, to whom we owe our immortal spirits, who is altogether wise, and who, in his wisdom, seeks for nothing but our highest good which he alone can know." (The Letter to the Hebrews, p. 199fΔ

## The Text Explained

### The Benefits of Chastisement

(Job 5: 17-19)

*Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise thou not the chastening of the Almighty. For he maketh sore, and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole. He will deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.*

The book from which this and the next lesson are taken tells the story of how Job came to be afflicted, and of the visit of his three friends for the purpose of comforting him. However, when they arrived at the patriarch's place and saw his condition,

"they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great." (See Job 2: 11-13.) Following the seven days and nights of silence, Job opened his mouth and bewailed the day of his birth. (Read chapter 3.) No one knows for certain to which race or nationality Job belonged, or when he lived; and the best that any one can say with any degree of accuracy regarding the location of the "land of Uz" is that it was in the East. All of this, however, is to our advantage; for Job stands out, not as a man of any par-

ticular race or age or land, but as a man in the universal sense (cf. Melchizedek), facing life and grappling with suffering, destiny, and God. He was, however, an actual being, as may be learned from Ezek. 14: 14, 20; James 5: 11.

The first of the three friends of Job to speak was Eliphaz the Temanite, who apparently was a grandson of Esau (Gen. 36: 8-11), and this may shed a ray of light on the time of the events of the Book of Job. The grandsons of Esau were contemporary with the sons and grandsons of Jacob, and it is therefore quite probable that Eliphaz lived during the time of the bondage of Israel in Egypt. It is hardly probable that the events of the book took place after the Exodus and the giving of the law; for no reference is made to the law by any of the speakers. It should be kept in mind that the time of the events of the book and the time of writing are not necessarily the same. The speakers of the book were not inspired men, and there is no reason to think that they spoke poetically; the contents of the book which are poetical were put into that form by the writer: and since Job was endorsed by Ezekiel and James, there is every reason for considering the book as being canonical. Some Bible students are of the opinion that the writer was Moses. He was a poetic writer, as may be seen by reading Psalm 90.

The lesson text for today is the last part of Eliphaz's first speech. (See Job, chapters 4, 5.) If this speech is carefully read, it will be seen that Eliphaz virtually accuses Job of being responsible for his affliction. "Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast made firm the feeble knees. But now it is come unto thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled. Is not the fear of God thy confidence, and the integrity of thy ways thy hope? Remember, I pray thee, whoever perished, being innocent? or where were the upright cut off? According as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow trouble, reap the same. By the breath of God they perish, and by the blast of his anger are they consumed." (Job 4: 3-9.)

With this view of the situation, as Eliphaz conceived it to be, he said to Job, "But as for me, I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause," and then went on to show what great things God does for those who put their trust in him, as well as the frustrations which come to the wicked. (Read Job 5: 8-16.) And as he began the words of this section of the lesson text, it is easy to see that he evidently recognized the difference between affliction as chastisement and affliction as punishment. His viewpoint here is substantially the same as that voiced by Solomon and quoted by Paul. (Cf. James 1: 12.) In commenting on the numbers used in verse 19, A. R. Fausset says that the Hebrew idiom fixes on a certain number (here *six*), in order to call attention to a thing of importance: then increases the force by adding, with a *yea, nay even*, the next higher number, in this case *seven*, the number which is often used to indicate perfection. The idea behind the combination being that God will deliver his people from all kinds of troubles. (Cf. Psalm 34: 6, 17, 19.) For other examples of the use of the combination of numbers, see Prov. 6: 16; Amos 1: 3ff. The advice which Eliphaz gave Job was good and wholesome, but he was mistaken with reference to Job's standing in God's sight. (Read Job 1: 6-12; 2: 1-6; of. 32: 1-5; 42: 7-9.)

#### With Reference to the Common Occurrences of Life

(Job 5: 20-24)

*In famine he will redeem thee from death; and in war from the power of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue; neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh. At destruction and dearth thou shalt laugh; neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth. For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee. And thou shalt know that thy tent is in peace; and thou shalt visit thy fold, and shalt miss nothing.*

The troubles about which Eliphaz spoke in this section of the lesson text are specific examples which are found in the average life, and especially in the lives of the people then. If one will read the closing part of

the Book of Job (42: 10-17), he will see that that is what happened to Job. However, there is no evidence to justify the conclusion that renewed prosperity always follows repentance. Jehovah, as some one has observed, does not always cause people to suffer in this life in the exact proportion to their sin; and neither is prosperity granted in direct proportion to one's piety.

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary notes that Eliphaz spoke more truth than he realized, in predicting deliverance from the scourge of the tongue, as the reader, aware of Satan's slanders and the friends' misjudgments, well knows. This is clearly revealed in the closing part of the book. Adam Clarke, in commenting on this phase of the lesson text, observes that perhaps no evil is more dreadful than the scourge of the tongue: evil-speaking, detraction, backbiting, calumny, slander, tale-bearing, whispering, and scandalizing, are some of the terms which we use when endeavoring to express the baleful influence and effects of that member, which is a world of fire, kindled from the nethermost hell. The Scriptures abound with invectives and execrations against it. (Cf. Psalm 31: 20: 52: 2-4: Prov. 12: 18; 14: 3: James 3: 5-8.) Eliphaz, in the closing part of this section of the lesson text, may have been referring to the great losses which Job sustained when Satan set out to afflict him. (See Job 1: 13-19.) If so, he was laboring under the impression that all of that took place as a result of Job's supposed sins; and he was endeavoring to assure him that no such evils would befall him, if he would repent and remain faithful to God.

#### With Reference to His Offspring and Personal Life (Job 5: 25-27)

*Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of grain cometh in in its season. Lo this, we have searched for, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.*

Andrew W. Blackwood, Jr., in his book, *Devotional Introduction to Job*, Points out the fact that Eliphaz demonstrates that he is a man with a

keen intellect. He marshalled his arguments and presented them with logic and vigor. He believed in God, and urged Job to commit his cause to him. But there is, lurking within the logic, a touch of selfish commercialism. What Eliphaz was actually saying was something like this: Job, if you will commit your cause to God, he will restore that which you have lost, and you will once again prosper. Is this the reason why men should devote themselves to God? Do people worship God in order to have peace of mind, freedom from inhibitions, and success? This was Satan's argument, when he talked with Jehovah about Job; and Eliphaz unwittingly agreed with Satan.

The proposals which Eliphaz set before Job were, in the main, sound, and would be good for any one to accept and apply to his own life; but, as has already been pointed out, Eliphaz did not understand Job, nor his relationship to God. The writer of the Book of Job did not find any fault with the propositions, as such: but he did reject most vigorously the idea of treating faith as a set of disconnected pious answers to be applied thoughtlessly to human problems. The fact is, Job's would-be comforters were completely exasperating because of their smug assurance that they understood the whole truth, when as a matter of fact they knew only some of the various facets of the truth. Blackwood sums up their attitude in these words: "The blind men examining the elephant reported their findings correctly. Their error lay in denying that some one else might also be reporting correctly. So the comforters make many true statements about divine Providence. But they deny that the righteous suffer. We who see the Cross as the power of God unto salvation can never join them in this denial."

The culmination of life is beautifully expressed by Eliphaz in these words: "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of grain cometh in in its season." Men, through the years, have made use of these words as they endeavored to comfort those who were drawn into the shadow of death. It is very probable that Edward King had these words in mind when he wrote to a lady regarding the illness of her hus-

band. "The Lord of the Harvest is watching us, and he sees just when it is best for each one to be taken, and so he gathers us in. We may trust him. It is sad indeed for those who are left, but it makes it easier for us to follow when so many are gone before." And to another lady whose father was ill, Bishop King wrote: "I was afraid by your *look* that you were anxious. Well! there is only one real line of comfort, and that is in the knowledge that it is not our doing. It is all ordered from above, and, being so, is sure to be all well done. My dear mother gave me this text many years ago: 'Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.' (Job 5: 26.) Just in the best way, and place, and time. So our part is to trust, and, as you say, tr3' to make all as bright as we can."

Matthew Henry offers the following observations on this passage,

namely, It is a great mercy (1) to live to a full age, and not to have the number of our months cut off in the midst. If the providence of God does not give us long life, if his grace gives us to be satisfied with the time allotted us, it may be said of us that we have come to a full age. That man lives long enough who has done his work well, and is fit for another world. (2) To be willing to die, to come cheerful to the grave, and not to be forced thither, as he whose soul is required of him. (3) To die seasonably, as the coin is cut and housed when it is full ripe; not till then, but then not suffered to stand a day longer, lest it shed. Our times are in God's hand; it is well that they are so, for he will take care that those who are his die in the best time: however their death may seem to us untimely, it will not be found to be unseasonable.

## Questions for Discussion

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

What advice did he give the patriarch?  
What promise did he hold out to Job?

### Introduction

Tell something of the nature of the Book of Job.  
What is the central problem with which it deals?  
What was Job's attitude toward the question in hand?  
In what way does the book go about answering the question of the righteous who suffer?  
What were some of the great thoughts which came to Job as he meditated on his condition?

### The Golden Text

What is the background of the passage which serves as the golden text?  
How did the writer apply it to his readers?  
Why can affliction be so valuable as a means of discipline?  
Why is discipline so essential?

### The Benefits of Chastisement

Relate the facts in the Book of Job which lead up to this lesson.  
Who was Job and where did he live?  
What appears to be the purpose of the book?  
What possible light do the facts regarding Eliphaz throw on the time of the events?  
Why is it thought by some that Moses may have been the writer?  
What appears to have been Eliphaz's purpose in making his first speech to Job?

### With Reference to the Common Occurrences of Life

What did Eliphaz endeavor to show Job in this section of the lesson text?  
What can you say regarding the truthfulness, per se, of Eliphaz's remarks?  
Wherein did he miss the point?  
What great truth did he inadvertently utter?  
What is meant by the scourge of the tongue?  
Give some of the teaching of the Bible on this question.  
To what great losses did Job sustain?  
To what did Eliphaz apparently attribute them?  
How do we know that he misjudged Job?

### With Reference to His Offspring and Personal Life

What fact do the speeches of Eliphaz reveal concerning him?  
What was the trend of his argument to Job?  
What was wrong with his attitude toward the issue before them?  
What can you say regarding the proposals he made to Job?  
What principal truth did Eliphaz overlook?  
What great proof do we have that the righteous do suffer?  
What figure did Eliphaz use regarding the end of one's life?  
Why is it so appropriate?  
How should we feel toward the question?

## Lesson II—July 11, 1965

## JOB'S APPEAL TO JEHOVAH

## Lesson Text

## Job 23: 1-10

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1 Then Job answered and said,<br/>         2 Even to-day is my complaint rebellious:<br/>         My stroke is heavier than my groaning<br/>         3 Oh that I knew where I might find him!<br/>         That I might come even to his seat!<br/>         4 I would set my cause in order before him,<br/>         And fill my mouth with arguments.<br/>         5 I would know the words which he would answer me,<br/>         And understand what he would say unto me.<br/>         6 Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power?</p> | <p>Nay; but he would give heed unto me.<br/>         7 There the upright might reason with him;<br/>         So should I be delivered for ever from my judge.<br/>         8 Behold, I go forward, but he is not <i>there</i>;<br/>         And backward, but I cannot perceive him;<br/>         9 On the left hand, when he doth work, but I cannot behold him:<br/>         He hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.<br/>         10 But he knoweth the way that I take;<br/>         When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.</p> |
|---|--|

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"But as for me I know that my Redeemer liveth, and at last he will stand up upon the earth"* (Job 19: 25.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Job 19: 7-12.

## Daily Bible Readings

- July 5. M..... Those Who Put Their Trust in Jehovah Shall Be Safe (Prov. 29: 20-27)  
 July 6. T..... Job Faced the Future with Confidence (Job 19: 23-29)  
 July 7. W..... Stephen Put His Trust in the Lord (Acts 7: 54-60)  
 July 8. T..... God Has Promised to Avenge His Children (Rom. 12: 17-21)  
 July 9. F..... Glory Is the Destiny of Those Who Follow the Lord (Psalm 73: 21-28)  
 July 10. S..... Beliefs That Make Men Strong and Courageous (2 Tim. 4: 1-8)  
 July 11. S..... Courage to Live and Faith to Die (1 Cor. 15: 50-58)

TIME.—The time of writing is uncertain.

PLACE.—The land of Uz, probably in the Syrian Desert, east of Palestine.

PERSONS.—Eliphaz and Job.

## Introduction

In order to appreciate the significance of Job's appeal to Jehovah, we must be familiar with the patriarch's background. The information regarding this can best be had by considering the first two chapters of the book which bears his name. Job's family consisted of his wife, seven sons, and three daughters. He was a man of great wealth, as may be gathered from a look at the list of his property, namely, seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she-asses, and a very great household, that is, servants or slaves, all of which made him "the greatest of all the children of the east." It should also be observed that Job's

piety was in proportion to his prosperity, as is indicated by his practice with reference to his children, following the days of their feasting. (Cf.

3 John 2.) Not every one's religious prosperity is commensurate with his material or physical prosperity.

On one occasion when the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah. Satan also came; and after being asked about his whereabouts and receiving his answer, Jehovah said to him, "Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and turneth away from evil." Satan replied by saying, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou

not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will renounce thee to thy face." Whereupon Jehovah granted Satan power over all that which Job possessed; "only upon himself put not forth thy hand."

It was then that a series of calamities began to befall Job, the like of which is seldom, if ever, seen by men; and it appears that all these things happened to Job in a single day—a day during which his sons and daughters were eating and drinking in the home of their eldest brother. Here are the things which took place, namely: (1) the Sabeans seized his oxen and asses and slew the servants who were with them, except the one who came and told Job what had taken place; (2) fire from heaven burned up the flocks and the servants with them, except the one who came and told Job about it; (3) the Chaldeans formed three bands and took away his camels and killed the servants, with the exception of the one who came and told Job; (4) all of his children who were feasting in their eldest brother's home were killed when a strong wind struck the house and caused it to fall upon them. Only one servant was left to tell this sad story to Job. The reaction by the man of Uz to all these things is told in these words: "Then Job arose, and rent his robe, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped;

and he said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

But this was not all. On another day when the sons of God came to present themselves before him, Satan also came; and after being questioned concerning his whereabouts and receiving his answer, Jehovah said to him, "Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and turneth away from evil: and he still holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause." Satan then replied, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will renounce thee to thy face." Jehovah then granted power to Satan over the person of Job, specifying only that his life be spared. Death under these circumstances would have been a relief to the patriarch. The blows which Job received at this time were as follows: (1) he was smitten "with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown;" (2) his wife, probably through scorn, although possibly through pity, called upon him to renounce God and die; (3) he lost his reputation and good name among his friends. Few men have ever suffered as Job did, but "in all this did not Job sin with his lips."

### The Golden Text

*"But as for me I know that my Redeemer liveth, and at last he will stand up upon the earth"* The probable meaning which these words had for Job can best be seen by considering the full context. "Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! That with an iron pen and lead they were graven in the rock for ever! But as for me I know that my Redeemer liveth, and at last he will stand up upon the earth: and after my skin, even this body, is destroyed, then without my flesh shall I see God; whom I, even I, shall see, on my side, and mine eyes shall behold, and not

as a stranger. My heart is consumed within me. If ye say, How' we will persecute him! and that the root of the matter is found in me; be ye afraid of the sword: for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgment." (Job 19: 23-29.)

If we read the preceding paragraph, it will be seen that Job wanted his earthly friends and kinspeople to vindicate him, but he was unable to enlist their sympathy. In the closing words of that portion of the address, he said, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me. O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.

Why do ye persecute me *as* God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?" (Job 19: 21, 22.) But after he was unable to move his friends, he then apparently turned to posterity, in the hope that later generations would acclaim him a righteous man, that is, they would if they had access to his record. That, seemingly, was the reason why he wished that his words were written in a book, or graven in the rock. But Job's words have been preserved, and are today found in the Bible which is more enduring than any book which man can write, or any stone which is upon the earth. But after his words regarding posterity, he next turns to the Divine Redeemer.

The term "Redeemer," while evidently referring to the Lord, is the same word from which we have the Old Testament idea of the "goel," or the next of kin. It was the duty of this person to restore the fortune, liberty, and the name of his relative, when that became necessary, to re-

dress his wrongs, and to avenge innocent blood. While Job probably did not have a clear view of immortality, as we do today with the New Testament opened before us, it is probably true that he did refer to that great consummation. This, of course, could have been in the same sense that the prophets often spoke that which they did not fully comprehend. (Cf. 1 Pet. 1: 10-12.) In the words of The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, "Here are the beginnings of what progressive revelation would ultimately enunciate in the doctrines of the coming of Christ at the end times, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment. The fact that neither Job nor any other speaker subsequently refers to these exalted convictions is further indication that the author's purpose was not theodicy. This remarkable thrust of faith at the midpoint of the debate served to break the tension for Job, even though his spirit was unable to maintain this sublime level."

## The Text Explained

### Job Yearns for Access to God

(Job 23: 1-7)

*Then Job answered and said, even to-day is my complaint rebellious: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. Oh that I knew where I might find him! That I might come even to his seat! I would set my cause in order before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? Nay, but he would give heed unto me. There the upright might reason with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge.*

The words of the lesson text for today are taken from Job's third reply to Eliphaz, that is, his reply to the third speech which Eliphaz made against Job. If one reads the speech of Eliphaz (Job 22: 1-30), he will find many unfounded charges which he made against the man of Uz; and it is a noticeable fact that Job did not make a detailed reply to that which his erstwhile friend had said. The patriarch did admit that his complaint was bitter and rebellious, put that apparently was with reference to Eliphaz, rather than to Jeho-

vah. Eliphaz had endeavored to get Job to change his attitude, confess his sins, and seek for mercy; but Job continued to maintain that his suffering was not due to his wrongdoing.

After charging Job with various and sundry sins, Eliphaz warned Job not to continue to resist the Almighty. His words are: "Is not God in the height of heaven? And behold the height of the stars, how high they are! And thou sayest, What doth God know? Can he judge through the thick darkness? Thick clouds are a covering to him, so that he cannot see; and he walketh on the vault of heaven. Wilt thou keep the old way which wicked men have trodden? who were snatched away before their time, whose foundation was poured out at a stream, who said unto God, Depart from us; and, What can the Almighty do for us? Yet he filled their houses with good things; but the counsel of the wicked is far from me. The righteous see it, and are glad; and the innocent laugh them to scorn, saying, Surely they that did rise up against us are cut off, and the remnant of them the fire hath consumed." (Job 22: 12-20.)

One of the most discouraging situations which can come to a devoted

child of God is to have some one to state emphatically or imply that he is not faithful to the Lord. Job's suffering was almost more than he could bear, but he never failed to maintain his integrity. He was doing his best, while his friends considered him a sinner. And as Eliphaz continued his address to Job, he urged him, ••Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby shall good come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thy heart. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, if thou put away unrighteousness far from thy tents." All of this advice was good, in and of itself; but it was given by a man to another whom he did not understand. Later on Jehovah said to Eliphaz, "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath." (Job 42: 7.) It is always good to speak for the Lord, but people should make sure that they are right themselves, and that they know something of the spiritual conditions of those to whom they speak. There are many people who attempt to teach others the way of salvation, while they themselves are not right in the sight of God. (Cf. Matt. 7: 21-23.) There are relatively few people in the denominational world who look upon simple New Testament churches and, those who claim to be Christians only, as being the people with whom the Lord is pleased.

Job, in his great misery felt that he was forsaken by both God and man (Matt. 27: 46), but it is apparent from this section of the lesson text that he desperately wanted to find Jehovah. We have already seen in the golden text that he believed that his Redeemer, that is, the divine Avenger, lives, and his desire to appear before him is more ardent than before, and his confidence in his vindication was stronger that it had previously been. God is always ready to bless his people; and with him nearby, there is never a time when the burdens of life are too heavy for them to bear, "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.)

### His Temporary Inability to Find Him

(Job 23: 8, 9)

*Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand, when he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.*

Job, in effect, was saying that he had searched in all directions—east, west, north, and south—for Jehovah, but was totally unable to find him. One's first thought, as he considers this, is to sympathize with the patriarch; but as he thinks more deeply, he begins to marvel at the arrogance of a mortal man in intimating that the Great Jehovah is fleeing and hiding from his creature. The man of Uz implied that Jehovah knew that he was innocent, and it was for that reason that he would not let himself be found; but, like so many others, Job was seeking for God where God was not; and it was for that reason that he could not find him. Or, to state the same thing in another way, Job was trusting in his own righteousness, rather than in God's.

The great man of the East about whom we are studying today was thinking about himself, when he said that he could not find Jehovah; but when one's thoughts are on God, the picture is completely changed. In the words of David, the sweet singer of Israel, "O Jehovah, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Jehovah, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thy hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit: or whether shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand



shall hold me. If I say. Surely the darkness shall overwhelm me, and the light about me shall be night; even the darkness hideth not from thee, but night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." (Psalm 139: 1-12.)

Job, however, did find Jehovah, but in a way and place which were wholly unexpected, so far as he was concerned. (Read Job, chapters 38-41. His words were: I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be restrained. Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Here, I beseech thee, and I will speak; I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42: 1-6.) Job's question, "Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge? and his statement, "Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak; I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me," are apparently a paraphrase of the Lord's statement in Job 32: 2, 3. It is as if Job was saying, I am the guilty person: I have been saying things about that which I did not understand, and have been attributing to Jehovah an attitude which was totally incorrect. In short, Job had been trusting in his own integrity, rather than in the providence of God. These were the sins which he confessed; not those which his three friends charged him with. It is interesting to note that when a righteous man comes face to face with God, he is overwhelmed with fear; and his human arrogance becomes to him both hideous and revolting.

There is, of course, a time when people cannot find Jehovah. Isaiah, speaking by inspiration, said, "Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isa. 55: 6, 7.) It is always true, as the wise man declared, that "he that turneth away his ear from

hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." (Prov. 28: 9.) But when people genuinely seek the Lord, when they appeal to him for help according to his will, there is never any doubt about his being found of them, and of his giving to them abundantly for the satisfying of all their needs.

### The Trial and Its Outcome

(Job 23: 10)

*But he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*

This is one of the beautiful statements of the Bible, and it is true, so far as the righteous are concerned, from any standpoint. But if we are to understand its significance, as used here, we must consider it in the light of its context. It should be remembered that Job, in effect, was saying that he had searched everywhere and had been wholly unable to find his Avenger, that is, his Redeemer, who is Jehovah. It was as if he was saying that he was hiding from him, and would not allow Job to come into his presence. In other words, from Job's point of view, Jehovah refused to meet him face to face, so that he could "set my cause in order before him, and fill my mouth with arguments."

"But," continued Job, "he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." It is as if Job said, Although I cannot find him, he knows the kind of life that I have been living; and when this terrible trial is over, I shall emerge as pure as gold; for even in this great ordeal, I have held fast to mine integrity. In other words, no sin will be found in me when the trial is over. This, of course, was true from Job's point of view; for he did hold fast to his own righteousness when it seemed to him that God was not fulfilling his part of the contract; but, as pointed out in the previous section of the lesson text, Job had to learn that he was looking in the wrong direction, which is to say that he was placing the emphasis on the wrong thing. Jehovah said in the beginning that Job was a righteous man, and when the trial was over he still said the same thing; but the great lesson which Job had to learn was that man, regardless of his per-

sonal integrity, must put his trust in the providence of God. (Cf. 1 Cor. 10: 13; James 1: 2-8.)

*The Interpreter's Bible* calls this section of the lesson text the shield of integrity, a shield which can and does blunt many a weapon and which wards off many assaults. There are few descriptions of the righteous man which can match this one for sheer beauty; there are few which breathe a loftier confidence in the righteousness of God, in spite of the setting in which it is found. There is a gold which comes forth from the refiner's fire; there are feet which walk in the way which God appoints; and there are lives which endeavor to be faithful to him at all hazards. But to rely on any of these when all the accounts are in and the books are opened, is to place both God and life in debt to self. But the Christian has fallen heir to another and greater kind of boldness. (Head 1 John 4: 16-19.)

Jehovah's questions in chapters 38-41 humbled Job and brought him to repentance. He did not repent, let it be repeated, of the sins which his friends charged him with, for he was not guilty of them; but he did repent of his questioning the ways of God in his life. The answer which was given to Job regarding the question of human suffering and the seeming injustice of it, is the answer which we need today. Jehovah is to be trusted and obeyed, rather than argued with or about. (Job 13: 15; 2 Cor. 12: 7-10.) Any one who is acquainted with the Bible knows that the Lord teaches that life is a probation, a trial; but the purpose of the trial is always good. There is, after all, nothing extraordinary or unique about the sufferings of Job. People have always suffered since sin entered into the world, but the outcome of the suffering depends upon the character of the person who does the suffering. (Cf. James 5: 10, 11; Rom. 8: 28.)

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

How can we best appreciate the significance of Job's appeal to Jehovah?

Give Job's background.

Why was Job subjected to such great suffering?

What charge did Satan make against him?

What did Jehovah then do? and with what result?

What was Satan's second charge?

What then did Jehovah permit Satan to do?

What next happened to Job?

#### The Golden Text

What did Job probably mean by the words of the golden text? Discuss the context.

What did happen to the words of Job?

What did he apparently mean by the term "Redeemer"?

What is the value of the words of the golden text to us?

#### Job Yearns for Access to God

Under what circumstances did Job speak the words of the lesson text?

What were some of the things which Eliphaz said about the man of Uz?

What did he try to get him to do?

What effect did this attitude have on Job?

What important lesson should we learn from this?

What should would-be teachers always try to do?

What promise has God always made to his people?

#### His Temporary Inability to Find Him

Where did Job look for God and why couldn't he find him?

What effect does one's own attitude have on his search for Jehovah?

When and under what circumstances did Job find Jehovah?

What happened to Job when he did find the Lord?

What great lesson did he learn?

What sins did he repent of?

Under what circumstances can people always be sure of finding the Lord?

#### The Trial and Its Outcome

What general truth do the words of this section of the lesson text suggest?

What did Job apparently mean by the statement?

What great mistake had Job been making all along?

What lesson should we learn from his error?

Why shouldn't one rely on his own integrity?

What brought Job to repentance? Why do we need the same lesson today?

Lesson III—July 18, 1965

THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Lesson Text

Psalms 1: 1-6

- 1 Blessed is the man that walketh  
not in the counsel of the wicked,  
Nor standeth in the way of sin-  
ners,  
Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers:

2 But his delight is in the law of  
Je-ho'-vah;  
And on his law doth he meditate  
day and night.

3 And he shall be like a tree planted  
by the streams of water,  
That bringeth forth its fruit in its  
season,  
Whose leaf also doth not wither:
- And whatsoever he doeth shall  
prosper.

4 The wicked are not so,  
But are like the chaff which the  
wind driveth away.

5 Therefore the wicked shall not  
stand in the judgment,  
Nor sinners in the congregation of  
the righteous.

6 For Je-ho'-vah knoweth the way  
of the righteous;  
But the way of the wicked shall  
perish.

Golden Text.—*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God*"  
(Matt. 5: 8.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalms 145: 1-10.

Daily Bible Readings

- July 12. M. The Path of the Righteous Always Grows Brighter (Prov. 4: 10-19)
- July 13. T. The Path of the Righteous Is the Path of Obedience (1 John 3: 7-12)
- July 14. W. The Path of the Righteous Is the Path of Peace (Isa. 26: 1-4)
- July 15. T. The Path of the Righteous Is a Sure Way (Prov. 3: 1-6)
- July 16. F. The Path of the Righteous Is a Designated Way (John 14: 1-6)
- July 17. S. The Path of the Righteous Is a Safe Way (Isa. 30: 18-21)
- July 18. S. The Path of the Righteous Is a Homeward Way (Isa. 35: 8-10)

Time.—The time of writing is unknown.  
Place.—The place of writing is not known.  
Persons.—No one knows who wrote this psalm.

Introduction

That part of the Old Testament which is known as *The Psalms* contains one hundred fifty separate compositions or entries. The entire collection is comparable to our song books, or to a modern prayer and hymn book. (Cf. the ascription of Psalm 86.) The Psalms, generally speaking, were "Poems to be Sung," by the people of the ages of Moses, as suggested by the title in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament. The entire collection is frequently referred to by English speaking people as *The Psalter*. There are five sections of the Psalms, as indicated in the American Standard Version of the Bible, and each one ends with a doxology. It is thought that they were collected during five successive periods, and they were probably put together in one volume, in much the same manner in which a modern

compiler arranges a hymn book. The five different sections of the Psalms are (1) 1-41; (2) 42-72; (3) 73-89; (4) 90-106; and (5) 107-150. Of the one hundred fifty different compositions, one hundred one of the psalms are ascribed to specific authors, namely, (1) David, 74; (2) Asaph, 12; (3) the sons of Korah, 11; (4) Solomon, 2; (5) Moses, 1; and (6) Ethan, 1. The other forty-nine are anonymous. If we consider each of the five sections of the Psalms alone, we shall find the following facts: (1) David wrote thirty-seven of the forty-one compositions of the first section, while the other four were written anonymously. (2) David wrote nineteen of the thirty-one psalms of the second section; the sons of Korah, seven; Asaph, one; Solomon, one; and three were written anonymously. (3) David wrote only

one of the seventeen entries of the third section; Asaph, 11; the sons of Korah, four; and Ethan, one. This is the only section in the entire Book of the Psalms which ascribes every composition to a definite writer. (4) David wrote two of the seventeen psalms of the fourth section; Moses, one; while fourteen were composed by an anonymous writer or writers.

(5) David wrote fifteen of the forty-four entries in the fifth section; Solomon, one; while the other twenty-eight were written anonymously. David is the only writer whose writings are found in all five sections of the Psalms, not excluding those who wrote anonymously; and it is probably for this reason that the entire collection is often referred to as *The Psalms of David*.

It is very probable that many of the psalms in the collection which we are now considering were also used by the early Christians, both in their private and public periods of devotion and worship (cf. Eph. 5: 19; Col. 3: 16), especially before Christian hymns were written. We still use some of them, as may be seen by looking at No. 143 in *Christian Hymns Number Two*. (Gospel Advocate Company, Publishers.) McGarvey says that the psalms in the collection we are now considering show the best effects of the Jewish law and history on the hearts of good men. Their study promotes devotion; and by their variety of occasion and sentiment, they are adapted to instruction and edification in all conditions of life. There is, however, a

sentiment in some of them which the Lord's people today are not permitted to entertain, namely, that with reference to their enemies. (Cf. Matt. 5: 43-48.) The people who wrote and sang the psalms of the Old Testament which denounce their enemies, probably were influenced by the manner in which they were taught to deal with their foes. (Cf. Ex. 34: 11-16; Deut. 7: 1-5; 23: 3-6; Psalm 137: 1-9; 139: 19-22.)

The inspiration of the Book of Psalms is an accepted fact by those who believe that the Bible is God's word to men. According to *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, *McClintock-Strong's Cyclopaedia*, *Josephus*, and others, the Old Testament Canon, which includes the Psalms, as established in the days of Ezra, more than four hundred years before the coming of Christ, is that which we have today. The Hebrew Old Testament, in its present form and substance, was translated into the Greek, known as the Septuagint Version, in the third century, B.C.; and was in general use during the time of Christ and the apostles. Christ and those who wrote the New Testament made use of the Hebrew Scriptures and the Greek Version of them during their ministry, and thereby gave their endorsement to both, as may be seen from quotation and other references in the New Testament. (Cf. Luke 24: 44; Acts 2: 25-35; 4: 25, 26; Rom. 3: 4-18.) Both Jesus and David himself asserted the latter's inspiration. (See Matt. 22: 43, 44; 2 Sam. 23: 2.)

### The Golden Text

*"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."* Whether intentional on the part of Jesus or not, there seems to be a close relationship between the psalm which we are to study today, and the Lord's sermon on the mount. It is as if he preached an expository sermon on the main outline of this ancient poem. In his sermon, Jesus pictured the ideal man of the kingdom, and developed four definite lines of thought, namely, his character, his influence, his conduct, and his destiny. To say the least of it, Jesus knew the message of this great psalm, and he boldly addressed the principles which it sets forth to the people who heard

him on that day. He fully realized that the man who ignores God, or shuts him out of his life, is on his way to eternal ruin. He taught that the life which counts must have some strong refusals, and some equally great acceptances.

The passage which serves as the golden text for today is a part of the introductory portion of the Lord's sermon on the mount, commonly referred to as the beatitudes. If we analyze this part of the Lord's sermon, we have (1) the beginning of faith, (Matt. 5: 3-5); (2) the progress of faith, (Matt. 5: 6); (3) the perfection of faith, (Matt. 5: 7-9); and (4) the trial of faith, (Matt. 5: 10-12).

The golden text therefore belongs to the perfection of faith. It tells something of the reward which comes to the faithful child of God. The pure in heart are those who are free from evil desires and purposes. This condition is possible only by the absolute enthronement of God in the affections. This beatitude has been called "The Beatific Vision." Such a vision

can come only to the pure in heart; for no other can see the King. (Cf. 1 John 3: 1-3.) Those whose hearts are pure see him by faith here; and they shall see him face to face in the world to come.

"Face to face shall I behold him,  
Far beyond the starry sky;  
Face to face in all his glory.  
1 shall see him by and by!"

## The Text Explained

### The Blessedness of the Righteous

(Psalm 1: 1-3)

*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, nor standeth in the ways of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: but his delight is in the law of Jehovah; and on his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also doth not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*

The psalm which is the basis for our study at this time has been called "the threshold psalm," for it forms an ideal portal to the whole collection of the psalms which is found in that section of the Old Testament. In fact, there are some Bible students who are of the opinion that the first psalm was the last one of the collection to be written. Apparently those who were responsible for bringing all the psalms together realized the fact that, while they expressed the truth on many subjects, there were two principal themes which dominated the whole series, namely, the blessedness of the righteous and the doom of the wicked; and with this in mind, the first psalm was composed as a kind of "preface" to the book.

The first psalm therefore is a perfect epitome of the whole collection; for its theme is the blessedness of the righteous and the utter destruction of the wicked. God alone can bless, and those who would enjoy his blessings must enter into and continue in fellowship with him. This, of course, implies that one's inner motives, desires, yearnings, and thoughts be acceptable to God. The psalm now under consideration therefore presents two portraits, one of which is the exact opposite of the other, involving choice, conduct, influence, and character. The author knew that there are three great perils which

threaten human beings and he, accordingly, urged that care be taken in guarding (1) the direction of one's journey, (2) his leisure, and (3) his company. What a difference it would make in our lives, if every one of us would give heed to this admonition!

The psalmist, at the very beginning of his poem, sets forth some things which the righteous must not do. The great aim in every life should be that of character-building, that is, the kind of character which will be pleasing to God; and this requires that some things must not be allowed to go into it. The principle which should govern the Lord's people at all times is expressed by Paul in these words: "Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him. For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. 5: 9, 10.) Thus, when our lives are governed by principle, rather than by policy or selfish desire, and are properly motivated, the result is almost certain to be acceptable to the Lord.

Some of the things which must not be done, if we are to please God, are (1) *we must not walk in the counsel of the wicked*. The wicked are those who have no place in their thoughts and lives for God (Rom. 1: 18-28); and the righteous therefore must avoid getting counsel from or following after the advice or example of such men. (2) *We must not stand in the way of sinners*. Sinners are those who miss the mark, pass over the prohibited limits, transgress the law, or, in general, endeavor to block the progress of God's kingdom. The man who tries to please God will neither commit himself to the course of sinners, nor spend his leisure hours

with them. Such action would result in blunting one's moral sense and rendering his conscience flabby, weak, and ineffective. It is tragic to find a person who has allowed sin to rob him of his power of discernment. (Cf. Heb. 5: 14.) (3) *We must not sit in the seat of scoffers.* Scoffers are those who scorn, mock, and deride truth and sacred things. Such people are coldly contemptuous of many things which others admire or believe in, especially things of moral or religious worth. Deliberate association with people of this sort must be carefully avoided by those who would please God.

The first verse of the psalm we are now considering sets forth three successive steps in an evil career, namely, (1) The thoughtless might *walk* by a questionable place, without any intention of going into sin; he merely wants to see what it is like.

(2) The next step is to *stand*, or loiter around long enough to allow evil to get its grip upon him. It is possible that he does not realize it, but he is warming himself by the devil's fireside; or, which is the same thing, he is learning to like the things which he hears, sees, and experiences. In the words of Alexander Pope.

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien.

As, to be hated, needs only to be seen;

Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,

We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

(3) The next step is to *sit*, that is, become confirmed, in the society of scoffers. When one begins a life of sin, it is easy for him to go from bad to worse; for the road is down hill all the way. The course of life which the psalmist has just outlined must be avoided by those who would have the Lord's blessings.

"Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin;

Each vict'ry will help you some other to win;

Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue,

Look ever to Jesus: he'll carry you through."

But the way of the righteous does not consist merely in negatives; there is a positive course which he must

follow. Or, to state the same thing in another way, the man who endeavors to please the Lord is not ruled solely by prohibitions or who reacts to a succession of "don'ts." His heart and interests are somewhere else. He is in love with One who exerts a stronger influence over him: *his delight is in the law of Jehovah.* He delights to read and study the word of the Lord, and he is happy to do that which it bids him do. (Cf. 1 John 5: 3; 2 Thess. 2: 10.) Not only does he read the law of Jehovah, he meditates on it day and night. To meditate on the law is to make a careful effort to learn its meaning, weighing it from all angles, so that he may follow its teaching. (Cf. 1 Tim. 4: 15.)

The psalmist next lists four results which follow the way of the righteous, namely, (1) *He shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water.* That is, he shall be rooted, anchored, and steadfast; and fed and nourished from an unending fountain of rich treasures, so that he will be able to meet any situation and brave any storm. (2) *That bringeth forth its fruit in its season.* The righteous man will continue to be a vigorous, productive, fruit-bearing servant of the Lord all the days of his life. (Cf. John 15: 8.) (3) *Whose leaf also doth not wither.* This indicates the perpetuity of this blessedness—an evergreen life. (Cf. Psalm 23: 6.) (4) *And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.* (Cf. Joseph in Potiphar's house or in prison, Gen. 39: 1-23; Rom. 8: 28.)

### The Fate of the Wicked

(Psalm 1: 4, 5)

*The wicked are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.*

Having given a full-size portrait of the righteous and the blessings which follow him, the writer of the first psalm next turns to the lot of the wicked. The wicked are those who choose to live according to their own wills and desires, rather than by God's will. One does not necessarily have to be a gross sinner, as that expression is generally understood, in order to be a wicked person. It

has already been pointed out that the wicked (*ungodly* in the King James Version) are those who live apart from God, that is, without regard to his will. Jesus gave two impressive examples of this, namely. Matt. 7: 21-23, and the one-talent man. Matt. 25: 24-30.

In the first example, Jesus was speaking to active religious workers, who thought that they were serving him. Here is what the Lord said would take place at the last day, that is, the judgment day. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." These people had been very active, very devoted religious workers, but they had failed to allow the will of the Lord to direct their activities. They must therefore suffer the fate of all who have tried to live apart from God.

In the case of the second citation, the lord had given his goods (talents) to his servants, to each according to his ability. Those who received the five and two talents, respectively, put them to a good use, with the result that when their lord required them to give an account to him, they were able to win his complete approval. They had simply done the best that they could do; they had worked in harmony with their lord's will. But the man with one talent was indolent and was unwilling to exert himself in the type of service which would be pleasing to his lord. After making his report, the master said to him, "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I did not scatter; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest. Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath the ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away. And cast ye out the unprofitable

servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth."

The wicked, as pictured in the psalm now before us, are the exact opposite of the righteous. Instead of being rooted and steadfast, continually nourished and fruitful, the wicked are like the dry, dead, and worthless chaff which the wind drives away. The real character of the wicked is revealed in the hour of judgment—the testing time. The dry chaff has no root; it is therefore helpless before the storm. "Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous." (Cf. Matt. 7: 24-27.)

### Jehovah's Approval Is That Which Counts

(Psalm 1: 6)

*For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked shall perish.*

When the psalmist said that Jehovah *knoweth* the way of the righteous, he meant that he takes notice of and approves it; Jehovah carefully watches over and encourages every person who lives in accordance with his will. The writer of Hebrews says that "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto his saints, and still do minister." (Heb. 6: 10; cf. Matt. 25: 31-40.) The righteous may sometimes think themselves forgotten, as Joseph probably did during his days of affliction in Egypt, or Job during the days of his suffering; but God's promise to his people will never be broken. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28; Matt. 28: 20.) It will be a source of encouragement to any Christian to go through the Bible and read the record of God's dealings with his people. He is infinite in greatness and power, but he always listens to the faintest cry of those who put their trust in him. Yes, Jehovah knows, that is, takes notice of and approves, the way of the righteous. (Cf. Prov. 4: 18.)

*"But the way of the wicked shall perish"* The particle "but" denotes a contrast, that is, a contrast between the ways of the righteous and the wicked. Instead of approving the way of the wicked, it shall perish, that is, be destroyed. If we keep in

mind the fact that the wicked are those who endeavor to live without God, regardless of the moral quality of their character, it will be easy to see what their way will lead to. "And to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his

power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that *know not God*, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, *even eternal destruction* from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might." (2 Thess. 1: 7-9; of. Prov. 4: 19; Rev. 20: 11-15.)

### Questions for Discussion

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

#### Introduction

How many psalms are in the Old Testament collection?  
What was the apparent purpose in bringing them together?  
Into how many sections are they divided?  
What information do we have regarding the authors of the psalms?  
Why are they often referred to as the Psalms of David?  
What benefit comes to us from a study of them today?  
What "unchristian" defect is found in some of them?  
What use can we make of the psalms now?  
What is said regarding the inspiration of the psalms?

#### The Golden Text

What seeming relationship is there between the psalms and the Lord's sermon on the mount?  
What four specific things did Jesus say regarding the ideal man of the kingdom?  
Give the setting of the passage which serves as the golden text.  
What does it mean for one to be pure in heart?  
What great blessing is promised him?

#### The Blessedness of the Righteous

What relation does the first psalm apparently sustain to the whole collection?  
When and why was it probably written?  
Show that the first psalm is a perfect epitome of the whole group.

What three great perils threaten the lives of many people?  
How does the psalmist go about contrasting the two opposite kinds of lives?  
Discuss the things which he says the righteous must not do.  
What are the three successive steps in wrongdoing?  
Show the effect which each one has on the total life.  
What is said regarding the positive side of the righteous life?  
What does it mean to meditate on the law of the Lord?  
What are the results of a righteous life?

#### The Fate of the Wicked

What is the meaning of a wicked life?  
Why would any one want to live apart from God?  
Show different ways in which people may become wicked before Jehovah.  
What impression should these facts have on people today?  
What kind of character are wicked people developing?  
Why can't they stand in the judgment, or in the congregation of the righteous?

#### Jehovah's Approval Is That Which Counts

What does it mean for Jehovah to know the way of the righteous?  
What great encouragement should this bring to all children of God?  
Toward what is the way of the righteous leading?  
What is the contrast between the ways of the righteous and the wicked?  
What does the psalmist mean by saying that the way of the wicked shall perish?  
Show, again, what it means to live without God?  
What does the Bible say will happen to those who do not know God?

## Lesson IV—July 25, 1965

# GOD IN THE UNIVERSE

### Lesson Text

#### Psalm 19: 1-14

- 1 The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament sheweth his handiwork.
- 2 Day unto day uttereth speech,  
And night unto night sheweth knowledge.
- 3 There is no speech nor language;  
Their voice is not heard.
- 4 Their line is gone out through all the earth,  
And their words to the end of the world.  
In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,
- 5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,



- And rejoiceth as a strong man to run his course.
- 6 His going forth is from the end of the heavens,  
And his circuit unto the ends of it;  
And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.
- 7 The law of Je-ho'-vah is perfect, restoring the soul:  
The testimony of Je-ho'-vah is sure, making wise the simple.
- 8 The precepts of Je-ho'-vah are right, rejoicing the heart:  
The commandment of Je-ho'-vah is pure, enlightening the eyes.
- 9 The fear of Je-ho'-vah is clean, enduring for ever:  
The ordinances of Je-ho'-vah are true, *and* righteous altogether.
- 10 More to be desired are they than

- gold, yea. than much fine gold;  
Sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb.
- 11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned:  
In keeping them there is great reward.
- 12 Who can discern *his* errors?  
Clear thou me from hidden *-faults*.
- 13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*;  
Let them not have dominion over me:  
Then shall I be upright,  
And I shall be clear from great transgression.
- 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
Be acceptable in thy sight,  
O Je-ho'-vah. my rock, and my redeemer.

Golden Text.—*"I will never forget thy precepts; for with them thou hast quickened me."* (Psalm 119: 93.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalm 119.

### Daily Bible Readings

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| July 19.        | M. The Origin of the Universe (Psalm 33: 1-9)                                 |
| July 20.        | T. The Truth Regarding the Universe Is a Matter of Faith (Heb. 11: 1-3)       |
| July 21. W..... | All Things Are Held Together by Christ (Col. 1: 9-17)                         |
| July 22.        | T. Man Knows So Little About the Universe (Job 38: 1-7)                       |
| July 23.        | F. The Material Declares God's Everlasting Power and Divinity (Rom. 1: 18-23) |
| July 24. S..... | The Present Material Universe Shall Be Destroyed (2 Pet. 3: 10-13)            |
| July 25. S..... | There Shall Be New Heavens and a New Earth (Rev. 21: 1-5)                     |

Time.—Unknown, except during the lifetime of David.

Place.—Probably somewhere in Palestine.

Persons.—David.

### Introduction

Although many centuries have passed since the psalms of the Old Testament were written and sung by God's people, the truths which they contain and express are not outdated. Any one who will stop and carefully and prayerfully consider these priceless treasures, will soon come to realize that he has access to something which should have a place in his life day by day. Anything which helps one to keep his mind on God should not be cast aside lightly. No one can read the collection of psalms which has been preserved in the Ancient Scriptures without having his mind fixed on the God who has made possible his salvation through the sacrifice of his Son on the cross. Consider Psalm 121 for example:

I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains:  
From whence shall my help come?  
My help cometh from Jehovah,

Who made heaven and earth.  
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:  
He that keepeth thee will not slumber.  
Behold, he that keepeth Israel  
Will neither slumber nor sleep.  
Jehovah is thy keeper:  
Jehovah is thy shade upon thy right hand.  
The sun shall not smite thee by day,  
Nor the moon by night.  
Jehovah will keep thee from all evil;  
He will keep thy soul.  
Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy coming in  
From this time forth and for evermore.

The world in which we now live is a world of tension, and it appears to be getting more so day by day. In the words of another, we are

nervous, taut, hard pressed, harried, and easily exhausted. We do not have, as another man said, the nervous equipment to keep pace with modern civilization. This situation not only leads people away from God; it has become a serious health hazard. A prominent physician, a few years ago, suggested that there are three things which we can and should do about this situation, namely, (1) look inside yourself, (2) look at your self,

and (3) look away from yourself. This is wholesome advice, and it would be well for all of us to give serious consideration to all three of the suggestions; but we are primarily concerned with the last one, especially in the sense of looking toward God. If this is done as we consider the psalm which we have before us today, we shall see the glory of God, as it is revealed in his two great books, namely, nature and revelation.

### The Golden Text

*"I will never forget thy precepts; for with them thou hast quickened me"* There are twenty-two divisions of the One Hundred Nineteenth Psalm, the one from which the passage which serves as the golden text is taken—one section for each of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The subject of the entire psalm is, *"Meditations and Prayers Relating to the Law of God,"* and the section from which the golden text is taken is the twelfth division, and the Hebrew letter which is used to designate it is *Lamedh*, equivalent to the English "L". The entire portion of the psalm reads as follows:

For ever, O Jehovah,  
Thy word is settled in heaven.  
Thy faithfulness is unto all generations:  
Thou hast established the earth,  
and it abideth.  
They abide this day according to  
thine ordinances;  
For all things are thy servants.  
Unless thy law had been my delight,  
I should then have perished in  
mine affliction.  
I will never forget thy precepts;  
For with them thou hast quickened  
me.  
I am thine, save me:  
For I have sought thy precepts.  
The wicked have waited for me. to  
destroy me;  
But I will consider thy testimonies.  
I have seen an end of all perfection;  
But thy commandment is exceeding  
broad.

When the child of God recognizes that God's word is eternal, and that his very life depends upon it; it will not be easy for him to forget it. There is no better commentary on this passage than the life and teaching of the apostle Paul. He realized what it meant to be saved from sin, and he made every effort he possibly could to remain saved, and to accomplish the work which the Lord ordained for him. As an illustration of this, consider his words to the Philippians, as he endeavored to refute the sinful teaching known as *antinomianism*. This vicious teaching held that one who accepted the gospel of Christ was not obligated to keep the moral law, since his salvation was due to faith alone. "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. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, this also shall God reveal unto you: only, whereunto we have attained, by the same rule let us walk." (Phil. 3: 12-16.) No one who has this conception of the matter can ever forget God's law; for he knows that he was made alive and is kept alive by it. (Cf. Eph. 2: 1ff; Heb. 4: 12, 13.)'

### The Text Explained

**The Material Universe Is Declaring:  
God's Glory**  
(Psalm 19: 1-6)  
*The heavens declare the glory of*

*God: and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor*

*language; their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he hath set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run his course. His going forth is from the end of the heavens, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.*

Since the psalms are poetic in their nature, the American Standard Version has arranged them in that fashion. It would require many pages to give the pertinent facts regarding Hebrew poetry; but one feature should be emphasized here, namely, that of "parallelism," which means that there is a balancing of thought against thought, phrase against phrase, etc. An expression is set forth in one manner, and then the thought is reiterated in similar language. If the psalm now before us is read with this idea in mind, it will be much easier to get the thought the writer had in mind.

There are three great fields of thought in this world, namely, philosophic, scientific, and that which pertains to faith; and the Christian proposes to recognize and use them all, each in its own sphere, in arriving at the truth regarding the existence of and the proper attitude toward the Supreme Being of the universe. *Philosophy* considers cause and effect, and depends upon reason in the search for the explanation of facts and existences; but it should be kept in mind that the functions of reason are limited. The necessary evidence must be at hand, before a correct decision can be rendered regarding the truth or falsity of any proposition. *Science* is classified knowledge, which has been gained and verified by exact observation and correct thinking. Both science and philosophy, as those terms are usually understood, belong to the realm of human endeavor. *Faith*, on the other hand, that is, religious faith, depends entirely on God's revelation for its existence. (Cf. Rom. 10: 17.) Man can *investigate* and *reason* with reference to the created universe; but he must *believe* that all things belonging to it came into being as a result

of the creative power of God. (Cf. Gen. 1: 1; Heb. 11: 3.)

The "heavens," in the passage now under consideration, refer to that which God created in the beginning; it is the same thing as the *firmament*, that is, the vault or arch of the sky: the place where the sun, moon, and stars are. It is said that the natural eye can normally see some six or seven thousand stars on a clear night, but with the aid of a high-powered telescope one can see millions. One of the closest fixed stars to the earth is Alpha, some twenty-five trillion miles, or five light years from the earth. (Light travels at the rate of 186,000 miles per second, and at that speed it would take light five years to travel from Alpha to the earth.) At the present method of calculation, astronomers are able to measure a distance of 15,000 light years, or 100 quadrillion miles out into space. And the precision and harmony with which the universe moves is so perfect that predictions of eclipses can be made to the second hundreds of years in advance.

The universe therefore is for ever declaring the glory of God, and gives unmistakable evidence of his creative ability. The created objects of the universe declare God's glory, but they cannot tell who he is; that knowledge must come from his revealed word. But some one may ask, How can the inanimate objects of creation glorify God? They glorify him in that they are a *credit* to him and cause men, as they gaze into the heavens, to exclaim, "How great is the Maker of all these things?" This is precisely the kind of thought that Paul had in mind when he said, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold [that is, the much-variegated or many-sided] wisdom of God." (Eph. 3: 10.) The place and purpose of the church in the economy of God proclaim the fact that God is a wise and benevolent heavenly Father, just as nature declares him to be a creator without a peer. (Cf. Rom. 1: 20.) Verses 2-6 of the psalm now under consideration portray the manner in which the *speechless heavens* bear witness to God's glory.

## The Perfection and Excellence of God's Law

(Psalm 19: 7-11)

*The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul: the testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring for ever: the ordinances of Jehovah are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: in keeping them there is great reward.*

Just as the natural world extols God's creative power, so his law acclaims his revelation. Because of the difference in subject matter and style, some Bible students are of the opinion that the Nineteenth Psalm is actually two psalms, as follows, (1) verses 1-6, and (2) verses 7-14. But, as the expositor in The Interpreter's Bible points out, it is natural for one who has been awed by the majesty of God's handiwork to turn to the sublimity of his revelation. It has already been pointed out that the psalm we are now considering was written according to the principle of parallelism; and with this idea in mind, it will be seen that the terms "law," "testimony," "precepts," "commandment," "fear," and "ordinances" are used as synonyms, and that each one of them meant to David that which the expression "holy scriptures" means to us. It is possible, of course, that David had in mind only the scriptures of his day, while we think, when considering the question, of the whole Bible. There is, to be sure, no violence done to the text when we endeavor to use David's language to cover all of God's message to the race; for it is true that any part of the divine revelation will accomplish the purpose for which it was given. (Cf. Isa. 10, 11; 2 Cor. 2: 14-17.)

The student of the Bible must, if he is to please God and accomplish the good intended, always handle aright the word of truth (cf. 2 Tim. 2: 15), which includes, of course, a distinction between the Old and New Testaments, as we have them today. The

revelation which God gave his people was progressive in its nature; but all of it is essential in order to understand his will. And so with this in mind, we, along with the psalmist, may say that the word of God is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true, for the purpose of restoring the soul, making wise the simple, rejoicing the heart, enlightening the eyes; that it endures for ever, and is righteous altogether. People who feel this way about the divine record can always know that they are being blest when they read and study any part of it. (Cf. Rom. 15: 4; 1 Cor. 10: 11; Heb. 11: 39, 40.) The specific things which people must do today in order to be saved are set forth in the law" of Christ, that is, in the New Testament. (Cf. Heb. 1: 1, 21; Matt. 17: 1-5.)

When the psalmist says that the words of the Lord are more to be desired "than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb," he was placing upon them the highest estimate possible. The truths which have been revealed, and especially that part which is applicable to those of any given age, should mean more to them than the greatest amount of the finest and most precious treasures, and the most exquisite and delicious foods. (Cf. John 4: 34.) David's words, "Moreover by them is thy servant warned: in keeping them there is great reward," sets forth the practical purpose for which the word of God has been given. God's requirements can have no greater end than man's best good and true happiness. Since the fall of Adam, man has always been subject to sin and its influences; and it is always necessary to warn him of the terrible consequences which he must suffer, if he continues in the evil way. But the man who delights to obey that which has been commanded him may always be sure that his reward will be great.

## A Fervent Prayer for Personal Application

(Psalm 19: 12-14)

*Who can discern his errors? clear thou me from hidden faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright,*

*and I shall be clear from great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Jehovah, my rock, and my redeemer.*

One of the great mysteries which is common to mankind is that of his own being. How little does any individual know of himself! There are regions within him which are unexplored; and his heart, in many ways, is undiscovered. Such must have been the feeling of the psalmist when he wrote the words of the section of the lesson text which we are now considering.

Paul has the answer to the question, "*Who can discern his errors?*" namely, "Howbeit, I had not known sin, except through the law." (Rom. 7: 7.) Only the word of the Lord can *enlighten the eyes*, so that sin can be recognized for what it is. (Cf. John 3: 19-21.) The "hidden faults" are not secret sins, as contrasted with open sins. The same original word for "hidden" is found in Deut. 29: 29, where it is rendered "secret:" and it is very evident that its meaning is something which had not been revealed, that is, something about which the sinner himself knows nothing. Moses' words in the passage just referred to are, "The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." (Cf. Jer. 17: 9, 10.) Moses does say something about *secret*, that is, concealed, sins, in the following passage: "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." (Psalm 90: 8.) The two Hebrew words for "hidden" or "secret" in the passages just quoted are (1) Psalm 19: 12; Deut. 29: 29, *sathar*, not revealed; and (2) Psalm 90: 8, *alam*, conceal.

There are evil influences in our hearts which are unknown to us before they crystallize into habit, or break forth into unmistakable wickedness. We cannot confess these offenses, or repent of them, because they are unknown to us. (See again Jer. 17: 9, 10.) But sin is sin, whether we are conscious of it or not; and the

principle of sin is the same, whether it be hand murder or heart murder. (Cf. 1 John 3: 15.) This is true because sin is not confined to the outward act; it has its basis in the thoughts and motives which lie behind the act, or the potential act. (Cf. Prov. 23: 7; 24: 9; Matt. 5: 27, 28.)

*Presumptuous sins*, on the other hand, are sins which are deliberately committed. The original word for "presumptuous" is *zed*, and the idea is that of one who arrogantly, insolently, or haughtily does that which is sinful in Jehovah's sight. The Lord's attitude toward such sins is clearly set forth in Heb. 10: 26-31. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall destroy the adversaries. A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Such sins as we are considering here are sometimes personified as tyrants who strive to enslave their victims; but no one needs to remain under the dominion of sin. (Cf. Rom. 6: 12-18.)

The psalmist closed his poem with a request for strength to overcome all types of sin, ranging all the way from hidden faults, of which he was not aware, to those deliberate sins which the arrogant do not hesitate to commit. This is the spirit in which all our prayers should be offered, if we would be free from that which is displeasing to Jehovah. This part of the psalm has been set to music, and is frequently sung in religious services today.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What is the value of the psalms of the Old Testament for our day?

What specific help do they afford us?  
In what ways can we help ourselves in this troubled world?  
Show how the psalm now before us can help in this respect.

### The Golden Text

Give some general facts regarding the psalm from which the golden text is taken.

What is the immediate setting of this text?

Why should people want to remember God's law?

Show how the life and teaching of Paul illustrates this truth.

Why should we always try to imitate the examples of men and women who are righteous?

### The Material Universe Is Declaring God's Glory

Why should people who read the psalms try to understand the principle of parallelism, as it is employed in Hebrew poetry?

What is the precise meaning of the principle of parallelism?

What are the three great fields of thought which dominate our thinking today?

Why is faith so essential?

What did the psalmist mean by the term "heavens"?

What are some of the wonders of the heavens which we can behold?

How do the heavens declare the glory of God?

In what way did Paul illustrate this truth with reference to the church?

### The Perfection and Excellence of God's Law

In what ways does God's law acclaim his revelation and what is the difference between law and revelation?

What reasons can you offer saying that this psalm is a literary unit?

Discuss the parallel statements which David used with reference to the word of God.

Show that the same principle is applicable to the entire Bible.

What is meant by handling aright the word of truth?

In what way did the psalmist express his great regard for God's law?

Why is it essential that people today be continuously warned by divine teaching?

What reward comes to the faithful Christian as a result of his keeping God's word?

### A Fervent Prayer for Personal Application

What great mystery is common to all men?

In what way does Paul answer the question, "Who can discern his errors?"

What did the psalmist mean by "hidden faults"?

What can we do about such sins?

What are "presumptuous sins"?

What does the Bible teach with reference to them?

What can any one do regarding sin in his own life?

How does the psalmist close his poem?

## Lesson V—August 1, 1965

# THE LORD OUR SHEPHERD

## Lesson Text

### Psalm 23: 1-6

- 1 Je-ho -vah is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leadeth me beside still waters.
- 3 He restoreth my soul:  
He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me:

Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

- 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;

Thou hast anointed my head with oil:

My cup runneth over.

- 6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life;

And I shall dwell in the house of Je-ho'-vah for ever.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Behold, he that keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep."* (Psalm 121: 4.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—John 10: 1-11.

## Daily Bible Readings

July 26. M.....	Jesus Is the Good Shepherd (John 10: 7-18)
July 27. ....	T. God's People Are the Sheep of His Pasture (Psalm 100: 1-5)
July 28. W.....	The Good Shepherd Seeks for the Lost (Luke 15: 3-7)
July 29. T.....	Elders Are Under-Shepherds (1 Pet. 5: 1-4)
July 30. ....	F. Unfaithful Shepherds Will Be Condemned (Ezek. 34: 1-10)
July 31. S.....	God Will Seek for His Sheep (Ezek. 34: 11-16)
Aug. 1. ....	S. Shepherds Will Be Required to Give Account for the Sheep (Heb. 13: 17-19)

TIME.—Unknown, except during the lifetime of David.

PLACE.—Probably somewhere in Palestine.

PERSONS.—David.

## Introduction

It is practically certain that there is no psalm in the entire Old Testament collection which is better known and which has a greater hold on more people, than the one which we are to study today. It has been compared to a nightingale which, as to size and plumage, is insignificant when compared to some other birds; yet it does that which many of the other birds can not or do not do, namely, it sings sweetly during many a mourner's night, and bids hope for the morning of joy. The psalm has also been compared to the lark which sings as it mounts, and mounts as it sings; and can still be heard after it passes from sight. Three thousand years have passed away since this little psalm was first sung, yet it is perhaps treasured in more hearts today than ever before. It has been and is the inspiration for many songs, poems, and orations.

One of the great blessings which the Old Testament brings to us is the rich storehouse of spiritual songs, which supply us with the most appropriate language in which to address the Most High. The Speaker's Bible points out the fact that we need higher and nobler speech for that purpose, than we ourselves are able to fashion. The editor of The Speaker's Bible continues: "Man, if he is to know the awed and reverent hour of worship, must have nobler words than his poor thought can make, expressions of higher emotion than his tame spirit can feel. There is wondrous power in song to consecrate and ennoble. Let me make the songs of a people, and I care not who

makes their laws," said Fletcher of Saltoun, and he said well. To make the songs is to shape those emotions, fancies, ideals, ends that are the highest because the most nobly embodied law enshrined in the heart. The man who can give to the spirit of a people its highest tone, its deepest conviction, its loftiest expression, will determine its truest purpose and noblest endeavors."

In his book, *Sermons, Chapel Talks, and Debates*, A. G. Freed has a lesson on the psalm now under consideration, in which he asks a question and makes the following observations. He asks, "Are you a lover of beautiful language?" and then goes on to say, "For lofty sentiment, sublime thought, and striking imagery this psalm is unsurpassed. The Authorized Version of this song, given to us in the Golden Age of English Literature, will live as long as the English tongue is spoken. Legend tells us that the Sweet Singer wrote this immortal hymn amid the scenic hills and vales of Palestine, a few miles from the city of the Great King, in the heart of a valley, by the Pool of David. Here close to nature, looking within, seeing himself as God saw him, away from the busy throng, he is prepared to give the world the best. It was in a lonely place that Bryant, at the age of eighteen, wrote 'Thanatopsis.' It was in a secluded spot, at Stoke Poges, a few miles out from the crowded streets of London, that Gray wrote the 'Elegy.' It was away from the restless haunts of humanity that Tennyson wrote 'The Crossing of the Bar.'"

## The Golden Text

"Behold, he that keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep" This passage is from one of the *Songs of the Ascents*, and was quoted in full in last week's lesson, as an illustration of the manner in which the psalms draw people close to God. There are fifteen of these songs of the ascents (Psalm 120 to Psalm 134) in the Old Testament collection, and, according to *A New Standard Bible Dictionary*, they "may have been used by pilgrims 'going up' to Jerusalem at the

annual feasts or songs sung ritually on one of the stairways in or near the temple." Some Bible students have thought that the psalm from which the golden text is taken was composed by an exile in Babylon, possibly a contemporary of Daniel. If this is true, it is easy for one to imagine the feelings which were stirred within him, as he thought of his homeland and the God of his fathers.

The entire psalm which contains

the words of the golden text should be read by the Lord's people frequently, especially those who are discouraged or who are in difficult places and situations. If it is true that the psalm was written during the Babylonian captivity, then it is also true that it was written during some of the dark days of this history of Israel. The people were away from their homeland, prevented from returning by a foreign power, and were deprived of the privilege of the temple worship which had meant so much to them. But with all this, it is a noticeable fact that there is not a single word of discouragement found in the entire psalm. And we know that the confidence which was expressed by the psalmist was fully justified; for the time did come when the people were given the opportunity to return to their fatherland, and were aided by the king himself in restoring their temple and all that went with it.

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.) There are three expressions in this passage which should challenge our attention, namely, (1) "that through patience" and (2) "through comfort of the scriptures" (3) "we might have hope." If we are willing to remain steadfast ourselves, make the proper use of God's word, then there is every reason for thinking that things will come out right at the proper time. This is not fanciful thinking, but is the specific teaching of the New Testament itself. For example, Jesus says, "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28: 20.) The marginal reading for "always" is *all the days*, while that of "the end of the world" is *the consummation of the age*. "All the days" include the good days and the bad days; but regardless of what they are, the Lord has definitely promised to be with his people, come what may; and that as long as the world or age continues. This teaching was shared by and was fully confirmed by the inspired apostles. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28, 31-39; Phil. 4: 6, 7, 13, 19; Heb. 13: 5, 6; Jude 24, 25.)

### The Text Explained

#### The Proposition Stated

(Psalm 23: 1)

*Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

It has been said that a subject is half argued when it is clearly stated; and if this is true which, of course, it is, then we should have little difficulty in seeing how the principle works in the lesson now before us. If Jehovah is our shepherd, then what shall we lack? This same great truth was also stated by Jesus when he said, in teaching his disciples to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." (Matt. 6: 9.) When our thoughts are fixed on the greatness of God to whom we pray, there is stirred within us a sense of his omnipotence, with the result that there is no petition which we have the right to make which would strain the capacity of our faith; and if there is within us a sense of his holiness, we will not ask for any unworthy thing.

God wants us to have confidence in him, and Jesus tells us that if we are willing to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness; then we have the

right to expect that all the things which we need shall be added to us. (See Matt. 6: 33.) When therefore we recognize Jehovah and our relationship to him, then it will not be difficult for us to trust him in all the walks of life. If the Lord is our shepherd, then what may we expect? Jesus does say in John 10 that he is the good shepherd, and it will be helpful to us, as we endeavor to get the significance of the expression, to consider something of the meaning of shepherd-life in oriental lands during Bible times. Some of the characteristics of that life may be learned from references in many parts of the Bible. (Cf. Isa. 40: Ezek. 34: 11-16; Luke 5: 3-7.) Some of the principal duties of a shepherd were (1) to lead the flock to pasture and water by day, and to see that the sheep were protected by night; (2) to care for the young and the sick among them; (3) to protect them from danger both by day and by night; (4) to keep them from being scattered or from straying away; and (5) to seek for and restore them if they should become scattered or lost.



As we go through the psalm we are now studying, it will be easy for us to see that it is intensely personal; for there are seventeen instances of the personal pronoun in the first person—all of this in six short verses. This is, as Brother Freed points out, the way of Christianity; we must see Christ as a personal Saviour. "What must I do" is the question which settles human destiny. And if David could sing so sweetly and confidently, while beholding the star of promise in the distant future, with what faith should the Christian walk, who has the entire revelation of God's will to lighten his way! "But the path of the righteous is as the dawning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Prov. 4: 18.) "And thy life shall be clearer than the noonday; though there be darkness, it shall be as the morning." (Job 11: 17; of. 2 Tim. 4: 6-8.)

### Jehovah As a Shepherd

(Psalm 23: 2-4)

*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul: he guideth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.*

It will be a profitable thing for us to observe the many separate blessings which are referred to in the psalm; and as we do so, let us begin with that of *rest and refreshment*—"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside still waters." The primary reference here seems to be that of plenty, without that uneasy feeling which often characterizes those who wonder if their needs will continue to be met. It is the picture of contentment. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." (Isa. 26: 3.) "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; of. 4: 19; Heb. 13: 5, 6.)

But in addition to the physical blessings which the Lord bestows

upon his people, there are some suggestions here which, while not specifically mentioned in the text, are very helpful to the Christian who often sees many seeming obstacle? before and about him. The Christian life is both active and meditative. There are times when one should be busily engaged in active service; but it often happens that one must "lie down." However, the lying down should, in the long run, make one better able to serve, according to his ability and opportunities. (Cf. the songs, "Take Time to Be Holy;" and "I Came to the Garden Alone.") It is said that a shepherd would sometimes break the leg of a wayward sheep, or otherwise injure it, especially if it had been leading other sheep astray; and thereby force inactivity. Perhaps we should not say that the Lord deliberately causes his people to become ill or otherwise incapacitated; but it certainly is not out of place to say that his providence can sanctify those conditions in order to bring about better things. (Cf. Paul, and particularly the sermons he preached and the letters he wrote while in prison and otherwise unable to go about his normal activities.)

*Restoration*—"He *restoreth my soul*" It sometimes happened that a sheep would wander away, be captured, or fall and lay wounded and bleeding; and it was in such situations that the shepherd left the flock (cf. Luke 15: 3-7), searched for the missing sheep, and restored it to the fold. That is precisely what the Good Shepherd does for us. "For ye were going astray like sheep; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." (1 Pet. 2: 25.) The Lord, of course, does not do this personally, but rather through the church, and especially the elders. (Cf. 1 Pet. 5: 1-4; Gal. 6: 1, 2; 1 Thess. 5: 12-15.) It seems fair to conclude from the meaning of the term "fulness" in Eph. 1: 22.

23 that the church, being the complement or that which makes Christ complete, is under obligation to do the kind of work that Christ, in all probability, would be doing if he were here in person; and that certainly would include restoring the lost.

*Guidance*—"He *guideth me in the*

*paths of righteousness for his name's sake*" Those who are accustomed to reading the King James Version of the Bible will observe that the verb "leadeth" is found in both verses 2 and 3. However, in the American Standard Version, the one which is being used here, has "leadeth" in verse 2, but "guideth" in verse 3. This is no accident; for the two words are from different Hebrew originals. The term "leadeth" in verse 2 is from *nahal*, while the word for "guideth" in verse 3 is from *nahag*, or, as Young has it, *nachah*. The *leading* in verse 2 is to their feeding and resting place; while the *guiding* in verse 3 is along the roads from one place to another. The Lord not only leads people to that which they need; he also guides them through all the vicissitudes of life. And it is well to note that the paths, wherever they may be, are always righteous, and for his name's sake. In other words, both the guiding along the way and the outcome of the journey will reflect glory and honor on the part of God; for he never guides any one except in righteousness: his name as a guide is always "at stake," and we may be certain that he will never fail us. (Cf. 2 Tim. 1: 12.) Things are usually peaceful and pleasant in the pasture and beside the still waters; but life does have periods of frustrations when divine guidance is necessary.

*Assurance and comfort*—"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." In going from one pasture to another one, or from one section of the country to another, the journey sometimes had to be made along narrow and dangerous paths where, if a misstep should be taken, the helpless sheep might be hurled to its death in the valley below, or become a victim of the wild beasts which inhabited the dark ravine. The shepherd, however, was alert to these dangers, and kept his eye on the sheep; and if the need arose, he could easily use his rod and staff for whatever work which needed to be done. It should be observed that the pronoun with reference to Jehovah is changed at this point from the third person to that of the second; as if

to say, There are times in the lives of God's people when there is no room for a third person—only God and the individual in question. In the words of Jessie Brown Pounds,

We are going down the valley one  
by one;  
Human comrade you or I will there  
have none;  
But a tender hand will guide us  
lest we fall:  
Christ is going down the valley  
with us all.

### Jehovah As a Gracious Host

(Psalm 23: 5, 6)

*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever.*

*Our needs providentially met*—"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over." It is said that the shepherd would often go into the pasture and remove all poisonous plants, and see to it that no vicious animals or snakes were there, before he permitted the sheep to enter and begin their grazing. The Lord's people, too, have enemies; and it is a glorious thing to know that he has made some gracious promises, and has demonstrated his providential care for them, even in the presence of their enemies. Who does not rejoice at the reading of the words of Jesus in Matt. 6: 25-34; which are as follows:

"Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even

Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But If God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall be not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Cf. Phil. 4: 19.)

All of the things which David mentions in verse 5 of the psalm now under consideration doubtless had their place in the life of the shepherd with his sheep, such as anointing the head of the tired and wounded, and giving a cup of refreshing water to an exhausted sheep; but it is also true that he may have changed the figure to that of being entertained in the home of a gracious host. It has been said that if you enter the house of an Eastern chief, and should even accidentally taste his salt, to say nothing of eating at his table, you thereby come under his defence; and he, according to the custom of those lands, would count it a great dishonor not to see that you are fully protected, along with the courtesy of bestowing honor upon you and supplying your needs. But all of this has a spiritual application. It is stated in The Great Texts of the Bible in these words:

"I sit down at Jehovah's table, which he has prepared before me in the presence of mine enemies. It is

not merely that I find supply for all the wants of my spiritual and immortal nature, but I am Jehovah's guest; he has received me into his pavilion, his tabernacle, his palace; he has set me at his table; thus he binds himself to protect me; he covers me with his defence, and takes me into relations of friendship with him; my enemies look on, and know that *my* cause is *his* cause, and that in reaching me for harm they must first pierce through his defence. Thus we perceive how the words are much more than a repetition, with change of figures, of the opening idea of the psalm; and how they lay a foundation for the great confidence, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?'

*Permanence—"Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever"* So far, in the psalm which we are studying, we have seen only the daily life of the shepherd; but here he speaks of that which will continue for ever. The Christian life, in and of itself, is the best life possible, even if that were all there is to it; but, as it is, we have all the blessings which go with Christian living, and heaven too. (Cf. John 14: 1-6.) No song which has even been written has touched the human heart like the immortal Twenty-third Psalm. It is sung the world over, and has been engraved in countless marble monuments in the silent cities of the dead. It has been read and quoted by millions as they passed through the deepening shadows; and it will continue to be employed by others, as long as the world continues. Let us all thank God for this wonderful poem which came from the heart and pen of the Sweet Singer of Israel.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Discuss the impact which the psalm we are to study today has had on the human mind.

What are some of the great blessings which the Old Testament has brought to us?

Why do we need the psalms so badly and benefit so highly from them?

Discuss the power of songs in the lives of people.

Under what circumstances was the

Twenty-third Psalm probably written?

### The Golden Text

What is the setting of the passage which serves as the golden text?

What great benefit may be derived from that psalm?

What criterion does Paul give for use of the Old Testament scriptures?

What encouragement does Jesus give in this respect?

Show how Paul and others made use of that which Jesus promised.

### The Proposition Stated

Discuss the relation which verse 1 has to the remainder of the psalm.

What teaching did Jesus give in this same respect?  
 Why does God want us to trust him and what great blessing comes to us from doing that?  
 What do we have the right to expect from the Lord as our shepherd?  
 What are some of the principal duties of a shepherd?  
 Discuss the personal aspect of the psalm now under consideration.  
 What great lesson should we learn from this?

#### Jehovah As a Shepherd

Why will we profit from considering the various blessings mentioned in this psalm?  
 What is said regarding rest and refreshment?  
 How are these things applied to us?  
 What suggestive lessons are found here?  
 Why is the Christian life both active and meditative?  
 What is often the value of enforced inactivity?

What is implied in the words regarding restoration?  
 What great duties rest on the Lord's people now in this respect?  
 What kind of guidance do we receive from the Lord?  
 Why is this so sorely needed?  
 What is said regarding assurance and comfort?  
 What change is noted in the personal pronoun and why?

#### Jehovah As a Gracious Host

In what way are all our needs met?  
 What does Jesus say regarding this?  
 What apparent change in the figure is observed here?  
 What is the attitude of the Eastern host toward his guests?  
 What is the attitude of the Lord toward his people?  
 What is said regarding the idea of permanence?  
 Discuss the lasting effects of the psalm we have been considering.

## Lesson VI—August 8, 1965

### A SONG OF PRAISE

#### Lesson Text

#### Psalm 103: 6-22

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| <p>6 Je-ho'-vah executeth righteous acts.<br/>         And judgments for all that are oppressed.</p> <p>7 He made known his ways unto Mo'-ses,<br/>         His doings unto the children of Is'-ra-el.</p> <p>8 Je-ho'-vah is merciful and gracious.<br/>         Slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness.</p> <p>9 He will not always chide;<br/>         Neither will he keep <i>his anger</i> for ever.</p> <p>10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins.<br/>         Nor rewarded us after our iniquities.</p> <p>11 For as the heavens are high above the earth.<br/>         So great is his lovingkindness toward them that fear him.</p> <p>12 As far as the east is from the west.<br/>         So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.</p> <p>13 Like as a father pitieth his children,<br/>         So Je-ho'-vah pitieth them that fear him.</p> | <p>14 For he knoweth our frame;<br/>         He remembereth that we are dust.</p> <p>15 As for man, his days are as grass;<br/>         As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.</p> <p>16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone;<br/>         And the place thereof shall know it no more.</p> <p>17 But the lovingkindness of Je-ho'-vah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him,<br/>         And his righteousness unto children's children;</p> <p>18 To such as keep his covenant,<br/>         And to those that remember his precepts to do them.</p> <p>19 Je-ho'-vah hath established his throne in the heavens;<br/>         And his kingdom ruleth over all.</p> <p>20 Bless Je-ho'-vah, ye his angels,<br/>         That are mighty in strength, that fulfil his word,<br/>         Harkening unto the voice of his word.</p> <p>21 Bless Je-ho'-vah, all ye his hosts,<br/>         Ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.</p> <p>22 Bless Je-ho'-vah, all ye his works.<br/>         In all places of his dominion:<br/>         Bless Je-ho'-vah, O my soul.</p> |
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Golden Text.—*"Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits"* (Psalm 103: 2.)

Devotional Heading.—Psalm 103: 1-5.

## Daily Bible Readings

- Aug. 2. M..... Let Heaven and Earth Praise Jehovah (Psalm 69: 30-36)  
 Aug. 3. T..... Let Everything That Hath Breath Praise Jehovah (Psalm 150: 1-6)  
 Aug. 4. W. We Must Sing with the Spirit and with Understanding (1 Cor. 14: 15-19)  
 Aug. 5. T. We Should Sing Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs (Eph. 5: 15-21)  
 Aug. 6. F. We Should Teach and Admonish Each Other As We Sing (Col. 3: 12-17)  
 Aug. 7. S..... All the World Should Praise Jehovah (Psalm 148: 1-14)  
 Aug. 8. S..... Sing unto the Lord a New Song (Psalm 96: 1-13)

TIME.—Unknown, except during the lifetime of David.

PLACE.—Probably somewhere in Palestine.

PERSONS.—David.

## Introduction

One of the great privileges which the children of God have is that of praising him; and it probably can be safely said that one of the reasons why Jehovah requires that men praise him is that it brings out the best that is in them. This is certainly true of his people; and when we stop to think of it, it also appears to be true of those who are not in covenant relationship with him. The wicked will not praise him while that attitude could benefit them; but the time will come when they will call upon him, and that time will see the best that is in them confessing his glories. (Cf. Luke 16: 19-31; Phil. 2: 9-11.) God does not want any one to be lost (cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9), and he has done, and is doing, all that is consistent with his will to see that all men are saved; but man must do his part. And when men realize their salvation, the matter of praising God is as natural as anything can be.

There is hardly a psalm in the entire collection of the Old Testament which does not give expression to the praise of Jehovah. In fact, that is why they were written. The men who wrote the psalms called upon their fellows to praise Jehovah under almost every conceivable situation. When people have faith in God, as the Bible teaches that they should, they have every reason to believe that he will bring them safely through whatever condition in which they may be found. The Bible even

speaks of Jehovah as he "who giveth songs in the night," and there are several references to such in the psalms. (See Psalm 42: 8; 77: 6; 149: 5; of. Acts 16: 25.) The spirit of the Psalms may be expressed in the words of the shortest among them, namely, Psalm 117: "Oh praise Jehovah, all ye nations; laud him, all ye peoples. For his lovingkindness is great toward us; and the truth of Jehovah endureth for ever. Praise ye Jehovah."

The Speaker's Bible points out that nearly every reader of the Psalms is perplexed when he comes to the word "Selah." What shall he do with the word? Shall he read it or shall he skilfully make a flying loop around it? Well, for the intensely religious Hebrew it was a solemn pause of hush and wonder. It was his "point of admiration." After he had climbed up to the height of some overwhelming truth, or had faced the deepest issues of the soul, or had caught an exalted vision of the majesty of God, there came a pause which was no empty pause. It was a hush that earned him higher than his highest words had done, or could do. The beat and throb of his soul went on mounting as he waited, moved with awe and too full for speech or sound. The Selah of the Psalmist is as untranslatable as is our "point of admiration," but if one tried to put it into words it would be the ejaculation of the tremulous soul: "Just think of that!" (Rufus M. Jones.)

## The Golden Text

*"Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."* While we have no way of knowing for certain at what period in his life David wrote the psalm now under consideration, and from which the golden

text is taken; yet Spurgeon suggests that it may have been in his later life, since he would then have a keener sense of sin and a greater appreciation for the Lord's mercy. That, of course, is generally true of most

people, and it could indeed have been true of David. But if one reads all the psalms which are attributed to David, he will soon see that in all of them he manifested a maturity which is becoming to a dedicated child of the Lord. David was an inspired man, but that does not mean that he had to have a special revelation from Jehovah in order to write about his own experiences. All the Bible, including the collection of the psalms, was composed and brought together under the supervision or direction of the Holy Spirit. Special truth required direct revelation and inspiration (cf. 2 Sam. 23: 2), but that was not essential in the case of information which was already known to the writer; but if anything became a part of God's word it came under the supervision of his Spirit: and it is for that reason that the entire Bible is inspired of God.

The context of the golden text is as follows: "Bless Jehovah, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies: who satisfieth thy desire with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle." (Psalm 103: 1-5.) One's life is going to be colored by the things which he chooses to think about. (Cf. Prov. 23: 7.) If we choose to dwell on the painful and disagreeable things which may be a part of our lives, then we will be expecting more of the same kind; but if we will count our many blessings and hope for better things, we at least can have the satisfaction of knowing that all things will work together for our good, if we love God and are called according to his purpose. (See Rom. 8: 28.)

There were many evil things in the life of David, but take another look at the context of the passage now under consideration and see how he

regarded them. Behold what Jehovah had done for him, and see what his reaction was. It is said that William Law once asked, Who is the greatest saint? His answer was not the one who prayed the most, but the one who is most thankful. And in the words of *The Speaker's Bible*, "To live under a deep sense of our infinite indebtedness to God is to enjoy a fellowship with him as wonderful as it is enriching. And one cannot but feel that there are many longing for larger spiritual experience who are inwardly impoverished by ingratitude. Gratitude is the inspiration of the Christian life. It sends a man forward on the second mile. It impels him always to go a little farther. It was when longing for a fuller life and for a larger fellowship with heaven that the psalmist called upon his soul to 'forget not all his benefits.' And yet he writes like a man who had had his experience, and whose experience had been severe. But, wonderful to say, the experience had not made him sad. As he looked back upon his life his one sure conviction was that the Lord his God had been with him all the way."

*The Treasury of David*, which was one of Spurgeon's great works, offers this timely observation: "Reader, have we not cause enough at this time to bless him who blesses us? Come, let us read our diaries and see if there be not choice favors recorded there for which we have rendered no grateful return. Remember how the Persian king, when he could not sleep, read the chronicles of the empire, and discovered that one who had saved his life had never been rewarded. How quickly did he do him honor! The Lord has saved us with a great salvation, shall we render no recompense? The name of *ingrate* is one of the most shameful that a man can wear; surely we cannot be content to run the risk of such a brand. Let us awake then, and with intense enthusiasm bless Jehovah."

### The Text Explained

**Jehovah's Dealings with His People**  
(Psalm 103: 6-12)

*Jehovah executeth righteous acts, and judgments for all that are oppressed. He made known his ways*

*unto Moses, his doings unto the children of Israel. Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness. He will not always chide; neither will he*

*keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us after our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his lovingkindness toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*

In the first five verses of the psalm now under consideration, as we have already seen, David spoke of his personal experiences and his own reaction toward them and toward Jehovah. But as he meditated on these things, it was easy for him to pass from those things which concerned his own life to the entire body of God's people and his attitude toward them. He goes back to the time when Jehovah appeared to Moses in the land of Egypt, and made known to him his purpose regarding his captive people. The Israelites had suffered greatly during the time of their bondage, but Jehovah executed righteous acts, and judgments for all who were oppressed; and what he did for them, he does for all who are similarly situated; for the psalmist speaks in the present tense. This was the mission which Isaiah predicted for Jesus, and it is the mission which Jesus said he came to accomplish. (See Luke 4: 16-19.) Justice demands that wrongs be punished, and that is exactly what the Lord will do at the proper time. (See 2 Thess. 1: 7-9; Rev. 6: 9-11; of. Rom. 12: 17-21.)

But God's justice is always seasoned with mercy. He will indeed punish the guilty, unless they repent of their sins and seek his forgiveness, in which case they would no longer be guilty; but he wants all men to be saved. It is because of this attitude toward the rebellious that he bears with those who deserve to die, so that they may, per-chance, see themselves as he sees them, and turn to him. This is what Peter says about it: "And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation." (2 Pet. 3: 15.) If people should be punished immediately for their wrongdoing, nobody would be saved. It appears that in the providence of God that he even permits his own people to suffer unjustly, in an effort to reach those who are in re-

bellion against him. (Cf. Acts 16: 22-34; 24: 24-27.)

It is not possible for finite minds to conceive of the full significance of God's love and mercy toward those who fear, that is, reverence him. The figure which the psalmist uses is that of the heavens, that is, the canopy where the sun, moon, and stars are, which is limitless. (Job 26: 7.) We have seen in a previous lesson in this series on the Psalms that at the present method of calculation, astronomers are able to measure a distance of fifteen thousand light years, or one hundred quadrillion miles out into space. David's figure therefore is a bold one, and it is but another way of saying that no one can measure the greatness of God's lovingkindness to those who obey him. East and west are the two extremes, beyond which no one can go; and this is to say that God will never remember the sins which have been forgiven. In the words of Kipling,

Oh, East is East, and West is West,  
and never the twain shall meet

Till earth and sky stand presently  
at God's great judgment seat.

But then the sins of the redeemed will have been left behind, and they shall enter with joy into the blessed home of the soul. O, blessed hope! Spurgeon says that no verse in the inspired word of God can excel this one, that is, verse 12 in the text now before us.

#### The Eternal Love of God for His Own (Psalm 103: 13-18)

*Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the lovingkindness of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant.*

The Speaker's Bible points out that the first intuition of man (man is here considered in his natural state after his departure from God) is the key to his latest and highest philosophy. Max Muller, so the editor notes, pointed out that among all races,

whether Aryan or Semitic, the first name for God was Sky-Father—the source of Light, the fountain of Fertility, the overbrooding Beauty of the world. Ages have passed since the Aryan races separated to travel north, east, south, west. They have formed many languages, they have founded many empires and philosophies; they have grown older; they may have grown wiser and better; but today when they make search for a name to express both love and awe, the infinite and the finite, they can but do what their first fathers did when gazing into the sky and feeling the presence of One who is “as far as far and as near as near can be”—they can but utter the primeval prayer in that form which will endure for ever, “Our Father who art in heaven.”

But the word “father” had a meaning for David which it did not have among the peoples of the world. As he looked back over his own experience, as well as that of the children of Israel, he knew that God was a pitiful, loving, and forgiving Father; and as he surveyed the benefits which had come to them, his soul was stirred by the spirit of praise, adoration, and love. But as life has gone forward and deepened, so has the word “father.” As the human heart became more tender, that word became the repository of a profound and unutterable tenderness, which reached its climax when it fell from the lips of Jesus. And as the best of men are at their best as fathers, so it is with our heavenly Father.

A. J. Gossip tells of an experience which he had while yet a boy, when he heard George Adam Smith preach in Edinburgh. He says he had forgotten the sermon, except for one illustration. Dr. Smith told of how a trawler put into the waters of the North Sea from Aberdeen, and how that in wild weather a tremendous wave swept away the skipper's little boy from before his very eyes. And in that dreadful moment, when for an agonizing second he saw the son's arms stretched out appealingly to him who could do nothing before the white snarl of boiling waters dragged him down, it was then, says Dr. Gossip, that he understood for the first time the meaning of a verse which he had known from childhood,

namely, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him.” (*The Galilean Accent*, p. 217.)

God is the Author of our being, and he fully understands our nature; and we may be sure that he will always supply that which we cannot gain for ourselves. It was never God's will that man should die; but since he chose to listen to the evil one, death was the inevitable result. And so, in the words of William Cullen Bryant,

All that breathe  
Will share thy destiny. The gay  
will laugh  
When thou art gone, the solemn  
brood of care  
Plod on, and each one as before  
will chase  
His favorite phantom; yet all these  
shall leave  
Their mirth and their employ-  
ments, and shall come  
And make their bed with thee. As  
the long train  
Of ages glide away, the sons of  
men,  
The youth in life's green spring,  
and he who goes  
In the full strength of years, ma-  
tron and maid,  
And the sweet babe, and the gray-  
headed man—  
Shall, one by one, be gathered to  
thy side  
By those who in their turn shall  
follow them.

But the lovingkindness of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; t? such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his precepts to do them, because he remembers our frame.

#### An Exhortation for Universal Praise (Psalm 103: 19-22)

*Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. Bless Jehovah, ye his angels, that are mighty in strength, that fulfil his word, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless Jehovah, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless Jehovah, all ye his works, in all places of his dominion: bless Jehovah, O my soul.*

Although J e h o v a h h a s conde-



scended to bless man in his fallen state, it must always be remembered that he has established his throne in heaven, and that the entire universe is included within his rule.

"He sits on no precarious throne.

Nor borrows leave to be."

This matchless sovereignty is the pledge of our security, and the pillar upon which our confidence may safely lean. This acclaim of Jehovah reminds one of Paul's words to Timothy: "I charge thee in the sight of God, who giveth life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession; that thou keep the commandment, without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in its own times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power eternal. Amen." (1 Tim. 6: 13-16.) This is the God who is entitled to, and who shall receive all praise. And amid the chorus of the whole universe, the animate as well as the inanimate, the psalmist returns to his own share in the paean of praise. (Cf. Psalm 148.)

Praise the Lord, ye heav'ns adore him!

Praise him, angels, in the height;  
Sun and moon rejoice before him:

Praise him, all ye stars of light.

Praise the Lord, for he hath spoken,

Worlds his mighty voice obeyed;  
Laws which never shall be broken.

For their guidance he hath made.

Praise the Lord, for he is glorious.

Never shall his promise fail;

God hath made his saints victor-  
ious,

Sin and death shall not prevail.

Praise the God of our salvation:

Hosts on high, his pow'r proclaim;

Heav'n and earth and all creation,

Laud and magnify his name.

Hallelujah! Amen, Hallelujah!

Amen. Amen, Amen.

—J. Kempthorne.

And, in the words of Henry F. Lyte.

Praise, my soul, the King of  
heaven,

To his feet thy tribute bring;

Ransomed, healed, restored, for-  
given,

Who, like me, his praise should  
sing

Praise him! praise him!

Praise him! praise him!

Praise the everlasting King!

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Why is the opportunity to praise God such a great blessing to the Christian?

What was the great purpose for which the Psalms were written?

What is the meaning of the truth that God gives songs in the night?

What is the theme of the shortest psalm in the collection?

What appears to have been the purpose of "Selah," frequently found in the Psalms?

### The Golden Text

Is there any way of knowing when David wrote this psalm? Give reasons for your answer.

How do we know that he was inspired?

What is the meaning of inspiration?

What was the reason for David's desire to praise God?

How does one's thinking affect his life?

What effect does thanksgiving have on one's life?

### Jehovah's Dealings with His People

In what way is this section of the lesson text related to the previous verses?

Name some of the things which Jehovah had done for his people?

In what way are God's justice and mercy related?

How did the psalmist seek to illustrate Jehovah's lovingkindness?

In what way does the Lord regard sins which have been forgiven?

### The Eternal Love of God for His Own

In what way did the people of the early years of the race think of Jehovah?

What significance did the term "father" come to have throughout the Old Testament period?

What added significance did Jesus give the term?

How does the knowledge of God as our Father affect our lives?

What is meant by saying that Jehovah knows our frame?

Why does death have a claim on all men?

### An Exhortation for Universal Praise

What is Jehovah's relationship with the world?

In what way should his people regard his matchless sovereignty?

What did Paul say about the greatness of God?

What call did David make for the praise of Jehovah?

Who and what should participate in this great acclaim?

In what way is the call to praise here

related to David's declaration in Psalm 19?  
What was the psalmist's own reaction to the universal call for praise?

What effect should this lesson have on all of the Lord's people?  
What is the best way for one to realize his own need for praising God?

## Lesson VII—August 15, 1965

### THE VOICE OF WISDOM

#### Lesson Text

Prov. 1: 20-33

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|--|---|
| <p>20 Wisdom crieth aloud in the street;<br/>She uttereth her voice in the broad places;</p> <p>21. She crieth in the chief place of concourse;<br/>At the entrance of the gates.<br/>In the city, she uttereth her words:</p> <p>22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?<br/>And scoffers delight them in scoffing,<br/>And fools hate knowledge?</p> <p>23 Turn you at my reproof:<br/>Behold, I will pour out my spirit upon you:<br/>I will make known my words unto you.</p> <p>24 Because I have called, and ye have refused:<br/>I have stretched out my hand, and no man hath regarded:</p> <p>25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel.<br/>And would none of my reproof:</p> <p>26 I also will laugh in <i>the day of</i> your calamity;<br/>I will mock when your fear cometh:</p> | <p>27 When your fear cometh as a storm.<br/>And your calamity cometh on as a whirlwind:<br/>When distress and anguish come upon you.</p> <p>28 Then will they call upon me, but I will not answer;<br/>They will seek me diligently, but they shall not find me.</p> <p>29 For that they hated knowledge.<br/>And did not choose the fear of Je-ho'-vah,</p> <p>30 They would none of my counsel,<br/>They despised all my reproof.</p> <p>31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way,<br/>And be filled with their own devices.</p> <p>32 For the backsliding of the simple shall slay them,<br/>And the careless ease of fools shall destroy them.</p> <p>33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell securely,<br/>And shall be quiet without fear of evil.</p> |
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Golden Text.—*"My son, forget not my laic; but let thy heart keep my commandments: for length of days, and years of life, and peace, will they add to thee:"* (Prov. 3: 1, 2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—PROV. 1: 1-19.

#### Daily Bible Readings

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|-----------------|---|
| Aug. 9.         | M. We Are Encouraged to Pray for Wisdom (James 1: 5-8)                      |
| Aug. 10. T..... | The Price of Wisdom Is Above Rubies (Job. 28: 12-22)                        |
| Aug. 11. W..... | The Fear of Jehovah Is the Beginning of Wisdom (Psalm 111: 1-10)            |
| Aug. 12. T..... | The Wise Man Can Demonstrate His Wisdom (James 3: 13-18)                    |
| Aug. 13.        | F. The Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge Are Hidden in Christ (Col. 2: 1-5) |
| Aug. 14. S..... | Christ Is Our Wisdom (1 Cor. 1: 26-31)                                      |
| Aug. 15. S..... | Wisdom Is Good As an Inheritance (Eccles. 7: 11-14)                         |

TIME.—1000 B.C.

PLACE.—Probably Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Solomon and those to whom he spoke.

#### Introduction

The term 'proverb' is found frequently in the Scriptures, as may be seen by consulting any good con-

cordance to the Bible. The original Hebrew word for proverb is *masal*, and, as used with reference to Solo-

mon, it means "sentences of ethical wisdom." (See *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, by Brown, Driver, and Briggs.) The word "proverb" has various shades of meaning in the Bible, such as brief terse sentences of popular sagacity (Ezek. 18: 2, 3: 1 Sam. 24: 13); as a by-word (Deut. 28: 37); as prophetic figurative discourse (Num. 23: 7, 18; Hab. 2: 6); as similitude or parable (Ezek. 17: 1-10); as an ode (Num. 21: 27-30); and, as already noted, sentences of ethical wisdom. (Ibid.)

The Book of Proverbs is one of the "wisdom books" of the Hebrew people. *The New Bible Dictionary* sums up the meaning and use of the term in this way, Basically, wisdom is the art of being successful, of forming the correct plan to gain the desired results. Its seat is the heart, the center of moral and intellectual decision. (1 Kings 3: 9, 12.) Biblical wisdom is both religious and practical. It stems from the fear of the Lord, and branches out to touch all phases of life, as the extended commentary on the subject in Proverbs clearly indicates. Wisdom takes insights which are gathered from the knowledge of God's ways, and applies them in the daily walks of this life. This combination of insight and obedience (and all insight must issue in obedience) relates wisdom to the prophetic emphasis on the knowledge of God. (Cf. Hos. 4: 6: 6; Jer. 4: 22; 9: 3, 6; Prov. 9: 10.) (P. 1333.) Other wisdom books are Job, Ecclesiastes, and some of the psalms.

G. Campbell Morgan observes that

"the underlying conception of all the wisdom books of the ancient writings is that of God himself, the All-Wise. They also recognize that his wisdom is expressed in all his works and words. Man is wise in proportion as he recognizes these truths and answers them in the conduct of his life. The perfectly wise man is the one who in his whole being lives and thinks and acts in right relationship to the All-Wise God. His wisdom commences emotionally in the fear of God; is manifest intellectually in his acquaintance with the manifestations of the Divine nature in word and work; is active volitionally in obedience to the will of God, as revealed in word and work." (*The Analyzed Bible*, p. 179.)

Solomon appears to have been the most prolific producer of proverbs known among those mentioned in the Bible. "And he spake three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five." (1 Kings 4: 32.) Many of these proverbs are the ones which are found in the Book of Proverbs. This is one of the books of the Bible which was evidently "compiled and edited" by some one other than its principal author, as may be seen from a look at the general make-up of the book. There are five principal sections, namely, (1) The Value of Wisdom, 1: 1-9: 18; (2) The First Collection of Solomon's Proverbs, 10: 1-22: 16; (3) Some Practical Applications, 22: 17-24: 34; (4) The Second Collection of Solomon's Proverbs, 25: 1-29: 27; and (5) The Words of Agur, the Words of King Lemuel, and the Description of a Worthy Woman, 30: 1-31: 31.

### The Golden Text

*"My son, forget not my law; but let thy heart keep my commandments: for length of days, and years of life, and peace, will they add to thee."* These are the opening words of the first of three brief addresses contained in chapter 3, each beginning with "My son." The three lectures are (1) verses 1-10; (2) verses 11-20; and (3) verses 21-35. The language is either that of a father spoken to his child, or that of a teacher addressing his pupil or student. The full statement of the first address is as follows: "My son, forget not my law; but let thy heart

keep my commandments: for length of days, and years of life, and peace, will they add to thee. Let not kindness and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the tablet of thy heart: so shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man. Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, and lean not upon thine own understanding: in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear Jehovah, and depart from evil: it will be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. Honor

Jehovah with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy vats shall overflow with new wine.'

Some one has said that one of the golden words of religion is "remember." This is true because there can be no spiritual life or growth apart from the basic teaching of the word of the Lord. To remember that which has been spoken is to make it a part of one's life, that is, if the remembering is translated into heartfelt obedience. That is exactly what the speaker in the verses which serve as the golden text exhorted his hearer to do. Paul reminded the Romans that they had been "obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered." (Rom. 6: 17.) This is the only way to make the proper use of that which has been spoken from the Lord. The editor of *The Interpreter's Bible* notes that in view of the appalling, continuing ignorance among Christians of the simply Biblical facts and Christian doctrines, the church may do well to heed more carefully the "message of the verse now under consideration."

The motive assigned for faithful obedience is that of definite rewards.

Three specific things are mentioned, namely, (1) length of days, (2) years of life, and (3) peace. Jehovah always has and always will reward faithful obedience on the part of his people (cf. Rev. 22: 12); and this same principle is also extended to children who obey their parents as they should. When Jehovah gave the law through Moses, he said, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee" (Ex. 20: 12); and when Moses delivered the second of his three discourses, contained in Deuteronomy, he said, "Honor thy father and thy mother, as Jehovah thy God commanded thee: that thy days may be long, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee" (Deut. 5: 16). The same teaching is also found in the New Testament: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth." (Eph. 6: 1-3.) The teaching of the golden text therefore is basic: it stems from the law of God himself.

### The Text Explained

#### Wisdom, Personified, Makes a Public Cry

(Prov. 1: 20-23)

*Wisdom crieth aloud in the street; she uttereth her voice in the broad places; she crieth in the chief place of concourse: at the entrance of the gates, in the city, she uttereth her words: How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and scoffers delight them in scoffing, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit upon you; I will make known my words unto you.*

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary points out that the essence of the teaching of the Book of Proverbs is that of moral and ethical principles; and that one of the over-all peculiarities of the book is that of contrast. This is especially true of chapters 10-15, where a large majority of the verses are divided by the word "but." There is also a contrast in the first nine chapters between good and evil.

The good in this section is dominated by several words, namely, wisdom, instruction, understanding, justice, judgment, equity, knowledge, discretion, learning, counsels, but especially wisdom, which occurs seventeen times in this section, and twenty-two times in the remainder of the book. It is interesting to observe that what amounts to a theme for the book is the statement found in verse 1, namely, "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge; but the foolish despise wisdom and instruction." This statement is also in keeping with the idea of contrast, which runs throughout the book. (Cf. Prov. 9: 10; Psalm 111: 10; Job 28: 28.)

The general teaching regarding the place and value of wisdom, contained in the first section of the Book of Proverbs, that is, in the first nine chapters, was apparently meant to pave the way for the proverbs themselves. Verse 1 of chapter 1 stated the title of the book, while verses 2-6 give that which we would call

the foreword or preface of the book, the purpose of which was to get the reader into the right frame of mind for the understanding or appreciation of the work he is about to read, or to supply him with the information which may be necessary for his proper understanding and use of it. Verse 7, as already suggested, may be looked upon as the text for the entire work. And then, beginning with verse 8 and continuing through chapter 9, there is a series of short addresses or counsels, each beginning with "My son," three of which are found in verses 8-19 of chapter from which the lesson text is taken.

It should also be observed that throughout the first section of the Book of Proverbs wisdom is personified, that is, regarded or represented as a person; and not only as a person, but as a woman. (Cf. Prov. 7: 4; 9: 1-3.) The Wycliffe Bible Commentary says that "since 'wisdom' in Hebrew is a feminine noun, it therefore is naturally and readily personified as a woman." It is also interesting to note that only in Proverbs, and only in the first section of the book, is wisdom thus personified. No one will understand this portion of the lesson text, who does not recognize the personification of wisdom.

With these facts before us, let us picture a godly woman going about the streets of a city, crying aloud as she makes her way through the broad places, where the people are, and urging them to turn away from all ignorance and folly, and listen to the words of truth and righteousness. This scene has, of course, been re-enacted times without number, both during the days of the prophets of the Old Testament, and the Lord's people during this dispensation. People are called upon every day to hearken to the word and way of the Lord; and those who are wise, that is, those who accept the way of wisdom, will hear and obey. (Cf. Matt. 25: 1-13.)

Jesus gave a practical picture of the situation we are now considering in the closing part of his sermon on the mount. He had been teaching the people the way of truth, had been calling on the great multitudes to listen to and accept the words of life; and then, as he finished the dis-

course, he said, "Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof." (Matt. 7: 24-27.)

In saying, "Turn you at my reproof: behold. I will pour out my spirit upon you: I will make known my words unto you," the author probably caused Wisdom to say that if any one was willing to heed the words of warning, that is, stop his wayward course, he would receive the instruction which he needed to get himself in the way of truth. The principle of parallelism seems to confirm this viewpoint. The two parallel lines are (1) "behold, I will pour out my spirit upon you;" and (2) "I will make known my words unto you." God makes known his word through his Spirit, and Wisdom follows the same course. But people must have the proper attitude, if they are to have this help. (Cf. John 7: 17; Matt. 13: 10-12.)

#### A Warning to Those Who Reject Wisdom's Plea (Prov. 1: 24-27)

*Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man hath regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh in the day of your calamity: I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as a storm, and your calamity cometh on as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you.*

Man is a moral being, and has the power and privilege of choice; and he can therefore exercise his own judgment as to his attitude toward the call of Wisdom. If he wants to, he can obey; but if he chooses to turn a deaf ear to that which is spoken unto him, he can exercise that prerogative. This is a respon-

sibility too deep for words, but one which the thoughtless continue to disregard. Jehovah caused Ezekiel to say to the people of Israel, "As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 33: 11.) The same kind of pleading is found over and over again in the New Testament. "And ye will not come to me, that ye may have life." (John 5: 40.)

When Paul sought to explain why Israel was rejected, he said, "But they did not all hearken to the glad tidings. For Isaiah saith. Lord, who hath believed our report? So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. But I say. Did they not hear? Yea. verily,

Their sound went out into all the earth,

And their words unto the ends of the world.

But I say, Did not Israel know?

First Moses saith,

I will provoke you to jealousy with that which is no nation.

With a nation void of understanding will I anger you.

And Isaiah is very bold, and saith,

I was found of them that sought me not;

I became manifest unto them that asked not of me.

But as to Israel he saith. All the day long did I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." (Rom. 10: 16-21.)

Those who reject the plea of Wisdom are not only doing wrong at the moment; they are also sinning away their day of grace. Isaiah exhorts. "Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found: call ye upon him while he is near." (Isa. 55: 6.) God is willing to save any one who will turn to him, in accordance with his will; but when people persist in remaining in rebellion against him, the time will come when they cannot break the shackles of sin. And when that time comes, they will not have any sympathy from the Lord. (Cf. Luke 16: 27-31; 2 Thess. 1: 7-9; Rev. 6: 12-17.)

The Consequence of Disobedience  
(Prov. 1: 28-33)

*Then will they call upon me, but*

*I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they shall not find me. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of Jehovah, they would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the backsliding of the simple shall slay them, and the careless ease of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell securely, and shall be quiet without fear of evil.*

In his book, *An Ethical Philosophy of Life*, p. 172, Felix Adler says, "It is characteristic of sin that the fuller knowledge that the harmful deed is sinful *comes after the act.*" This is another way of saying that memory will be a factor in the future punishment of sin; for every man will have a memory of his past. (Cf. Luke 16: 19-31.) It is difficult for people in this life, while the events are taking place, to give a true estimate of their own attitudes and deeds. They need to be at a distance from them before they can be anything like accurate in their judgment of them. This is why people can look back over their lives and recognize more clearly their mistakes and failures. (Cf. business, games, etc.)

If the principle which has just been mentioned is extended to the retrospect of life as a whole, which in eternity the lost sinner will have to take, it can at once be seen how things which seemed to be of little consequence at the time they were done, will assume a sublimity and importance in the world to come, which will make each of them another lash in the scorpion scourge of conscience. What must be the feelings of those who are lost in eternity, like the foolish virgins, who neglected, perhaps against the caution of their wise companions, to take extra oil in their vessels with their lamps! Theirs was the sin of neglect, of refusing to heed the plea of Wisdom.

The light in which we stand determines that which we see. For example, if one stands in a brilliantly-lighted room and looks out into the darkness, he will see little or nothing; but if he is out in the darkness and looks into the lustrous room, he can see everything which it contains.

Our experience on the earth is comparable to him who looks into the darkness; but when the lost person reviews his life in the world to come, he will be looking from darkness into the light, and can see every detail of his life—his failure to heed the warnings of Wisdom, his misspent hours, his thoughtless folly, his secret sins, his presumptuous wickedness, and all other things which characterized him in life. (Cf. Deut. 5: 29; 32: 29.)

And too, memory will be so quickened in its exercise in eternity as to prevent one from forgetting anything. The New Testament plainly teaches that each person will have to answer in the judgment for all his deeds, which implies that every one of them will be brought to his attention. (Cf. Matt. 12: 36, 37; 2 Cor. 5: 10; Revelation 20: 12.)

"Painted on the eternal wall  
The past shall reappear."

In the future state of the lost, conscience, in its relation to memory, shall be rectified and shall give proper utterance regarding the events which are reviewed. It is the union of memory and conscience which gives power to both. A faulty memory in this life prevents conscience from exercising its full power: and in the same manner, a conscience which is not fully awake

will neutralize the moral influence of a faithful memory. This is the reason why memory is not more terrible than it is to some people even now. Its reports are given to a conscience which is asleep, or seared, or perverted, so that no moral action is taken, and no remorse is felt.

But in the last great day all the irregularities mentioned above will be adjusted to the extent that both memory and conscience will do their respective works faithfully and completely. No longer will the lost be able to look back upon their misdeeds, their failures to heed properly constituted warnings, and think little about them: but then, with a vivid memory at work, conscience will insist on calling things by their right names, and each wrong, each neglect, will stand out before the doomed sinner as an act of rebellion against God. No one can fail to heed the warnings of the gospel without being guilty before God. (See again 2 Thess. 1: 7-9; of Heb. 2: 1-3.)

"But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell securely, and shall be quiet without fear of evil." This is also the way Paul felt about the matter. (See 2 Tim. 4: 6-8.) In the words of Daniel, "And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." (Dan. 12: 3.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Give some facts regarding the meaning and use of the term "proverb" in the Bible.  
What is the nature of the Book of Proverbs?  
What is the meaning of the term "wisdom"?  
What other "wisdom books" are in the Bible? What is their underlying conception?  
What do we know about Solomon's ability to coin proverbs?  
Give a general outline of the Book of Proverbs.

### The Golden Text

Give the setting of the golden text.  
Discuss the significance of "remember" in the religious life.  
What motive is shown for faithful obedience?

Show how this is extended to children.

Wisdom, Personified, Makes a Public Cry

What is the essence of the teaching of the Book of Proverbs?

What is the theme of the book?

Discuss the arrangement of the first section of the book and its general teaching.

What is the meaning of the personification of wisdom?

Give a picture of the work of Wisdom.

In what way did Jesus continue this work?

What promise was made to the penitent?

### A Warning to Those Who Reject Wisdom's Plea

Why is man responsible with reference to his attitudes and conduct?

What is the Lord's feeling regarding the lost?

What did Paul say regarding the disobedience of Israel?

What is happening to those who reject the plea of Wisdom?

What will be the Lord's attitude toward them in the end?

### The Consequence of Disobedience

When does the full significance of the sinfulness of one's wrongs become apparent?

What important lesson do we learn from this?

Show how memory will be a factor in future punishment.

In what way does light determine that which we see?

What will enable lost people in eternity to remember everything?

What will be the result in the world to

come of memory and conscience working together?

How will the doomed then look upon their sin and neglect?

What promise is made to the one who responds to the cry of Wisdom?

What will be the portion of the righteous in the world to come?

## Lesson VIII—August 22, 1965

# THE VALUE OF WISDOM

## Lesson Text

Prov. 3: 11-24

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>11 My son, despise not the chastening of Je-h6'-vah;<br/>Neither be weary of his reproof:</p> <p>12 For whom Je-ho'-vah loveth he reproveth,<br/>Even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.</p> <p>13 Happy is the man that findeth wisdom,<br/>And the man that getteth understanding.</p> <p>14 For the gaining of it is better than the gaining of silver,<br/>And the profit thereof than fine gold.</p> <p>15 She is more precious than rubies:<br/>And none of the things thou canst desire are to be compared unto her.</p> <p>16 Length of days is in her right hand;<br/>In her left hand are riches and honor.</p> <p>17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness,</p> | <p>And all her paths are peace.</p> <p>18 She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her:<br/>And happy is every one that retaineth her.</p> <p>19 Je-ho'-vah by wisdom founded the earth;<br/>By understanding he established the heavens.</p> <p>20 By his knowledge the depths were broken up,<br/>And the skies drop down the dew.</p> <p>21 My son, let them not depart from thine eyes;<br/>Keep sound wisdom and discretion:</p> <p>22 So shall they be life unto thy soul,<br/>And grace to thy neck.</p> <p>23 Then shalt thou walk in thy way securely,<br/>And thy foot shall not stumble.</p> <p>24 When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid:<br/>Yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.</p> |
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Golden Text.—*"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths"* (Prov. 3: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Prov. 3: 1-10.

## Daily Bible Readings

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Aug. 16. M..... | It Is Sometimes Wise to Hold One's Peace (Job 13: 1-12)        |
| Aug. 17. T..... | The Proverbs Were Given to Impart Wisdom (Prov. 1: 1-6)        |
| Aug. 18. W..... | .....The Warning of Wisdom (Prov. 1: 20-33)                    |
| Aug. 19. T..... | The Pursuit of Wisdom Brings Great Blessings (Prov. 2: 1-12)   |
| Aug. 20. F..... | .. The Rewards of Wisdom (Prov. 3: 13-18)                      |
| Aug. 21. S..... | An Appraisal of Wisdom (Prov. 4: 1-9)                          |
| Aug. 22. S..... | A Father's Advice to His Son Regarding Wisdom (Prov. 4: 10-19) |

TIME.—1000 B.C.

PLACE.—Probably Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Solomon and those to whom he spoke.

## Introduction

It was pointed out in last week's lesson that the basic idea of wisdom is the art of being successful, of forming the correct plan in order to

gain the desired end. The wisdom which is set forth in the Bible is both religious and practical. It stems from the fear of the Lord, and



branches out in all the areas of life. The kind of wisdom which the Bible talks about is not obtained by man's efforts alone; it must come from the Lord. "But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways." (James 1: 5-8.)

Wisdom should not be confused with knowledge. The latter is obtained by study, observation, and experience; but, as Spurgeon points out, "wisdom is the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal, and are all the greater fools for it. There is no fool so great a fool as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom." The Lord's people therefore should make every effort to obtain all the knowledge they can from the Bible, and every other worthy field; and then ask God to give them the ability to form correct judgments and employ the knowledge in ways which will please him. Inge says that "the wise man is he who knows the relative value of things," while Seneca avers that "wisdom allows nothing to be good that will not be so for ever; no man to be happy but he that needs no other happiness than what he has within himself; no man to be great or powerful that is not master of himself." There is, of course, a sense in which wisdom and true knowledge are used interchangeably, as, for example, "And I have not learned wisdom, neither have I the knowledge of the Holy One." (Prov. 30:3.)

The truth just stated may also be

seen by reading the following passages: "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge; but the foolish despise wisdom and instruction." (Prov. 1: 7.) "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Prov. 9: 10.) The point to emphasize just here in these two verses is that the gates of wisdom and knowledge will be opened only to those who reverently seek admittance. It is true, of course, that irreverent men may gain that which the world calls wisdom and knowledge; but they are far removed from that which is set forth in the Bible. Some one has said that "the seeker after real knowledge will have little about him which suggests worldly success. He is modest, self-forgetful, possibly shy; he is absorbed in a disinterested pursuit, for he has seen afar the high, white star of truth; at it he gazes, to it he aspires. Things which only affect him personally make but little impression on him; things which affect the truth move, agitate, excite him. A bright spot is on ahead, beckoning to him. The color mounts to his cheek, the nerves thrill, and his soul is filled with rapture, when the form seems to grow clearer and a step is gained in the pursuit. When the discovery is made he almost forgets that he is the discoverer; he will even allow the credit of it pass to another, for he would rather rejoice in the truth itself than allow his joy to be tinged with a personal consideration. Yes, this modest, self-forgetful, reverent mien is the first condition of winning truth, which must be approached on bended knee, and recognized with a humble and prostrate heart. There is no gainsaying the fact that this fear, this reverence, is the beginning of wisdom."

### The Golden Text

*"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths"* The full sentence in which these words are found reads as follows: "Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, and lean not upon thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths." In commenting on the words which serve as the golden text, H. P. Lid-

don says, "A characteristic of the Old Testament Scriptures, which results from the genius of the Hebrew language, is especially observable in the Book of Proverbs. Instead of the copious, versatile, precise, and in so many respects unrivalled, instrument which the Greek wields when expressing his thought, the Hebrew writer has at command a

language possessing by comparison only a few and simple words. But of these, many are words of the widest range and applicability. They are words containing depth below depth of meaning. The text furnishes us with a sample of this almost untranslatable pregnancy and power of Hebrew speech. The English word 'acknowledge' represents only one of the many meanings which are to be found, upon reflection, in the original *yada*.

"This word, originally identical with *eidein* and *videre*, came to signify that which results from sight, unless the sense be imperfect or the understanding impaired, namely, knowledge. It exhibits knowledge at all its stages of growth. As used in the passage before us it describes nothing less comprehensive than the whole action of man's spiritual being when face to face with the eternal God. It is irresistibly implied that to know God truly, to have full insight of God before the soul, is something more than mere head-knowledge, that it is knowledge in act. It is, in short, to be out of heart with self, to distrust self, to abase and crush and forget self; we are sensible of the presence of a Being who discovers to self its insignificance or its pollution. The text thus includes, besides much else, such specific exhortations as that of St. Peter, 'Be clothed with humility.'"

That which has just been said is another way of saying, in a practical

way that which Jesus says in Matt. 16: 24. namely, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself." Unless we have such a conscious attitude toward God, it is useless to believe that he will direct our paths. The Great Texts of the Bible puts the matter in this way: "A devout regard to God, indeed, cannot but be pleasing in his sight, and it is a healthy state of soul. Whatever is right in itself cannot fail to be practically useful. But such a devout regard implies humble reliance upon his guidance. It is a kind of faith spread like a leaf of gold over our whole life: or, to change the figure, it is to live and breathe in the very atmosphere of prayer, though no formal petition may escape our lips. To acknowledge God in all our ways is to acknowledge his goodness and wisdom in guarding our interests; and the very thought cannot but inspire us with a humble, trustful reliance, and call forth now and then earnest entreaty from the depth of the soul. To acknowledge God is not to recognize his presence and remain blind to his perfections; it is not to mark the working of his hand and forget the goodness of his heart; or to believe that he is ever surrounding us as a watchful friend, and yet not yield him our confidence or utter to him our prayer. Acknowledgment of such a Being must, in the nature of things, include faith, and without this it would be only a lifeless form—a skeleton of religion without its soul."

### The Text Explained

#### A Timely Exhortation

(Prov. 3: 11, 12)

*My son, despise not the chastening of Jehovah; neither be weary of his reproof: for whom Jehovah loveth he reproveth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.*

This is the passage which the writer of Hebrews quoted, and upon which he based his remarks regarding the value of chastening. (See Heb. 12: 5-13.) Solomon had been teaching in a positive manner, but here he turns to that which ought not to be done. Those who need instruction should be told what to do, and they also need to be told what they should not do. Our nature is so constituted as to need discipline, as

well as instruction. When Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, he said, "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.)

It is easy to see, from the passage just quoted, that the Scriptures are designed to do four things, namely, (1) teach, that is, instruct people regarding that which they should know; give them the necessary information, so that they can do that which is pleasing to the Lord: (2) *reprove*, that is, convict and rebuke the which is not right; (3) *correct*, that is, restore one to the pathway of

duty; and (4) *instruct* in righteousness, that is, continue the *discipline* (the original word for "instruction" is *paideia*, which means discipline, see marginal note) which is in righteousness, "that is, in holy living, in conformity to God's will, in thought, purpose, and action." (See Amplified New Testament.) The entire passage is rendered in *Living Letters* in these words: "The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out and helps us do what is right. It is God's way of making us well-prepared at every point, fully equipped to do good to everyone." Phillips translates it this way: "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for resetting the direction of a man's life and training him in good living. The scriptures are the comprehensive equipment of the man of God, and fit him fully for all branches of his work."

This same principle is also seen in the Lord's manner of dealing with the churches. The church was established on the day of Pentecost, following his ascension: and during the next sixty years letters were written and oral teaching was given to show the various congregations and individual Christians what was expected of them. And then, near the close of the first century of the Christian era, Jesus appeared to John and instructed him to send letters to seven representative congregations, in which he pointed out that which they were doing which was right, and rebuking that which was wrong. He also told them to continue their good work, and warned of the consequences if they persisted in the way of error. The Lord's people therefore should never weary of the discipline of the truth.

#### A True Appraisal of Wisdom (Prov. 3: 13-20)

*Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the gaining of it is better than the gaining of silver, and the profit thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and none of the things thou canst desire ere to be compared unto her. Length*

*of days is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her. Jehovah by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths were broken up, and the skies drop down the dew.*

The term "findeth" implies that a search has been made; and if we turn back to the second chapter of Proverbs, we learn that Solomon gives some idea of the manner in which the searching should be done, namely, "If thou seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of Jehovah, and find the knowledge of God." (Verses 4, 5.) Paul gives some indication of the ardor with which men search for the wealth of the earth. He says, "But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Tim. 6: 9, 10.) There are few sacrifices which those who seek for wealth are unwilling to make.

In commenting on the search for "hid treasures," mentioned in Prov. 2: 4, Adam Clarke says. "The original word signifies property of any kind *concealed* in the earth, in caves or such like; and may also mean *treasures*, such as the *precious metals* or *precious stones*, which are presumptively known to exist in such and such *mines*. And how are these sought? Learn from the following circumstance: In the Brazils *slaves* are employed to scrape up the soil from the bed of the Rio Janeiro, and wash it carefully, in order to find particles of *gold* and *diamonds*; and it is a law of the state, that he who finds a diamond of so many carats shall have his *freedom*. This causes the greatest ardour and diligence in searching, washing out the soil, picking, etc., in order to find such diamonds, and the greatest anxiety for success; so precious is *liberty* to the

human heart. This method of searching for gold and precious stones is alluded to in chapter 3: 13-15. In this way Solomon wishes men to seek for wisdom, knowledge, and understanding; and he who succeeds finds the *liberty* of the children of God, and is saved from the *slavery of sin* and the *empire of death*"

This search for wisdom, and the value attached to it, reminds us of the parable which Jesus spoke regarding the man who was seeking for goodly pearls. His words are, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it." (Matt. 13: 45, 46.) The man of this parable was in search of something which was better than he already had; and this implies that he had a definite purpose in mind, and was not going to be contented until he found that for which he was looking. And after he discovered that for which he sought, there was no sacrifice he was unwilling to make in order to make the newly found blessing his own. (Cf. Phil. 3: 7-11; Luke 14: 25-33.)

Men have often speculated about the highest good, and they have endeavored to identify that which could be considered their greatest blessing. Williams R. Inge once asked, "What are the most precious gifts for which an old man, looking back on his life, ought to thank God?" After mentioning some of the values which men have cherished, he concluded. "But I have not the slightest doubt that domestic happiness is the greatest of all good gifts, next to that of 'wisdom,' for which Solomon prayed, and which I suppose, may be defined as a right judgment of the relative value of things." If any one will carefully read that which Solomon said about the value of wisdom, in the passage now under consideration, he should have no trouble in placing it at the top of the list of good things. The ability to estimate things at their true value is indeed one of the greatest blessings which can come to one; for it is then that he can be numbered among the wise. It should be remembered, however, as Rochefoucauld remarked, that "the strongest symptom of wisdom in man is his

being sensible of his own follies." In the words of Paul, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man thinketh that he is wise among you in this world, let him become a fool, that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He that taketh the wise in their craftiness: and again, The Lord knoweth the reasonings of the wise, that they are vain." (1 Cor. 3: 18-20.)

### The Way to Confidence, Safety, and Security

(Prov. 3: 21-24)

*My son. Jet them not depart from thine eyes; keep sound wisdom and discretion: so shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way securely. and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea. thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.*

The hunger for confidence, safety, and security are basic in every human life. We hear about them on every hand. A day never passes but that some high official in the government says something about our national security, or of winning the confidence of this or that people. There can be no inner peace for any individual who does not have a sense of confidence, safety, and security. Doctors know the great value of these blessings to the health of the body, as well as the mind. It is said that during the terrible ordeal of the nightly bombings of London, a physician placed placards in some of the air raid shelters with quotations from this section of the lesson text printed on them. It was true that the people were in great danger from the physical bombs, but they were also in great danger from fear and other destructive forces which, if allowed to have their way, would greatly affect their mental and spiritual lives.

Solomon says that the way to have the blessings which have just been mentioned is to keep sound wisdom and discretion; they should never be allowed to depart from one. In commenting on these two words, Adam Clarke says, "*Tushiyah* [wisdom] is the *essence* or *substance* of a thing; *mezimmah* [discretion] is the *resolution* or *purpose* formed in reference

to something good or excellent. To acknowledge God as the author of all good, is the *tushiyah*, the *essence*, of a godly man's creed; to *resolve to act according to the direction of his wisdom*, is the *mezimmah*, the *religious purpose*, that will bring good to ourselves and glory to God. These bring *life to the soul*, and are *ornamental* to the man who acts in this way." The Interpreter's Bible points out that wisdom is the source of life, as well as that of graciousness. It manifests itself inwardly in the healthy life of the soul, and outwardly in the gracious, pleasing appearance of the man who possesses it: and when we add to this the determination to live in keeping with such a principle, it is not difficult to see what the result will be.

In speaking of the blessings which form the topic of this section of the lesson text, Adam Clarke says, "In these verses (23-26) the wise man describes the confidence, security, and safety, which proceed from a consciousness of innocence. Most people are afraid of *sleep*, lest they should never awake, because they feel they are not prepared to appear before God. They are neither innocent nor pardoned. True believers know that God is their keeper night and day; they have strong confidence in him that he will be their director, and not suffer them to take any false step in life. (Verse 23.) They go to rest in perfect confidence that God will watch over them: hence their *sleep*, being undisturbed with foreboding and evil dreams, is *sweet* and refreshing. (Verse 24.) They are not apprehensive of any *sudden destruction*, because they know that all things are under the control of

God; and they are satisfied that if *sudden destruction* should fall upon their wicked neighbor, yet God knows well how to preserve *them*, verse 25. Anri all this naturally flows from the Lord being their confidence. (Verse 26.)"

This kind of confidence is also expressed by Paul in these words: "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. . . . What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written,

For thy sake we are killed all the day long:

We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8: 28, 31-39.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What is the basic meaning of the term

"wisdom" as used in this lesson?

What promise regarding wisdom has the Lord made to his people in this dispensation?

What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge?

To what kind of people is wisdom promised?

### The Golden Text

What is implied in the expression "in all thy ways acknowledge him"?

"What type of person will do that?"

What does Jesus teach on the same subject?

What great lesson should we learn from all of this?

### A Timely Exhortation

What New Testament use was made of this portion of the lesson text?

Why is the passage now under consideration important?

What does Paul teach on the same general subject?

Discuss the place of "discipline" in the Christian life.

In what way does Jesus illustrate this principle in dealing with the churches?

### A True Appraisal of Wisdom

What is suggested by the term "findeth"?

Illustrate the zeal with which people should seek for wisdom.

What great motive for action should always actuate the seeker?

Show that the same principle is also emphasized in the New Testament.

What, in your opinion, is the highest good which is possible to man in this life?

What is the strongest evidence that a man is wise after a godly sort?

What exhortation did Paul give regarding this question?

#### The Way to Confidence, Safety, and Security

Why are these things basic to all human beings?

How is this principle illustrated in daily living?

Why are doctors so concerned about such matters?

What does Solomon say should be done in order to have confidence, safety, and security?

Discuss the relation of wisdom and discretion as used in the text now under consideration.

In what way does wisdom manifest itself in the lives of people?

How does Solomon describe confidence, safety, and security in the lives of the Lord's people?

What does the New Testament teach on the same subject?

In what ways do all things work together for Christians?

What does it mean to be called according to the Lord's purpose?

Why cannot anything separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

### Lesson IX—August 29, 1965

## THE FRUITS OF WISDOM

### Lesson Text

#### Prov. 12: 1-15

1 Whoso loveth correction loveth knowledge;

But he that hateth reproof is brutish.

2 A good man shall obtain favor of Je-ho'-vah;

But a man of wicked devices will he condemn.

3 A man shall not be established by wickedness:

But the root of the righteous shall not be moved.

4 A worthy woman is the crown of her husband:

But she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.

5 The thoughts of the righteous are just:

*But* the counsels of the wicked are deceit.

6 The words of the wicked are of lying in wait for blood;

But the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.

7 The wicked are overthrown, and are not;

But the house of the righteous shall stand.

8 A man shall be commended according to his wisdom:

But he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.

9 Better is he that is lightly esteemed, and hath a servant. Than he that honoreth himself, and lacketh bread.

10 A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast;

But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

11 He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread;

But he that followeth after vain *persons* is void of understanding.

12 The wicked desireth the net of evil men;

But the root of the righteous yieldeth *fruit*.

13 In the transgression of the lips is a snare to the evil man;

But the righteous shall come out of trouble.

14 A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth;

And the doings of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.

15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes:

But lie that is wise hearkeneth unto counsel.

Golden Text.—*"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; yea, with all thy getting get understanding."* (Prov. 4: 7.)

Devotional Heading.—Prov. 4: 1-9.

### Daily Bible Readings

Aug. 23. M.....

Aug. 24. T.....

..... Wisdom Is Good for the Soul (Prov. 19: 1-8)

..... Wisdom Is Better Than Riches (Prov. 16: 13-18)

Aug. 25. W.  
 Aug. 26. T.  
 Aug. 27. F.  
 Aug. 28. S.  
 Aug. 29. S.

The Rod and Reproof Impart Wisdom (Prov. 29: 9-15)  
 Wisdom Greatly Exceeds Folly (Eccles. 2: 12-17)  
 The Effect of Wisdom in One's Life (Eccles. 8: 1-8)  
 Wisdom Often Comes from Unexpected Places (Prov. 6: 6-11)  
 The Scriptures Bring the Greatest Wisdom (2 Tim. 3: 14-17)

TIME.—1000 B.C.

PLACE.—Probably Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Solomon and those to whom he spoke.

## Introduction

When we think of fruits, we have in mind results; for that is the motive behind the efforts of every farmer, or any one else, who takes his work seriously. The parent, the educator, the administrator, and all who work with people hope for certain results from their activities; and they are disappointed, if they are not achieved. This is the motive behind the great commission, as recorded by Matthew. "Go ye therefore, and *make disciples of all the nations*, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: *teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you*: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28: 19, 20.)

Paul was always looking for fruit in the lives of the people whom he sought to influence, and from whatever work he sought to accomplish. When he wrote to the Romans, he said, "And I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you (and was hindered hitherto), *that I might have some fruit in you also*, even as in the rest of the Gentiles." (Rom. 1: 13.) When the great missionary apostle wrote to thank the Philippians for their material assistance, he said, "Not that I seek for the gift; *but I seek for the fruit that increaseth to your account*." (Phil. 4: 17.) This same writer reminded the wavering Galatians that "*the fruit of the Spirit* is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

meekness, self-control; against such there is no law. *And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof.*" (Gai. 5: 22-24.)

The writer of Hebrews in discussing the question of discipline, said, "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; *yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness*. Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the palsied knees; and make straight paths for your feet, that that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed." (Heb. 12: 11-13.) And James, speaking specifically regarding the subject of wisdom, said, "Who is wise and understanding among you? *let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom*. But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. This is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed. *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace,*" (James 3: 13-18.) When people are wise, in the Bible sense of the term, the fruit which is pleasing to God is certain to follow.

## The Golden Text

"*Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom; yea, with all thy getting get understanding.*" "Wisdom" and "understanding" are the synonymous terms in the parallel lines of the verse which is used as the golden text. This statement will appear brighter and more effective, if it is considered in the light of its

full context. "Hear, my sons, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding: for I give you good doctrine; forsake ye not my law. For I was a son unto my father, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. And he taught me, and said unto me: Let thy heart retain my words; keep my command-

ments, and live; get wisdom, get understanding; forget not, neither decline from the words of my mouth; forsake her not, and she will preserve thee; love her, and she will keep thee. Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom; yea, with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she will promote thee; she will bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her. She will give to thy head a chaplet of grace; a crown of beauty will she deliver to thee." (Prov. 4: 1-9.)

In his book, *The Silence and Voice of God*, Farrar makes the following observations regarding "wisdom": The world gives the name of wisdom to many higher and lower manifestations of intellectual foresight and practical sense, but Scripture sees in it nothing but one single law of life: "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." Some one may ask, Is knowledge worth the attainment, save the one knowledge which is wisdom? The answer is, To the true Christian every school will be a school of Christ. On the ample leaf of knowledge, whether it be rich with the secrets of nature or with the spoils of time, we will read no name save the name of God. To seek for knowledge where it is possible is the clear duty of man; to win it is the gift of God. Knowledge apart from wis-

dom is like a vestibule dis severed from its temple, but it may on the other hand be the worthy vestibule of that sacred shrine. Knowledge is a vain thing only when it is sought out of unworthy motives and applied to selfish ends; but it becomes noble and glorious when it is desired solely for man's benefit and consecrated wholly to God's praise. (See p. 119.)

It is only when people learn to put first things first, that they are truly prepared to be what they are capable of becoming. Jesus says, "Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness;" and when people do that, they are on the way to greatness in the sight of God. (See Matt. 6: 33; of. 5: 19.) Paul kept one goal in life before him, and wherever one finds him, or whatever he may be doing, as one reads his life's history, he is always pressing on toward that one aim in life. The wise man, in the chapter from which the golden text is taken, says, "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life." (Prov. 4: 13.) This passage should impress upon our minds both the importance and result of wisdom. When the Lord's people realize something of the value of wisdom, and what they may expect from its acquisition and maintenance, they are in the proper frame of mind to follow the instruction of the Scriptures in making an effort to lay hold upon it.

### The Text Explained

#### The Value of Correction and Other Proverbs (Prov. 12: 1-5)

*Whoso loveth correction loveth knowledge; but he that hateth reproof is brutish.*

The lesson text for this lesson is taken from a section of the Book of Proverbs which is almost wholly given to contrasts. Every one of the fifteen proverbs of the lesson now before us introduces the contrast by "but," with the exception of two; but even one of those verses contains a contrast. There is only one proverb in the entire fifteen which can be described as synonymous; all the others are antithetic. It should also be noted that there is no pattern of thought followed; instead, each proverb is complete within itself. They were all coined or spoken by Solo-

mon (cf. Prov. 10: 1), and were very probably collected and put in their present form by the editor of the Book of Proverbs.

It should be kept in mind that the proverbs of Solomon are usually sentences of ethical wisdom; and, with this idea in mind, let us consider the fifteen proverbs of this lesson. The term "correction" is used in the sense of disciplinary instruction, which tends to get one into the right way or to correct understanding. These corrective measures are not always pleasant (cf. Heb. 12: 11), but it is the result toward which the person in question looks. The individual who is in need of medical or surgical attention is happy to have the physician do whatever is necessary in order to correct the trouble, notwithstanding the fact that much pain and discom-



fort may follow his efforts, but he both loves and appreciates the doctor who did that which makes him well again. But he that hateth reproof, that is, that which is essential to the correction, is brutish: which means that he is no more appreciative of that which is done for his welfare, than a mere brute would be.

***A good man shall obtain favor of Jehovah; but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.***

A good man is one who lives as the Lord directs, and he can always be sure of his blessings. Barnabas is an example of a good man; and one has only to read that which the Book of Acts says about him, in order to see the manner in which he obtained the favor of the Lord. (Cf. Acts 4: 36, 37; 11: 19-26.) Jehovah looks with favor upon any one who will live according to his commandments, and he has promised to make all things work together for his good. (See Rom. 8: 28.) But the man who is characterized by wicked devices, that is, evil plans and intentions toward others, will be condemned. "Evil devices" include one's evil thoughts, words, and deeds. (Cf. Psalm 10: 2; Job 21: 27; 37: 7.)

***A man shall not be established by wickedness; but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.***

It sometimes appears that wicked people prosper more than do the righteous; but that is only the way it seems to be. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and prolong his days, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before him: but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God." (Eccles. 8: 11-13.) The wicked are not guided by a set principle, and they therefore make whatever change they feel will be to their advantage; and it is for this reason there is nothing of permanence with them: they cannot continue to be steadfast, and cannot therefore be established. But the root of the righteous shall not be moved; because it is firmly fixed in the Lord. (Cf. Psalm 1: 1-6.)

***A worthy woman is the crown of***

***her husband; but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.***

The Hebrew word for "worthy" is *chayil*. This term occurs many times in the Old Testament and is rendered by such words as strength, valor, etc. It is also the word from which we have "virtuous," and that is the meaning of the term here, as may be seen by reading the following passages where the same word is found. (Ruth 3: 11; Prov. 31: 10, 29.) There is no way to estimate the good which a woman of this character does to and for her husband; she is indeed his crown. But a woman who makes her husband ashamed, because she lacks virtue and prudence is, in the words of A. R. Fausset, "an incurable evil, affecting the inmost and most vital powers of mind and body; a plague in the privacy of home, as well as in public life. A disease in the bones is hard to cure."

***The thoughts of the righteous are just; but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.***

The term "thoughts" is used here in the sense of device or intention. Righteous people always intend and plan to deal justly with others. This is because they fear God and know that he understands their hearts. "For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. 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: 12, 13; of. Phil. 4: 8, 9.) But the counsels, that is, the plans or devices of the wicked are intended to deceive. (Cf. Acts 5: 3, marginal note.)

### **The Words of the Wicked and Other Proverbs**

(Prov. 12: 6-10)

***The words of the wicked are of lying in wait for blood; but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.***

The preceding proverb indicates the plans and intentions of the wicked, while in this one we see their specific aim. They may speak kindly, but their purpose is to destroy. This kind of an attitude is seen time and

again in the conduct of the Pharisees and others toward Jesus. (Cf. Matt. 12: 9, 10.) In saying, "But the mouth of the upright shall deliver them," the meaning could be (1) that the upright, by speaking wisely, would deliver themselves, as Jesus frequently did (cf. Luke 11: 53, 54; John 7: 45, 46; Matt. 22: 15-22); or (2) the victims of the plots of the wicked would be able to deliver themselves by heeding the words of the righteous (Prov. 1: 10-19).

*The wicked are overthrown, and are not; but the house of the righteous shall stand.*

One has only to read the Bible in order to see how true this statement is. The house of David, for example, was prolonged because of his righteousness; but it was a frequent thing to witness the destruction of a reigning house of Israel because of wickedness. Practically the same proposition is stated in another proverb in Prov. 10: 25, "When the whirlwind passeth, the wicked is no more; but the righteous is an everlasting foundation." And again, "The righteous shall never be removed; but the wicked shall not dwell in the land." (Prov. 10: 30.) In commenting on the proverb now before us, Adam Clarke says, "God blesses their [that is, the righteous] progeny, and their families continue long in the earth; whereas the wicked seldom have many generations in direct line. This is God's mercy, that the entail of iniquity may be in some sort cut off, so that the same vices may not be strengthened by successive generations. For generally the bad *root* produces not only a bad *plant*, but one *worse than itself*."

*A man shall be commended according to his wisdom; but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.*

Both God and righteous people approve or commend a man in proportion to his wisdom, rather than by his apparent success, according to world standards. The world, however, judges according to success or failure. And God and his people likewise condemn or despise a man who has a perverse heart. But if such a person can turn his perverseness into worldly success, he is commended by worldly people as a man who has attained the desired end. In the words of Grantland Rice,

"For when the One Great Scorer come

To write against your name,  
He writes—not that you won or lost—

But how you played the game."

*Better is he that is lightly esteemed, and hath a servant, than he that honoreth himself, and lacketh bread.*

This is the only antithetical proverb in the list we are considering which does not introduce the contrast with the term "but." The contrast here is between the man who lives an unpretentious life, and is lightly esteemed by his neighbors, but who has plenty, even a servant; and the man who boasts of that which he claims to have and be, but who lacks the necessities of life. Clarke quotes the Vulgate, that is the Latin Version of the Scriptures: "Better is the poor man who provides for himself, than the proud who is destitute of bread." and says that he believes that this is the true sense of the passage. He then adds, "The versions in general agree with this sense. This needs no comment. There are some who, through *pride of birth*, etc., would rather starve, than put their hands to menial labor. Though they may be *lords*, how much to be preferred is the simple peasant, who supports himself and family by the drudgery of life!"

*A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.*

The law of Moses specifically enjoined kindness and mercy to the brute creation (cf. Deut. 25: 4; Lev. 22: 28); and mercy, whether with reference to man or beast, is one of the outstanding characteristics of people who fear God. Such people cannot bring themselves to mistreat helpless, dumb animals. Adam Clarke said that once, during his travels, he saw the first part of this proverb painted on a sign board in Hebrew; and that it very appropriately reminded him that he should feed his horse. But if wicked people appear to be merciful, it is only to cover up their purposes of cruelty.

**The Honest Toiler and Other Proverbs**

(Prov. 12: 11-15)

*He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread; but he that follow-*

*eth after vain persons is void of understanding.*

God has ordained that man must gain his livelihood from honest toil, and those who engage in such occupations will have the blessings of God upon them. We all remember the story of Ruth, the stranger in Bethlehem, who went out into the grain fields, where she knew no one, and gleaned, so that she could have food for her widowed mother-in-law and herself; and she was richly blessed. When people are willing to do their best at whatever their hands find to do, they usually have that which they need. But when those who can work, but who instead follow after those in idleness, or, as Fausset puts it, "such as love vanity, shrink from honest labor, delight in sleep, indolence, play, and idle talk," are without understanding, and shall lack the necessary things of life. Paul gives some specific instruction regarding this kind of a situation. (See 2 Thess. 3: 6-15.)

*The wicked desireth the net of evil men; but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit.*

In commenting on the first clause of this proverb, Matthew Henry says, "What is the care and aim of a wicked man; he would do mischief; he desires the net of evil men; Oh that I were but as cunning as such a man, to make a hand of those I deal with; that I had but his art in over-reaching; that I could but take my revenge on one I have spite to, as effectually as he can!" He desires the *strong-hold, or fortress*, of evil men, so some read it, that it may not turn upon him." But the righteous, seeking their good from within, do not have to depend upon a confeder-

tion with others for their welfare.

*In the transgression of the lips is a snare to the evil man; but the righteous shall come out of trouble.*

Wicked people, when they violate God's law by bearing false witness, uttering calumnies, and speaking lies, very often find themselves the victims of the evil which they sought to do to others. They are snared by their own wicked conduct. But if the righteous are entrapped in such evil, they will come out of it; for they depend upon God as their Vindicator. (Cf. Matt. 5: 10-12; Rom. 8: 31-39.)

*A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth; and the doings of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.*

This is the only synonymous proverb in the list which we are considering today. The teacher or anyone else, as for that matter, who speaks good words, will be able to see the fruit of his lips and be satisfied; and the same will be true with reference to the deeds of his hands. Both the results of his words and his deeds shall return to bless him.

*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes; but he that is wise hearkeneth unto counsel.*

A "fool" is the opposite of a wise man. He endeavors to do his own thinking, to live without God, and steadfastly refuses to heed the advice of others. He considers his own attitude correct, and all others in error. But the wise are those who recognize their own limitations; they do not think that they have in their possession all wisdom and knowledge. (Cf. Job 12: 1-3.) Matthew Henry notes that what keeps a wise man from being a fool is his willingness to listen to the counsel of others.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What comes into our minds when we think of "fruit"?

In what way did the Lord emphasize this idea?

Show that Paul was always looking for fruit in the lives of the people he influenced.

How does the proper kind of discipline bring fruit for those who are exercised thereby?

What does James say about wisdom?  
How may one be certain that the proper kind of fruit is produced in his life?

### The Golden Text

In what way are "wisdom" and "understanding" related?

Under what circumstances did Solomon speak the words of the golden text?

Discuss the difference between the wisdom of the Bible and that of the world.

Why is wisdom the principal thing and how may one get it?

Why is it important to put first things first?

In what way was this principal illustrated in Paul's life?

### The Value of Correction and Other Proverbs

What is the nature of the proverbs which we are to study today?

How are they related to each other?  
 In what do the proverbs of Solomon usually consist?  
 In what sense is the word "correction" used in the first one for today?  
 How should people feel toward such measures?  
 What is the difference between the righteous and the wicked in this respect?  
 Why will the good man obtain the favor of the Lord?  
 What will be the fate of the wicked?  
 Why cannot a wicked man be established?  
 Why cannot the root of the righteous be moved?  
 Who is a worthy woman and in what way is she a crown to her husband?  
 How can a wife make her husband ashamed, as set forth in the text now before us?  
 What "thoughts" of the righteous and what "counsels" of the wicked?  
 How do the two differ in this respect?  
 In what way are the words of the wicked of lying in wait for blood?  
 How can the mouth of the upright deliver them?

What usually happens to the houses of the wicked and the righteous?  
 By what standards do God and his people appraise others?  
 Why is the man who is lightly esteemed better than the boaster?  
 What does one's attitude toward beasts reveal regarding his character?  
 In what way are the tender mercies of the wicked cruel?

#### The Honest Toiler and Other Proverbs

What has Jehovah ordained as it respects one's livelihood?  
 What is the meaning of following after vain persons?  
 Why do the wicked desire the net of evil men?  
 What fruit does the root of the righteous bear?  
 How are evil men snared by the transgression of the lips?  
 What escape do the righteous have from trouble and what trouble?  
 What results accrue from the words and deeds of the righteous?  
 What is the major difference between a fool and a man who listens to counsel?

### Lesson X—September 5, 1965

## WARNINGS AND ADMONITIONS

### Lesson Text

#### Eccles. 5: 1-12

1 Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God; for to draw nigh to hear is better than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they know not that they do evil.

2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

3 For a dream cometh with a multitude of business, and a fool's voice with a multitude of words.

4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou vowest.

5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

6 Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thy hands?

7 For in the multitude of dreams there are vanities, and in many words: but fear thou God.

8 If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and the violent taking away of justice and righteousness in a province, marvel not at the matter: for one higher than the high regardeth; and there are higher than they.

9 Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king *himself* is served by the field.

10 He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance, with increase: this also is vanity.

11 When goods increase, they are increased that eat them; and what advantage is there to the owner thereof, save the beholding of *them* with his eyes?

12 The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the fulness of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.

Golden Text.—*"The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself"* (Eccles. 10: 12.)

Devotional Reading.—Eccles. 3: 1-15.

### Daily Bible Readings

Aug. 30. M. ....

It is Always Wise to Heed Warnings (Prov. 10: 17-22)

Aug. 31. T. .... It Is the Duty of the Informed to Give Warnings (Ezek. 33: 1-9)

- Sept. 1. W. .... Warning Always Increases Responsibility (Ezek. 33: 10-16)  
 Sept. 2. .... T. Paul Prolonged His Admonition (Acts 20: 28-35)  
 Sept. 3. F. .... Admonition Frees One from the Blood of Others (Acts 20: 17-27)  
 Sept. 4. S. .... Admonition Should Be Accompanied by Teaching (Col. 1: 24-29)  
 Sept. 5. S. .... The Elders Should Admonish the Flock (1 Thess. 5: 12-15)

TIME.—977 B.C. (The time of Solomon.)

PLACE.—Probably Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Solomon and possibly another writer.

## Introduction

This is the third of the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament to be considered during this quarter. The other two were Job and Proverbs. The book from which this and the next lesson are taken is called *Ecclesiastes*, and it should be of interest to us to learn something about how that term came to be applied to this part of the Bible. If one uses the American Standard Version of the Scriptures, he will see that the title of the book is *Ecclesiastes*, or The Preacher. This designation is from the Hebrew *Qoheleth* which means "preacher" or "-collector of sentences" (see *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, by Brown, Driver, and Briggs.) The Greek translators of the Old Testament called him *Ekklesiastes*. While Jerome, in his Latin Vulgate Version used the term *Ecclesiastes*. Thus, the Hebrew *Qoheleth*, the Greek *Ekklesiastes*, the Latin *Ecclesiastes*, and the English Preacher mean exactly the same thing.

No one knows for certain who wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes, or when; and under ordinary circumstances. It would be in order to say that, inasmuch as the name of the writer is not given, the question is not important. But this appears to be an unusual situation. It is true that the opening sentence of the book says, "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem," who evidently was Solomon; but that does not say that Solomon was the actual writer. Adam Clarke, in referring to a work which he had examined regarding this book, says, "Of the authenticity of the book of *Ecclesiastes* I have no doubt; but I must say, the language and style puzzle me not a little. Chaldaisms and Syriacisms are certainly frequent in it, and not a few Chaldee words and terminations; and the style is such as may be seen in those writers who lived at or after the captivity. If these can

be reconciled with the age of Solomon, I have no objection; but the attempts that have been made to deny this, and overthrow the evidence, are in my view often trifling, and generally ineffectual. That Solomon, son of David, might have been the author of the whole matter of this, and a subsequent writer put it in his own language, is a possible case; and were this to be allowed, it would solve all difficulties. Let us place the supposition thus: Solomon said all these things, and they are highly worthy of his wisdom; and a Divine writer, after his time, who does not mention his name, gives us a faithful version of the whole in his own language."

If one will take the time to read the entire book of Ecclesiastes at the sitting, he will be able to see that there is, indeed, a difference in style. J. Lawrence Eason, in his book, *The New Bible Survey*, is of the opinion that the writer of Ecclesiastes made use of a well known technique, employed by writers through the years, such as Plato, Browning, and others, in which the writer either used the actual words of the hero of his composition, in this case the words of Solomon himself, or put the appropriate language into the mouth of the hero, and then offered some comments of his own. In the words of Dr. Eason, "As we have seen, Ecclesiastes lets King Solomon be the speaker in his composition. From the viewpoint of this imaginary mouthpiece, the author develops his discourse on the vanity and unreality of a philosophy which limits life to the short, incomplete, and often unsatisfactory days of man's present existence here on the earth. The Solomon through whom the author speaks, is not the wise and prosperous king we meet in the early years, but the Solomon of old age, at the end of his days, when life for him was full of disappointment and futility, perhaps mainly because of the

evil influences surrounding the Court in the later years, including his own defection."

If one will study the history of Solomon himself, as recorded by the inspired writers of the Old Testament (cf. 1 Kings 11: 1-13), it will be easy for him to see that it would be extremely unlikely that the king would continue, in his latter days, to be the effectual teacher of truth, as it is set forth in the Book of Ecclesiastes. *The New Bible Dictionary*, in outlining the contents of the book, says, "The theme of the book is a search for the key to the meaning of life. The Preacher examines life from all an-

gles to see where satisfaction can be found. He finds that God alone holds the key, and he must be trusted. Meanwhile we are to take life day by day from his hand, and glorify him in the ordinary things." The writer then goes on to say that "within this general framework Ecclesiastes falls into two main divisions of thought, (a) 'the futility of life,' and (b) 'the answer of practical faith.' These run concurrently through its chapters." Not only is the Book of Ecclesiastes an inspired book; it is truly one of the great books of all time; and any one who will learn its lessons well will be a better person.

### The Golden Text

*"The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself."* These words are taken from a chapter which is largely given over to some observations on the contrast between wisdom and folly. The words of a wise man win him favor, for they are gracious; but the words of a fool will be detrimental to him, for they will cause others to realize that he is indeed a fool. The entire paragraph in which the words of the golden text are found reads as follows: "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness; and the end of his talk is mischievous madness. A fool also multiplied words; yet man knoweth not what shall be; and that which shall be after him, who can tell him? The labor of fools wearieth every one of them; for he knoweth not how to go to the city."

The reason why the words of a wise man's mouth are gracious is because they are right and orderly; he endeavors to say the proper thing, in the proper manner, and at the proper time. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in network of silver." (Prov. 25: 11.) When Jesus spoke in the synagogue in Nazareth, at the be-

ginning of his great Galilean ministry, those who heard him "bare him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth." (Luke 4: 22.) This is also the kind of speech which should characterize the Lord's people. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one." (Col. 4: 6; of. Eph. 4: 29.)

The case of fools, however, is different; for that which they speak is usually at random, with little order or purpose. And that which they say, instead of either benefiting or destroying others, will have the effect of destroying themselves. "But the lips of a fool will swallow up himself." One of the proverbs of Solomon puts it this way: "The lips of the righteous feed many; but the foolish die for lack of understanding." (Prov. 10: 21.) Many a thoughtless man has spoken words which resulted in his own death. (Cf. 1 Kings 2: 13-25; Psalm 64: 8.) The best way to avoid this fate is to heed the admonition of the apostle Paul, namely, "Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." (Eph. 5: 15-17.)

### The Text Explained

A Word of Caution Regarding: True  
Worshippers  
(Eccles. 5: 1-7)

*Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God; for to draw nigh to hear is better than to give the*

*sacrifice of fools: for they know not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be*

*few. For a dream cometh with a multitude of business, and a fool's voice with a multitude of words.*

The chapter from which the lesson text is taken is closely related to the preceding chapter, and it should be read before entering the one now under consideration. In chapter 4, the writer lists a number of conditions which are not satisfactory. He begins by saying, "Then I returned and saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and, behold, the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead that have been long dead more than the living that are yet alive; yea, better than them both did I esteem him that hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun." (Eccles. 4: 1-3.)

The idea behind the situation as it is presented by the writer of Ecclesiastes is that of a person who is weary of conditions in which he finds himself, and who longs for something better, which can be found only in the house of the Lord. The New Testament pictures the church as a haven of rest, a fold of security from the dangers and distresses of the world, a place to which one may flee from the corruptions which are in the world about him, and which will end in eternal death. When people can be brought to realize their need of the Lord, they are then ready to seek his blessings which are to be found in his house. Paul, in writing the Ephesian letter, says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 1: 3.) There is no other place where these things can be found. (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 3, 4.)

But when people come into the church, they must be taught how to behave themselves therein. "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim. 3: 14, 15.) This has reference to Christian conduct with reference to both God and man; and no one can be pleas-

ing to the Lord who ignores this injunction. Therefore, when any one draws near to God to worship, there are some things which he should carefully keep in mind, namely, he should watch his steps, and be ready to hear. In other words, try to make certain that he is walking in the right way, and is willing to listen to the word of the Lord. That, says the writer of Ecclesiastes, is better than to give the sacrifice of fools, that is, to attempt to worship the Lord in a way which he has not authorized. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to Jehovah; but the prayer of the upright is his delight." (Prov. 15: 8; of. Matt. 7: 21-23.)

It would be a fine thing if the words of verse 2 could be kept at all times before the minds of those who come before Jehovah in worship. These words are, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon the earth: therefore let thy words be few." When this admonition is placed along beside that which goes on in the average congregation of worshippers, it is not difficult to see how great the need is for its application. The matter is expressed by *The Sermon Outline Bible* in these words: "There is a preparation for the sanctuary. Not only should there be prayer beforehand for God's blessings there, but a studious effort to concentrate on its services all our faculties. In the spirit of the significant Oriental usage which drops its sandals at the palace door, the devout worshipper will put off his travel-tarnished shoes—will try to divest himself of secular anxieties and worldly projects—when the place where he stands is converted into holy ground by the words, 'Let us worship God.'" Just as dreams often follow a trying day of activities (travail, margin), so a multitude of words flow from the workings of a fool's mind.

*When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou vowest. Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and*

*destroy the work of thy hands? For in the multitude of dreams there are vanities, and in many words: but fear thou God.*

The term "vow" is used in the sense of a pledge or promise to do something; a commitment. The Lord's people must exercise caution in their speech, and they must likewise exercise caution in their promises. The reference here is probably to a difficult or distressing situation in which one sometimes finds himself. It is often the case that one, during his anxious moments, will promise the Lord that he will do so and so, if he is delivered from such troubles. There is, of course, nothing wrong in making commitments under such conditions, provided the promises are reasonable and within one's power to keep; but no one should ever be guilty of making rash pledges and pledges which he has no intention of keeping.

It also happens that people who desire to make good in their business, or who want to be the recipients of large returns from their investments in time, labor, and money, will make promises to the Lord regarding their gains. "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Jehovah will be my God, then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." (Gen. 28: 20-22.) Such vows are commendable, if a sincere effort is made to keep them.

The writer of the book from which the lesson now under consideration is taken warns that one should not allow his mouth to cause him to sin, such as making a vow which he does not intend to keep. It will not be enough for him to say to God's messenger, whether human or divine, that he made a mistake in making the vow; for why "should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thy hands?" But this lesson may also be extended to matters such as our commitment to the Lord when we obey the gospel, that is, when we become his people. The writer of Hebrews exhorts, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it

waver not; for he is faithful that promised." (Heb. 10: 23.) It makes no difference what the vow is about, or under what conditions it was made, the Lord expects his people to do that which they pledged themselves to do. This is a lesson which every professed follower of Christ would do well to consider well.

But one might say that if what has been said is the truth of the matter, then one should make no vow at all. However, the error of that viewpoint is easily seen; for no one can please the Lord who does not make some commitments. He must, in fact, commit himself to the Lord, and that will include the doing of many things, more or less voluntarily, in his service. When the writer of the lesson text suggests that it is better not to vow, than to vow and not fulfill, he was not encouraging people not to make commitments; he was warning against rashness in such matters. (Cf. 2 Pet. 2: 20-22; Luke 14: 28-35.)

#### Unwarranted Oppression and Mutual Dependence (Eccles. 5: 8, 9)

*If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and the violent taking away of justice and righteousness in a province, marvel not at the matter: for one higher than the high regarded: and there are higher than they. Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field.*

The reader of Ecclesiastes might be led to ask, If God punishes hasty words and vows, why does he allow gross injustice toward the poor? This was, and still is, especially in provinces and states which are not under the immediate supervision of the head of the government, in the case now before us, the king. But such things are to be expected, or at least: no one should be surprised at them, as long as men in their desire for gain have the opportunity of taking advantage of the poor and weaker ones. Bible students are not agreed as to the meaning of the expression "for one higher than the high regarded; and there are higher than they." Some think that the reference is to one official will protect those below him from those above him; and so on throughout the entire hierarchy.



Others are of the opinion that the reference is to the place which God holds above all. Matthew Henry puts the matter in this way: When things look dismal for us here, we may comfort ourselves by remembering that God is over all, and that things will be properly dealt in his own time and way. A quotation from Adam Clarke has it thusly:

"Marvel not,  
Ye righteous, if his dispensations  
here  
Unequal seem, What, though disorders reign?  
He still presides, and with unerring hand  
Directs the vast machine. His wisdom can  
From discord harmony produces;  
and make  
Even vice itself subservient to his ends."

Evil men may feel that they are secure, but God has an eye upon them; and will give them their just dues at the proper time. There is no sin which can escape his sight. Whatever happens to God's people, he can make all things work together for their good. (See Horn. 8: 28.) Furthermore, Jehovah has ordained that profit of the earth is for all, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak. Even the king is dependent on those who till the ground. Without the field he could not have the necessities for his own household. All men, whatever their station in life, have a mutual dependence; for no one can live to himself.

#### Anxieties Multiply with Possessions (Eccles. 5: 10-12)

*He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance, with increase: this also is vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them; and what advantage is there to the owner thereof, save the beholding of them with his eyes? The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the fulness of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.*

If the love of money is in the heart of a person, he will never be satisfied with riches. It was the satirical Latin poet Juvenal who said, "The love of money grows as the money itself grows;" and he also said, "Every man's credit is proportioned to the money which he has in his chest." Benjamin Franklin, the philosopher once remarked, "If you would know the value of money, go and try to borrow some." Money indeed has its place, but it should never be allowed to become the master of any one.

An increase of property always brings an increase in expense; for more servants are required to manage it, and that means more expense in providing for them. The waiter of the text therefore concludes that only pleasure which the owner of such riches has from them, is the seeing of them with his eyes. It always remains true, as Luther expressed the matter, that "whoso gathers riches, gathers devourers," either during his life time, or after he is gone. The apostle Paul gives this admonition, through his son Timothy, to those who are rich: "Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed." (1 Tim. 6: 17-19; cf. Luke 16: 1-13; James 5: 1-6.)

The man who must work for his living does not usually have the anxieties which go with an accumulation of goods, or with the desire to accumulate them; and when his day is over, he is ready for sleep. His weariness from works causes him to sleep, whether he eats much or little; but the rich man is filled with both anxiety and food, and his sleep does not come so easily.

#### Questions for Discussion

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

##### Introduction

What is the nature of the book from

which this and the next lesson are taken?  
How did it come to be called Ecclesiastes?  
What is known regarding the actual writer of the book?

What appears to be the nature of its contents?  
What is the purpose of the book?

#### The Golden Text

Discuss the setting of the golden text.  
Why are the words of a wise man's mouth gracious?  
In what way do the lips of a fool swallow up himself?

#### A Word of Caution Regarding True Worshippers

What is the idea behind the opening words of this section of the lesson text?  
When is a person really ready to enter into the house of the Lord?  
Why must people be taught how to behave themselves in the church and what does that mean?  
What preparations should be made by the worshipper?  
What is the "sacrifice of fools"?  
What is the meaning of "vowing"?  
Show how this may be applied to people today?  
Why is this teaching emphasized so little today?

#### Unwarranted Oppression and Mutual Dependence

Why should one not be surprised at the oppression of the poor?  
Wherein does the hope of such people lie?  
What has the Lord promised regarding such matters?  
What is Jehovah's will regarding the profit of the earth?  
Why are all people mutually dependent regarding such matters?

#### Anxieties Multiply with Possessions

Why can't the man who loves money be satisfied with riches?  
What is a good way to find out how the world regards money?  
What always follows an increase in one's wealth?  
What, then, is such a person's only advantage?  
What does the New Testament teach on the subject of riches?  
Why is the sleep of a laboring man sweet?  
What difference does his eating make in this respect?  
What "fulness" keeps the rich man from sleeping?

## Lesson XI—September 12, 1965

# REMEMBERING OUR CREATOR

## Lesson Text

Eccles. 12: 1-14

1 Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

2 Before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars, are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain;

3 In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened,

4 And the doors shall be shut in the street; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one shall rise up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low;

5 Yea, they shall be afraid of *that which is high*, and terrors *shall be* in the way; and the almond-tree shall blossom, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goeth to his everlasting home, and the mourners go about the streets:

6 Before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or

the wheel broken at the cistern,

7 And the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it.

8 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity.

9 And further, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he pondered, and sought out, *and* set in order many proverbs.

10 The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written uprightly, *even* words of truth.

11 The words of the wise are as goads; and as nails well fastened are *the words of* the masters of assemblies, *which* are given from one shepherd.

12 And furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

13 *This is* the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole *duty* of man.

14 For God will bring every word into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth"*  
(Eccles. 12: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Eccles. 11: 1-10.

### Daily Bible Readings

Sept. 6.	M.....	We Owe Our Very Being to God (Acts 17: 22-28)
Sept. 7.	T.....	It Is Often Easy to Forget and Become Ungrateful (Gen. 41: 9-13)
Sept. 8.	W.....	Thinking People Are Thankful People (Psalm 103: 1-5)
Sept. 9.	T.....	Immediate Action Prevents Forgetting (James 1: 22-25)
Sept. 10.	F.....	We Must Remember God If We Expect Him to Remember Us (Psa. 145: 14-21)
Sept. 11.	S.....	Remember Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 2: 8-13)
Sept. 12.	S.....	Comfort Often Comes by Remembering (Psalm 77: 1-20)

TIME.—977 B.C. (The time of Solomon.)

PLACE.—Probably Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Solomon and possibly another writer.

### Introduction

Any one who is acquainted with the Bible is aware of the fact that it contains information which meets the needs of every responsible human being, regardless of what those needs may be. In his final letter which has come down to us, Paul says, "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.) The apostle frequently addressed his instruction for righteous living to various classes and ages, as he wrote his epistles which we have in the New Testament—the aged men, the aged women, the young women, the younger men, servants, et al. (See Tit. 2: 1-10.) The writer of *Ecclesiastes* followed the same principle when he wrote the words of the text new before us.

As one reads the different books of the Bible, he is often impressed with the faith of the men who wrote them, or of those about whom they wrote. The principle of genuine faith is always the same; but as long as human beings have their constitutional differences, it is only natural that they should manifest different aspects of faith. For example, the faith of

Moses may be described as a self-sacrificing faith; and, in a similar manner, we may say that Isaiah had an expectant faith; Jeremiah, a sustaining faith; Daniel, a consoling faith; while the writer of the book now before us had what may be described as a daringly honest faith, that is, a faith which looked squarely at the facts of life, and saw God in or behind the very things which hid him from many others.

The *Book of Ecclesiastes* has been described as a philosophy which ponders the problem of human existence. Adam Clarke calls it the finest monument we have of the wisdom of the ancients, except the *Book of Job*. Hailey, in contrasting *Ecclesiastes* with the latter, notes that *Job* was the case of a man who came through terrible suffering to a triumphant end, while *Ecclesiastes* was the case of a man who, through luxury and human glory, fell to the depths of gloom and despair. The writer of *Ecclesiastes* clearly understood that the world itself will pass away, but he knew that the people who live in the world will have to stand in judgment and account for their deeds, whether they are good or bad; and it was for that reason that he appealed to the young in years to remember their Creator.

### The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is a part of the main text, and it will be considered in normal place.

### The Text Explained

Remember God While Young; for  
Soon It Will Be Later Than You  
Think

(Eccles. 12: 1-7)

*Remember also thy Creator in the  
days of thy youth, before the evil*

*days come, and the years draw nigh,  
when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure  
in them; before the sun, and the  
light, and the moon, and the stars, are  
darkened, and the clouds return after  
the rain; in the days when the keep-*

ers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the street; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one shall rise up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; yea, they shall be afraid of that which is high, and terrors shall be in the way; and the almond-tree shall blossom, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goeth to his everlasting home, and the mourners go about the streets: before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it.

The word "also" in the expression "Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth," implies that something else had been said to that age group. It is found in the last verses of the preceding chapter. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh; for youth and the dawn of life are vanity." (Eccles. 11: 9, 10.)

Therefore, in addition to that which had just been said, the writer admonishes, "Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth. The term "remember," as used here, means to keep God in mind, with a view to serving him. (Cf. Deut. 8: 18-20; Jer. 51: 50.) When one recalls who God is and what he has done for him, it is much easier for him to depend upon him. (Cf. 2 Tim. 1: 12.) William Hazlitt, the English essayist, began one of the most important of his essays with these words: "No young man thinks that he shall ever die." But the proper remembrance of God will inspire young people with a sense of their opportunity and responsibility. Hastings notes that the French have a saying, "If youth but knew and age had power"; and he then adds.. "It is almost a Proverb,

so deep and full of wisdom is its sad truth. If youth but knew that youth is their spring! If youth but knew that they are shaping their future! If youth but knew that it has opportunities that will never come again!" Youth is the time to take advantage of opportunities and discharge responsibilities. Continual remembrance of God encourages the growth and development of the spirit. The soul, like plants in the vegetable kingdom, must be cultivated, if it is to grow and be protected from harmful influences. (Cf. Luke 8: 14.)

There are some basic reasons why young people should remember God.

(1) He is their Creator, and they are therefore not their own. No one has the right to ignore the master to whom he belongs. (Cf. Rom. 6: 15-23; 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20.) In addition to being their Creator, God is also their Preserver and Benefactor (cf. Acts 17: 26-28), and has made it possible for them to know, love, and serve him. (2) Notwithstanding the fact that they are young, they have no guarantee of the future. *Now* is theirs; *tomorrow* may never be. (Cf. Prov. 27: 1; James 4: 13-17.) They should therefore avail themselves of their present opportunity to serve their Creator, not only because he made them, but also because he made it possible for them to fit themselves for an eternal abode with him. (3) And too, the older they get, the more difficult it will be for them to break away from sin and begin serving God. This is true for two reasons, namely, (a) the infirmities of the flesh, which we are to consider next; and (b) the hardening of the heart. (Heb. 3: 13; 4: 7.)

The motive which the writer of Ecclesiastes gives for remembering one's Creator is "before the evil days come, and the days draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." This is followed by a picture of the winter of old age in contrast with the spring of youth. Eason notes that "the writer, in one of the famous passages in the Old Testament, gives this symbolic and poetic description of creeping old age, and its infirmities, as a contrasting picture with youth and its disregard for the counsel of the wise. And it is one of several beautiful passages which add weight and substance, and value, to the book of Ecclesiastes."

Many commentators regard the picture something like the following: The sun, light, moon, and stars of the springtime of youth are darkened by the winter of old age; and instead of sunshine following the rain, the clouds of trouble continue to return. The body is compared to a house, with keepers (the arms and hands) and strong men (the legs and feet). The arms and hands become palsied, while the feet and legs become weak. The grinders are the teeth, while those that look out of the windows are the eyes. The "doors" which are shut in the street could refer either to the ears or to the lips. In either case, the mouth would be closed while eating, and therefore the sound of the grinding would be low. Old people do not always sleep as well as when they were younger, and they are ready to get up at the crowing of the cock, or the chirping of the birds. The voice is no longer able to sing as it once could, and the ear can no longer appreciate it. They are afraid to get on high places, and even afraid of falling in the way. The hair becomes white like the almond-tree, and the body, once erect, now resembles the bent body of the grasshopper which becomes a burden to itself. They no longer desire pleasant food and other enjoyments, as they once did; for they shall soon be ready for their long home, that is, their home after death; while the mourners go about the streets. Verses six and seven refer to death.

The Preacher and His Words of  
Wisdom  
(Eccles. 12: 8-12)

*Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity. And further, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he pondered, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written uprightly, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads; and as nails well fastened are the words of the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. And furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.*

It was pointed out in the previous

lesson that no one knows for certain who wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes; but when all the facts are taken into consideration, it appears reasonable to conclude that the actual writing was done by some one who lived many years after Solomon's day. It was also pointed out that the book opens with these words, "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem," which evidently refers to Solomon; but, as already suggested, that does not say that Solomon was the actual writer. It is hardly probable that Solomon would have said, "I the Preacher *was* king over Israel in Jerusalem" (Eccles. 1: 12); instead, he likely would have said, "I the Preacher *am* king over Israel in Jerusalem:" for he remained king until his death. But if some later writer penned the book we are now considering, he simply used the thoughts, ideas, and words of Solomon to set forth some needed teaching; and there is no doubt but that he wrote by inspiration.

With the view of the matter which has been stated before us, it appears easy to see how the writer re-stated and emphasized many of the words and much of the teaching which Solomon had set forth during his lifetime. He begins the dissertation with these words: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (Eccles. 1: 2); and now as he nears the end of the message, he repeats that statement: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity" (Eccles. 12: 8). This, of course, refers to the "earthly" side of the question. The writer then goes on to point out that which the Preacher did, namely, (1) he was a wise man, and he still taught the people knowledge. His wisdom came from God (1 Kings 3: 4-15), which implies that he was an inspired man. (2) He pondered, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. (1 Kings 4: 29-34.) (3) He made an effort, as a servant of the Lord, to see to it that the right thing was said. (Verse 10.) All of this must have been before Solomon's defection; for it is not reasonable to suppose that he would have continued to teach the truth after he fell into sin and rebellion against God. (Cf. 1 Kings 9: 1-9; 11: 9-13.) This is another reason for thinking that some one other than Solomon

actually wrote the book from which these lessons are taken.

The words of those who speak by inspiration are like goads which urge the oxen on (cf. Acts 2: 37; 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17); while the things spoken by masters of assemblies, or, collectors of sentences (margin), are compared to nails which have been well fastened, and which hold the hearers together. These are the words and sayings which are given from one shepherd, which apparently means that they were inspired by God. These are the things by which the Lord's people should be admonished. There is no end to the making of books of human wisdom, and much study is a weariness of the flesh; but that kind of learning is not what the soul needs. Man must live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (See Matt. 4: 4.) This is the kind of teaching which the young must have, if they are to remember their Creator in the days of their youth.

#### The Inevitable Conclusion (Eccles. 12: 13, 14)

*This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

Some of the Bible students who think that Solomon wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes, are of the opinion that it was written near the close of his life; and that his purpose was to show the wretched plight of a mis-spent life like that of his own. Others, however, feel that the book was written by some other wise Hebrew whose aim was to set forth the true meaning of life through the personality of the wise but erring king who apparently died as an apostate. There is no indication in the inspired record that Solomon ever repented of the sins of his old age. (Cf. Neh. 13: 26; and see again 1 Kings 11: 9-13.) But regardless of who wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes, it claims to be inspired, and the conclusion toward which it aims is unmistakable, namely, "This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For

God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

The writer, whoever he was, has finished his task; he has accomplished his purpose in the dissertation which he has set before his reader; it has only one aim, and that is to impress upon them the true meaning of life, namely, Fear, that is, reverence God, and keep, that is, obey, his commandments (cf. Acts 10: 34, 35); for this is the whole man, or God's ideal for him. The term "duty," which is italicized, is not in the original. Adam Clarke says that the word *duty*, added here by our translators, spoils, if not perverts, the sense. Elsewhere in the discourse, the writer has said, "Behold, this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." (Eccles. 7: 29.) This would never have happened, if men had revered God, and had obeyed his commandments. (Cf. Horn. 1: 18-32.) There is no other place in the Bible which gives a clearer picture of God's ideal for man, than that which is found in the passage now before us; but we must remember that it can be reached only in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 14-17; 2 Pet. 1: 3, 4.)

One of the most august scenes pictured in the Bible is that of the last judgment. The best that any one can do in presenting that picture is to let the Scriptures speak for themselves; and that is what is being done here. "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he hath commanded men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17: 30, 31; of. John 16: 10.) Not only will there be a judgment day; it will be conducted strictly on the basis of righteousness. When the mother of James and John asked Jesus for places on his right and left hands in his kingdom, the Lord replied, "Ye know not what ye ask." He then told them that such a request as they were making was not his to give; "but it is for them for

whom it hath been prepared of my Father." (See Matt. 20: 20-23.) Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people; and not even God can take unrighteous people into the home of the soul. (John 14: 1-6; 12: 48-50; 1 John 5: 17.)

"Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him. For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. 5: 9, 10.) Some other translations of this passage are: "We therefore make it our ambition, wherever we are, here or there, to be acceptable to him. For we must all have our lives laid open before the tribunal of Christ, where each must receive what is due to him for his conduct in the body, good or bad." (The New English Bible.) "It is our aim, therefore, to please him, whether we are 'at home' or 'away.' For every one of us will have to stand without pretense before Christ our judge, and we shall be rewarded for what we did when we lived in our bodies, whether it was good or bad." (Phillips.)

It is said that some one once asked Daniel Webster what was the most solemn thought which ever entered his mind, and that he promptly replied by saying, "The fact that I must stand in the presence of God, and be judged for that which I did while here upon the earth." When people are properly informed regarding the truth of a proposition, there are few things which will affect their standing before God, more than the motives which prompt their actions. Archibald Alexander once remarked, "Men are more accountable for their motives, than for anything else." And these words from Hugh Blair: "In the eyes of that Supreme Being to whom our whole internal frame is uncovered, motives and dispositions hold the place of action." There are motives and dispositions behind all responsible action; and any one who will read Matt. 5: 27, 28; 1 John 3: 15 will be able to see how the Lord regards them. (Cf. Heb. 4: 12, 13.)

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20: 11-15.)

The words which have just been quoted are among the most impressive which are on record. John saw the Judge upon his throne of purity, triumph, and glory; and so terrible was his presence that even the earth and the heaven fled from before him, but no place was found to which they might go. This is another way of saying that they were destroyed. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 10-13; Rev. 21: 1.) And then John saw all the people who had ever lived upon the earth standing before the throne. This, of course, was made possible by the general resurrection. (Cf. John 5: 28, 29.) Even death and Hades which had successfully held the peoples of the earth within their grasp since the days of Adam, could no longer assert their power. They were compelled to give up the dead that were in them; and were then themselves cast into the lake of fire. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 24-26.)

When all the people who had ever lived upon the earth had taken their places before the judgment-throne, then came the terrible event for which the assembly had been called, namely, the pronouncing of the final destiny of all mankind. Although the Judge himself is infallible, it is a noticeable fact that his decisions on that occasion will be based upon the *written record*. (Cf. Dan. 7: 10.)

### Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction  
What can be said regarding the Bible and human needs?

What can you say regarding its personal application?

In what way did many of the writers of the Bible manifest their faith?

Discuss the nature of the Book of Ecclesiastes.

Why is it such a great book?

Remember God While Young; for Soon  
It Will Be Later Than You Think

What is suggested by the word "also" in verse 1 of the lesson text?

What had the writer just said to the young?

What thought did he intend to convey by the term "remember"?

Why should young people be exhorted to remember their Creator?

What are some of the important things which youth should realize?

What is always essential for the proper growth of the soul?

Discuss some of the basic reasons why young people should remember God.

Why is it difficult for any one to break away from sin and serve God?

What motive does the writer of Ecclesiastes give for his exhortation to remember God?

What kind of a picture does he then place before his readers?

Discuss the various features of old age in contrast with youth.

How does the writer call attention to death?

The Preacher and His Words of Wisdom

What reasons can you give for thinking that Solomon did or did not write Ecclesiastes?

Who was the "Preacher" referred to here?

If some one else actually wrote the book, what was his purpose in doing so?

What are some of the things which the writer said that the Preacher did?

How does all of this fit in with the closing years of Solomon's life?

What claim is made here for the inspiration of the book?

To what does the writer compare the words of the wise teacher?

In what way are they like goads and nails which are well fastened?

Why is this kind of teaching so applicable to young people?

The Inevitable Conclusion

Why is it often helpful to teach truth through the personality of others?

Toward what conclusion was the writer of Ecclesiastes aiming?

What is the true meaning of life?

In what sense does the whole man come into focus by the admonition given here?

What was Jehovah's original plan for man?

How alone can that image be restored?

Why is the question of the judgment at the last day such a vital and sobering question?

Give some idea of what it will be like to be there?

## Lesson XII—September 19, 1965

### SORROWS OF CAPTIVITY

#### Lesson Text

#### Lam. 1: 1-11

- 1 How doth the city sit solitary,  
that was full of people!  
She is become as a widow, that  
was great among the nations!  
She that was a princess among the  
provinces is become tributary!
- 2 She weepeth sore in the night,  
and her tears are on her cheeks;  
Among all her lovers she hath  
none to comfort her:  
All her friends have dealt treach-  
erously with her; they are be-  
come her enemies.
- 3 Ju'-dah is gone into captivity be-  
cause of affliction, and because  
of great servitude;  
She dwelleth among the nations,  
she findeth no rest:  
All her persecutors overtook her  
within the straits.
- 4 The ways of Zi'-on do mourn, be-  
cause none come to the solemn  
assembly;  
All her gates are desolate, her  
priests do sigh:

- Her virgins are afflicted, and she  
herself is in bitterness.
- 5 Her adversaries are become the  
head, her enemies prosper:  
For Je-ho'-vah hath afflicted her  
for the multitude of her trans-  
gressions:  
Her young children are gone into  
captivity before the adversary.
  - 6 And from the daughter of Zi'-on  
all her majesty is departed:  
Her princes are become like harts  
that find no pasture,  
And they are gone without  
strength before the pursuer.
  - 7 Je-ru'-sa-lem remembereth in the  
days of her affliction and of her  
miseries all her pleasant things  
that were from the days of old:  
When her people fell into the  
hand of the adversary, and none  
did help her,  
The adversaries saw her, they did  
mock at her desolations.
  - 8 Je-ru'-sa-lem hath grievously



- sinned; therefore she is become  
as an unclean thing;  
All that honored her despise her.  
because they have seen her  
nakedness:  
Yea, she sigheth, and turneth  
backward.
- 9 Her filthiness was in her skirts;  
she remembered not her latter  
end;  
Therefore is she come down won-  
derfully; she hath no comforter:  
Behold, O Je-ho'-vah, my afflic-  
tion: for the enemy hath mag-  
nified himself.
- 10 The adversary hath spread out his  
hand upon all her pleasant  
things:  
For she hath seen that the nations  
are entered into her sanctuary,  
Concerning whom thou didst com-  
mand that they should not enter  
into thine assembly.
- 11 All her people sigh, they seek  
bread;  
They have given their pleasant  
things for food to refresh the  
soul;  
See, O Je-ho'-vah, and behold; for  
I am become abject.

Golden Text.—*"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is brought upon me."*  
(Lam. 1: 12.)

Devotional Heading.—Lam. 2: 12-22.

### Daily Bible Readings

- Sept. 13. M..... Many People Are Captured by the Devil (2 Tim. 2: 22-26)  
Sept. 14. T..... Christ Came to Free People from Sin (Heb. 2: 13-18)  
Sept. 15. W..... Bondage to Sin Is Often Not Realized (John 8: 31-36)  
Sept. 16. T..... The Gospel Proclaims Release to the Captives (Luke 4: 16-21)  
Sept. 17. F..... Israel's Sad Experience in Babylon (Psalm 137: 1-9)  
Sept. 18. S..... S. The Corinthians Allowed Themselves to Be Taken Captive (2 Cor. 11: 16-21)  
Sept. 19. S..... People Can Be Brought into Bondage Today (2 Pet. 2: 17-22)

TIME.—Possibly soon after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

PLACE.—The place of writing is unknown.

Persons.—Probably Jeremiah.

### Introduction

The entire Old Testament may be looked upon as an anthology of inspired ancient Hebrew Literature. It is, of course, the greatest collection of ancient literature on record; and if one is willing to spend the time and make the effort, he will find many different types of writing therein. There are many *lamentations* scattered throughout the Old Testament record, but the only book which can be properly called an "elegy," that is, a poem or song of mourning, is the Book of Lamentations. There are, in fact, five separate poems in the book—one in each of the five chapters. An elegy is generally a poem of lamentation for the dead, or of unrequited love. (Cf. 2 Chron. 35: 20-25; 2 Sam. 1: 17-27; Amos 5: 1, 2; Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*; Tennyson's *In Memoriam*; Milton's *Lycidas*.) There is no title to the book in the Hebrew, but it came to be known by its first word in chapters 1, 2, and 4, namely, *Ekhah*, an exclamatory particle which means *How!* or *Alas!* The Book of Lamentations was not placed after

the Book of Jeremiah in the Hebrew Bible, but between the Books of Ruth and Ecclesiastes, in a group of books known as the Writings. The five Rolls or Megilloth, as they were called, are, in the order of their listing, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther; and they were read in the synagogues, respectively, to commemorate the feasts of the Passover, Pentecost, the destruction of Jerusalem, the feast of Tabernacles, and Purim.

In the Greek Version of the Old Testament, that is the Septuagint, the Book of Lamentations is placed after Jeremiah, as in our English versions. It was called *Thrēnoi* (the plural of *thrēnos*), that is "Dirges" or "Lamentations," by the Greek translators of the Old Testament (cf. Matt. 2: 18; Jer. 31: 15). In later versions, both in the Greek and in the Latin, the book came to be called "The Lamentations of Jeremiah." While there does not appear to have been any question about the place of the book in the canon of the Old Testament, modern scholars have sought

to place the time of writing later than that of Jeremiah, and they have therefore endeavored to show that some one else wrote the book. Conservative scholars, on the other hand, are of the opinion that it was written by Jeremiah, soon after the burning of Jerusalem. Hailey says that the probable place of writing, according to tradition, was "just under the knoll that is now called 'Golgotha,' the self-same hill on which the cross of Jesus stood. Thus the suffering prophet wept where later the suffering Saviour died." This, however, is only a tradition.

The following preface was added to the Book of Lamentations in all editions of the *Septuagint Version*, according to Adam Clarke: "And it came to pass after Israel had been carried away captive, and Jerusalem was become desolate, that Jeremiah sat weeping; and he lamented with this lamentation over Jerusalem; and said." G. Campbell Morgan points out that "this serves to show that, long before the coming of Christ, they [that is, The Lamentations] were considered by Jewish scholars to be the work of Jeremiah." If one will read the Books of Jeremiah and Lamentations together, he will see much in each of them which suggest that they had a common author, or, more correctly, that Jeremiah was directly connected with both books. The closing chapter of Jeremiah gives the history of the burning of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. (See Jer. 52: 12, 13.)

It has already been pointed out that the Book of Lamentations consists of five poems, one for each of the five chapters. It should be noted, however, that the first, second, and fourth poems are dirges, in the strict sense of the term; the third one is a

personal lament, ending in a prayer; while the fifth one is a prayer. The first four poems are alphabetical (also called acrostic) in arrangement, and each one has twenty-two stanzas. The fifth poem also has twenty-two stanzas, but does not have the alphabetical arrangement. The stanzas in the first two and the last two poems coincide with the verse numbering; while the middle or third poem has three verse numbers to each stanza. The Revised Standard Version groups the verses of each chapter into separate poetic stanzas, while retaining the verse numbering. This makes the reading more enjoyable, and the meaning more understandable.

The alphabetical or acrostical arrangement simply means that each stanza begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet; and since there are twenty-two letters in that alphabet, there are twenty-two stanzas in each of the poems. This is also true of the fifth or prayer poem, as has already been pointed out; although it lacks the alphabetical arrangement. In the third poem, as already observed, each stanza has three parts, and each of the three part in a given stanza begin with the same Hebrew letter. The letters of the Hebrew alphabet, as would be expected, are placed in their consecutive order, with the exception of chapters 2 and 4 where the sixteenth and seventeenth letters, *ayin* and *pe*, are transposed. No one has even come forward with a satisfactory answer for this transposition. The alphabetical arrangement apparently was intended to aid the memory. This same plan is followed in some of the psalms (cf. Psalm 119, where each letter is given in the American Standard Version), and other parts of the Old Testament. (Cf. Prov. 31: 10-31.)

### The Golden Text

"is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is brought upon me This is a pathetic picture. People are passing by, but none seems to care. It is true that Jerusalem was suffering for the sins which she had committed; but suffering of any kind usually draws sympathy from tenderhearted people. Jeremiah had foretold this kind of a situation, when he said,

"Therefore thus saith Jehovah: Ask ye now among the nations, who hath heard such things; the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing. Shall the snow of Lebanon fail from the rock of the field? or shall the cold waters that flow down from afar be dried up? For my people have forgotten me, they have burned incense to false gods; and they have been made to stumble in their ways, in the ancient paths, to walk in bypaths, in

a way not cast up; to make their land an astonished, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and shake his head. I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity" (Jer. 18: 13-17.)

It is one thing, however, for God to punish people for their sin, but something entirely different for human beings to glory in the suffering of others. Paul says that love "rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth." (1 Cor. 13: 6.) But the indifference of the world toward suffering is nothing short of appalling. This kind of a situation is both seen and experienced by multitudes of people every day. Here is a man, for example, who has sickness and other troubles in his home, and it is only when he goes out into the world that he realizes the awful indifference of the people who pass by. They are bright, busy, noisy, laughing, and entirely heedless of the sick and dying on the inside. We would like to protest this, but, as Bryant notes,

"O shalt thou rest; and what if  
thou withdraw  
In silence from the living, and no  
friend  
Take note of thy departure? All  
that breathe

### The Text Explained

#### The Sad, Solitary Plight of the Fallen City (Lam. 1: 1, 2)

*How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! She is become as a widow, that was great among the nations! She that was a princess among the provinces is become tributary! She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks; among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they are become her enemies.*

In order to illustrate the ease and satisfaction with which this lament can be read in the stanza arrangement, these two verses are rendered in the Revised Standard Version in this way:

"How lonely sits the city that, was  
full of people!

Will share thy destiny. The gay  
will laugh  
When thou art gone, the solemn  
brood of care  
Plod on, and each one as before  
will chase  
His favorite phantom; yet all these  
shall leave  
Their mirth and their employments,  
and shall come  
And make their bed with thee."

In his book, *Building on the Rock*, H. Kingman tells of the pictures of two men, Pepys and Charles Kingsley, which hung on the wall of Magdalene College, Cambridge, facing each other across the table. Both men shared the zest of life to the fullest, and fought hard for its prizes. Pepys was sleek, satisfied, kindly, sensuous; a man who cheerfully tried to skim the cream off of life's surface for himself, and to a large extent succeeded. Kingsley, on the other hand, delighted in life beyond most men, but whose heart burned like a flame in sympathy with the wrong and sorrows of the poor, and who gave himself, like the Master, in generous devotion to all who needed him. And his face, lined with love and pain, was of one who looked ineffably beyond the getting and spending of life's pleasures. These men tell the difference between formal religion and the practical Christianity which endeavors to lift, men out of their despair.

How like a widow has she become,  
she that was great among the  
nations!

She that was a princess among the  
cities has become a vassal.  
She weeps bitterly in the night,  
tears on her cheeks;  
among all her lovers she has none  
to comfort her;  
all her friends have dealt treacherously  
with her, they have become  
her enemies."

Isaiah, more than a hundred years before the fall of the city, had made this prediction: "And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she shall be desolate and sit upon the ground." (Isa. 3: 26.) To sit upon the ground, with the elbows upon the knees, and the head supported by the hands, without any company, unless an oppressor near by, were signs of mourning and distress. The writer

of Lamentations puts it this way: "The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, they keep silence; they have cast up dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves with sackcloth: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground." (Lam. 2: 10.)

The heights from which the people of Jerusalem had fallen is expressed by Ezra, as they were returning from the exile, in these words: "There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, who have ruled over all the country beyond the River; and tribute, custom, and toll, was paid unto them." (Ezra 4: 20.) But when people are not willing to listen to God's word, and walk according to his will, humiliation and trouble are certain to come. (Read Psalm 137.) Some of the nations which were about Jerusalem during the time that they were walking in their own ways promised help to them against their enemy (cf. Jer. 2: 20-25; 37: 6, 7); but when the time came when Judah really needed help there was none to comfort her (cf. Jer. 30: 12-17): all her friends dealt treacherously with her; and her erstwhile friends became her enemies.

The ways of the world often appear to some professed Christians as being more attractive than the ways of the Lord; but one has only to read in almost any part of the Bible in order to see the error of such a viewpoint. For example, "And he said, A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country; and there he wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in the country; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his field to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him." (Luke 15: 11-16.) As long as the young man had money which he could lavish upon others, he had friends; but when the time came for his own need to manifest itself, *no man gave unto him*. It would be

difficult to find a more desolate person than the prodigal son at the time of his distress; but the rest of the story shows that his father was anxiously waiting to take him back and restore him to his former place in the home. (See Luke 15: 17-24.)

### The Wages of Sin Is Death

(Lam. 1: 3-6)

*Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude; she dwelleth among the nations. she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her within the straits. The ways of Zion do mourn, because none came to the solemn assembly; all her gates are desolate, her priests do sigh: her virgins are afflicted, and she herself is in bitterness. Her adversaries are become the head, her enemies prosper; for Jehovah hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her young children are gone into captivity before the adversary. And from the daughter of Zion all her majesty is departed: her princes are become like harts that find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer.*

In one of his addresses which make up the greater part of the Book of Deuteronomy. Moses went into great detail regarding the punishment which the people of Israel would receive, if they failed to follow God's plan for them. "Because thou servest not Jehovah thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, by reason of the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies that Jehovah shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things; and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. . . .

And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, and there shall be no rest for the sole of thy foot: but Jehovah will give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and pining of soul; and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear night and day, and shalt have no assurance of thy life." (Deut. 28: 47, 48, 65, 66.) If it were not for the fact that many of the Lord's people today manifest substantially the same attitude which characterized the Jews before the fall of Jerusalem,

it would be difficult to understand how responsible people can ignore the warnings which are in practically every book of the Bible, Jehovah sent his prophets to teach and warn the people during the age of Moses; and faithful gospel preachers continue to do the same thing today. (Cf. Heb. 3: 12-4: 7.)

The apostle Paul plainly says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life." (Gal. 6: 7, 8.) This is the inexorable law of the harvest; but people who call themselves by the name of Christ still find more satisfaction in the ways of the flesh, then they do in that which he has specifically commanded. The same apostle said to the Romans, "For when ye were servants of sin, ye were free in regard of righteousness. What fruit then had ye at that time in the things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life. For the wages of sin is death: but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 6: 20-23.)

#### The Personification of Jerusalem and Her Sad Remembrances (Lam. 1: 7-11)

*Jerusalem remembereth in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that were from the days of old: when her people fell into the hand of the adversary, and none did help her, the adversaries saw her, they did mock at her desolations. Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is become as an unclean thing; all that honored her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward. Her filthiness was in her skirts; she remembered not her latter end; therefore is she come down wonderfully; she hath no comforter: behold, O Jehovah, my affliction; for the enemy hath magnified himself. The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things: for she hath seen that the na-*

*tions are entered into her sanctuary, concerning whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thine assembly. All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their pleasant things for food to refresh the soul: see. O Jehovah, and behold: for I am become a subject.*

Most people will readily admit that it is much better to look forward, than to look backward; to anticipate the good things which are possible, than to remember what could have been theirs but which were lost. We can, in the words which Browning put into the mouth of Rabbi Ben Ezra, say.

The best is yet to be.

The last of life, for which the first was made.

But if we are going to misuse our blessings, and rebel against God's will for us, we will have to cry with Tennyson, in *Locksley Hall*,

Comfort? comfort scorned of devils!  
this is truth the poet sings,

That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is  
remembering happier things.

There is no reason to think that such memories will always result in godly sorrow, and produce the fruit of repentance: and this is certainly true if the subject is extended to the world which is to come. The rich man of Luke 16 was told to *remember*, but that brought to him no satisfaction. The five foolish virgins (Matt. 25) could only recall the fact that they could have carried extra oil in their vessels, in case they had need for it. But as it was, they could only say, in the words of Whittier,

Of all sad words of tongue or pen,  
The saddest are these: It might  
have been.

Although Jerusalem remembered, in the days of her affliction and bitterness, all the precious things that were hers from the days of old, "she never thought of what would follow," as Moffatt has it in verse 9. But whatever affliction comes to any one, we may be sure, as Kipling expresses it,

This was none of the good Lord's  
pleasure;

For the Spirit he sets in Man is  
free;

But what comes after is measure  
for measure

And not a God that Afflicteth thee.  
As was the sowing so the reaping  
Is now, and evermore shall be.

Thou are delivered to thine own keeping.  
Only thyself hath afflicted thee.

### Questions for Discussion

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

#### Introduction

What is the nature of the literature which is contained in the Old Testament?  
What kind of writing is the Book of Lamentations?  
What special use did the ancient Hebrews make of the Lamentations?  
How did the book come to have its present name?  
Why is Jeremiah regarded as its writer?  
In what way is the Book of Lamentations divided?  
What is meant by the alphabetical arrangement and what was its purpose?  
What other parts of the Old Testament have a similar arrangement?

#### The Golden Text

What makes the scene of the golden text a pathetic one?  
How do thoughtful people usually regard suffering?  
Why did these terrible things happen to Jerusalem?  
Why are so many people indifferent to sorrow and suffering?

#### The Sad, Solitary Plight of the Fallen City

Why do many people not enjoy reading such poems as the Lamentations?  
What was the usual picture of mourning and distress?

What "friends" had dealt treacherously with Jerusalem?  
Why do so many professed Christians prefer the ways of the world?  
What great lesson does Jesus teach regarding this question?

#### The Wages of Sin Is Death

What warning had Moses given regarding the future condition of the people of Israel?  
How can we account for responsible people's ignoring such warnings?  
What New Testament teaching do we have on this question?  
In what sense will people reap that which they sow?  
What is the obligation of every child of God?  
What great motives are held out before us?

#### The Personification of Jerusalem and Her Sad Remembrance

Why is it better for the Lord's people to look forward than backward?  
On what plan has our life been constructed?  
What is a "sorrow's crown of sorrow"?  
What are some of the results of sorrowful memories?  
Illustrate this by the cases of the rich man and the foolish virgins.  
What increases the affliction of neglected opportunities? Think!  
Why can people be so thoughtless about the future?  
Who is the real afflictor when punishment comes?

## Lesson XIII—September 26, 1965

### MISERIES OF THE CAPTIVITY

#### Lesson Text

##### Lam. 5: 1-18

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>1 Remember, O Je-ho'-vah, what is come upon us:<br/>Behold, and see our reproach.</p> <p>2 Our inheritance is turned unto strangers,<br/>Our houses unto aliens.</p> <p>3 We are orphans and fatherless;<br/>Our mothers are as widows.</p> <p>4 We have drunken our water for money;<br/>Our wood is sold unto us.</p> <p>5 Our pursuers are upon our necks:<br/>We are weary, and have no rest.</p> <p>6 We have given the hand to the E-gyp'-tians,<br/>And to the As-syr'-i-ans, to be satisfied with bread.</p> | <p>7 Our fathers sinned, and are not: And we have borne their iniquities.</p> <p>8 Servants rule over us:<br/>There is none to deliver us out of their hand.</p> <p>9 We get our bread at the peril of our lives.<br/>Because of the sword of the wilderness.</p> <p>10 Our skin is black like an oven.<br/>Because of the burning heat of famine.</p> <p>11 They ravished the women in Zi'-ôn.<br/>The virgins in the cities of Ju'-dah.</p> |
|---|---|

- 12 Princes were hanged up by their hand;  
The faces of elders were not honored.  
13 The young men bare the mill;  
And the children stumbled under the wood.  
14 The elders have ceased from the gate,  
The young men from their music.  
15 The joy of our heart is ceased;

- Our dance is turned into mourning.  
16 The crown is fallen from our head:  
Woe unto us! for we have sinned.  
17 For this our heart is faint;  
For these things our eyes are dim;  
18 For the mountain of Zi'-ōn, which is desolate:  
The foxes walk upon it.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Turn thou us unto thee, O Jehovah, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old" (Lam. 5: 21.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Lam. 4: 1-10.

### Daily Bible Readings

- |           |        |   |
|-----------|--------|---|
| Sept. 20. | M..... | Israel Sighed by Reason of Bondage (Ex. 2: 23-25)                 |
| Sept. 21. | T..... | Bondage in Any Form Is Never Pleasant (Ex. 3: 1-8*)               |
| Sept. 22. | W.     | Ignorance Is Often Responsible for Bondage (Gal. 4: 8-10)         |
| Sept. 23. | T.     | Christians Should Not Return to Bondage (Gal. 5: 1-12)            |
| Sept. 24. | F..... | It Is Not Necessary for Anyone to Remain in Bondage (Rom. 6: 1-7) |
| Sept. 25. | S.     | Responsible People Can Choose Their Masters (Rom. 6: 16-18)       |
| Sept. 26. | S..... | The Worst Bondage Will Be for Eternity (Mark 9: 42-50)            |

TIME.—Sometime after the fall of Jerusalem.

PLACE.—The place of writing is unknown.

PERSONS.—Probably Jeremiah.

### Introduction

*The Interpreter's Bible* thinks that the Book of Lamentations was written, not merely to memorialize the tragic destruction of Jerusalem, but to interpret the meaning of God's rigorous treatment of his people, so that they would learn the lessons of the past and maintain their faith in him in the face of overwhelming disaster. There is therefore set forth in the book deep sorrow over the past, and some complaint; but there is also radiant hope for the future, particularly in chapter 3. *Harper's Bible Dictionary* points out that the unity of the Book of Lamentations may be found in its attitude toward suffering. It proclaims that suffering is the inevitable result of persistent sin, and acknowledges that Jehovah is righteous in allowing punishment to be inflicted on wrongdoers. It appeals for trust in God, who will yet turn and be gracious to his people. There is no indication in the book that suffering can be borne on behalf of others. That idea was first set forth in Isa. 53, and was fully demonstrated when the prophecy was fulfilled in Christ.

Something of the glorious hope which afflicted people may enjoy, when they manifest the proper attitude toward Jehovah's discipline, may be seen from the following passage,

quoted from the Revised Standard Version:

"Remember my affliction and my bitterness, the wormwood and the gall!

My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me.

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end;

they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness.

"The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."

The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him.

It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth."

(Lam. 3: 19-27.)

*The Speaker's Bible*, in commenting on verse 23, says, "This is the kind of statement that gives the Bible its unique and unrivalled place among books. Born out of first-hand experience, the words are one man's testimony to the reality of God's grace. Burdened by many and great

afflictions, which of himself he was incapable of enduring, he won through in the end because of the constancy of God's providence. His mercies and compassions, he declares, were new every morning, and, because of that, he who, left to himself, must have been overwhelmed, was made more than conqueror. Where else, except in the Bible, is such encouragement given to burdened men by burdened men? It runs through both the Old and the New Testaments like a golden thread—the assurance of men and women who once bore the

heat and the burden of the day to men and women who bear the heat and the burden to-day that, if we rely sufficiently upon God, we can and will be brought through the direst of life's experiences, the most exacting of moral struggles, and the gravest of calamities. What happened in their case, they affirm, can happen in ours. Of ourselves we may be as incapable as they were of compassing all that life asks of us, but God and we together should prove an invincible combination.'

### The Golden Text

*"Turn us unto thee, O Jehovah, and ice shall be turned; renew our days as of old"* Were it not for the fact that man can have a second chance, there would be hope for none of us; for the Bible teaches that there is no responsible person who lives and sins not. There is hardly a book in the entire Canon of the Scriptures which does not hold out the hope for a second chance to those who have sinned against God. But people to-day, of course, must turn to the law of Christ, if they are to enjoy that blessing; for it is he who holds the key to every man's salvation. The apostle Paul joyfully exclaims, "wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." (2 Cor. 5: 17.) This passage is rendered in *Living Letters* (The Paraphrased Epistles) in these words: "When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same any more. A new life has begun!"

There are many people today who have become the Lord's people but who, like the people described in the Book of Lamentations, have failed to guard their heritage in Christ Jesus: and have returned to the weak and beggarly elements of the world. These wanderers must realize their sin, and return to the Lord, if they are to be saved with him in eternity. They must be renewed "as of old." A classic example of this kind of a situation is found in Paul's experience with the Corinthians, as may be seen by reading 2 Corinthians. And when one comes to consider the reconciliation portion of the letter, he is able to see the great joy which is brought to the heart of the apostle

Paul, and what must have been the rejoicing in heaven! The only way in which one may get himself right with God with reference to such matters is to break with the past, and turn back to the pathway of righteousness.

Some years ago there was an article in a national magazine which told of many men whose careers were interrupted by the war, and who, as a consequence, had to make a second start; but for whom the second start was better than the first. Among that number was Mr. Eric Johnston, who passed away only a short time ago. Mr. Johnston had just finished law school in 1917 when World War I came on, and was about ready to take the bar examination. He entered the service of his country instead; and when the armistice was signed, he was a captain in the marines. He decided to remain in the service; but in 1920, in Peking, he was seriously injured. A year later he was retired from service, but too ill to return to law or any indoor work. He went home to Spokane, married his high school sweetheart, and began selling vacuum cleaners from door to door. At the end of the year he was able to purchase an interest in the business. When he reached forty-eight he owned the two largest electrical companies in the Northwest, and became the youngest man, up to that time at least, ever to be elected president of the United States Chamber of Commerce. He said, concerning his own case, "I believe that many a veteran will be as grateful for his second start as I am for mine. The break with the past can be a big break for the future."



## The Text Explained

### A Plea for God to Remember

(Lam. 5: 1-6)

*Remember, O Jehovah, what is come upon us: behold, and see our reproach. Our inheritance is turned unto strangers, our houses unto aliens. We are orphans and fatherless; our mothers are as widows. We have drunken our water for money; our wood is sold unto us. Our pursuers are upon our necks: we are weary, and have no rest. We have given the hand to the Egyptians, and to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.*

The entire fifth chapter of Lamentations is given to the groanings of the captive people, and their humble supplication to God for his mercy. While it is not always easy to tell whether the reference is to the captives in Babylon or to those left in Judah, it seems from the whole picture that the writer had the people in the homeland in mind. But, whether in Judah or in Babylon, the lesson is essentially the same; and it appears that no violence will be done to the record, if the miseries which are herein recounted are understood of both. Some Bible students are of the opinion that the reference in chapter 5, was not to the actual captivity, but to the siege which the Chaldeans conducted against Jerusalem. This, however, seems hardly probable.

The people who are represented as calling upon God in the time of their great agony and distress had been deprived of their rights, freedom and property; and they were entirely at the mercy of the foe. They were indeed in dire need of God's mercy, and the first thing they did was to call reverently upon God to recognize their true condition. Too many people attempt to pray without actually realizing their helpless state. This should never be. No one can live without God, and he should always keep before him the truth that he must have God's blessings or perish. And if this attitude is maintained, one can always feel confident that his prayers will be heard. "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.)

James says, "Is any among you suffering? let him pray." (James 5: 13a.) This suggests a definite need for prayer, and implies that one is ready to receive the Lord's blessings. The people of Judah were in just such a situation, and they were calling upon Jehovah to remember their deplorable condition, and behold, and see their reproach. Their inheritance had been turned over to strangers, and their houses to aliens. Their fathers had been killed or captured, and they were actually orphans and fatherless; and their mothers were indeed widows. They even had to pay for the ordinary necessities of life, which they had evidently taken for granted. They were under the yoke of their oppressors, and found no rest for their bodies or their spirits. They had been forced to deal with the Egyptians and the Assyrians in order to have bread to sustain their lives.

The Bible makes it abundantly clear that suffering and hardship are often necessary in the lives of the Lord's people, in order to bring them into right relationships with him. But when they have been brought to a proper understanding of what it means to serve God, they are in the right frame of mind to call upon him in prayer. When Solomon had finished the temple, he offered his prayer of dedication; and among other things, made this request: "If they [this is, thy people] 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; if they return unto thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies, who carried them captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy

name: 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, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee; and give them compassion before those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them (for they are thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron); that thine eyes may be open unto the supplication of thy servant, and unto the supplication of thy people Israel, to hearken unto them whensoever they cry unto thee. For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be thine inheritance, as thou spakest by Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt. O Lord Jehovah." (1 Kings 8: 46-53.)

#### The Fruits of Wickedness (Lam. 5: 7-14)

*Our fathers sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities. Servants rule over us: there is none to deliver us out of their hand. We get our bread at the peril of our lives, because of the sword of the wilderness. Our skin is black like an oven, because of the burning heat of famine. They ravished the women in Zion, the virgins in the cities of Judah. Princes were hanged up by their hand: the faces of elders were not honored. The young men bare the mill; and the children stumbled under the wood. The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their music.*

Adam Clarke points out the fact that nations, as such, cannot be punished in the world to come; therefore national judgments are to be looked for only in this life. The punishment which had come to the people of Judah was the result of the accumulated sins of their fathers, as well as those of their own. Even those who had endeavored to do right during the period of the declining days of the kingdom had to suffer along with the others. (Cf., for example, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and others.) This has always been true of people, whether in the home, community, or church; but there is a vast

difference between suffering for the sins of others, and of being responsible for them. "The word of Jehovah came unto me again, saying. What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezek. 18: 1-4; of. verses 19, 20; 33: 10-20.)

Not only had the people of Judah lost their freedom, but even servants ruled over them. (Cf. Neh. 5: 15.) It was bad enough for the captives to have foreign dignitaries rule over them; but when it came to servants, they could hardly feel any lower. Felix, the governor of Judaea, and the one who kept Paul in prison for two years, was a former slave of Agrippina, the mother of Nero; and Tacitus says of him that "with every kind of cruelty and lust, he exercised the authority of a king with the temper of a slave." This should give us some idea of the type of rule to which the wretched Jews of the captivity were compelled to obey. And when Jerusalem fell, the defense was so weakened that the helpless people could not leave their home in search for food, without being harassed and plundered by the marauding tribes of the wilderness. (Cf. Deut. 28: 31.) A. R. Fausset notes that hunger dries up the pores, so that the skin looks as if it had been scorched by the sun. (Cf. Job 30: 30.)

The terrible treatment to which the women and virgins were subjected was foretold by both Moses and Jeremiah. (See Deut. 28: 30; Jer. 6: 9-12.) In commenting on the hanging of princes by their hands, Clarke says. "It is very probable that this was a species of punishment. They were suspended from hooks in the wall by their hands till they died through torture and exhaustion. The body of Saul was fastened to the wall of Bethshan, probably in the same way; but his head had already been cut off. They were hung in this way that they might be devoured by the fowls of the air. It was a custom of the Persians after they had slain, strangled, or beheaded their en-

emies, to hang their bodies upon poles, or empale them." Thus, the great men among them were not only put to death; they were forced to die ignominiously. The young men were compelled to grind, that is, do the work of the most menial female slaves; and small children were so burdened with the loads which were put upon them, that they stumbled beneath them. The elders were no longer honored, nor permitted to render judicial decisions in the gates; while the young men were forced to hang their musical instruments upon the willow trees. (Cf. Psalm 137.)

When Joy Is Turned into Mourning:  
(Lam. 5: 15-18)

*The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning. The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us! for we have sinned. For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim; for the mountain of Zion, which is desolate: the foxes walk upon it.*

The festivities which formerly characterized the people of Judah had all departed. Some Bible students think that the crown which fell from their head was a garland of flowers used on such occasions, while others are of the opinion that the reference is to the regal crown; which is to say that not only had their king been dethroned, but he had no successor. Either or both literally came to pass. In verse 7 of the lesson text, the poet had said, "Our fathers sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities;" but here he says that the calamities which befell them was the result of their own sin. He then goes on to say, "For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim; for the mountain of Zion, which is desolate: the foxes walk upon it."

It is a terrible thing for one to sin, even in the most private fashion; but when the Lord's people conduct themselves so as to bring reproach upon the church, and cause it to cease to function, the situation is desperate beyond words to describe it. The temple of the Old Testament was once the revered house of worship, with throngs of devoted worshippers going to it daily; but at the time of the lesson it was not only deserted and destroyed; foxes roamed over the place where it stood. Almost any one

today has heard of churches of the Lord which, because of internal strife and sin, have been allowed to die; and few things are more desolate than the place where the building which housed it once stood.

But regardless of what people have done in the past, it is always good for them to be brought to the place where they are both willing and ready to confess their waywardness. The history of Israel and Judah abounds in information regarding their downfall and ultimate captivity; but all of that is overshadowed by the news of their penitence and ultimate restoration to their homeland. Isaiah, more than a hundred years before the exile, spoke of their return; and his message is one of the most beautiful to be found in the Bible. "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of our God.

"Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; he will come and save you.

"The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the glowing sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water: in the habitation of jackals, where they lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness: the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for the redeemed: the wayfaring men, yea, fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up thereon; they shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and

sighing shall flee away." (Isa. 35: 1-10.)

The words just quoted remind us of the golden text for today, the full context of which is quoted here from the Revised Standard Version:

"But thou, O Lord, dost reign for ever; thy throne endures to all generations.

Why dost thou forget us for ever, why dost thou so long forsake us?

Restore us to thyself, O Lord, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old!

Or hast thou utterly rejected us? Art thou exceedingly angry with us?"

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What appears to be the purpose for which the Book of Lamentations was written?

In what way may the mistakes of the past become helpful to us?

What can you say regarding the unity of the book from which our lesson is taken?

What great appeal does it make?

Where alone is vicarious suffering found?

Why was it possible for the people of the captivity to have hope for the future?

In what way is the same principle applicable to us today?

### The Golden Text

Why does the doctrine of a second chance in this life mean so much to people of this age?

How is it possible for any one to avail himself of a second chance?

Why is a break with the past often so vital to one's welfare?

### A Plea for God to Remember

Discuss the over-all contents of the fifth chapter of Lamentations.

Why did the people involved request God to remember their condition?

What is always essential for effective praying?

Describe the condition of the people who were calling upon Jehovah.

Why is suffering often necessary for the welfare of the Lord's people?

What request did Solomon make regarding these matters in his prayer of dedication?

### The Fruits of Wickedness

What is always implied in "national punishment"?

What application does this section of the lesson text have in our time?

What were some of the fruits of wickedness which were seen among the captives?

Under what circumstances were some of these things foretold?

What were some of the terrible punishments inflicted upon the Lord's people?

### When Joy Is Turned into Mourning

What changes in the lives of the people are noted here?

What further admission was made here?

What effect did their sins have upon their attitude toward the Lord?

What had brought about the destruction of the temple and the desolation of its grounds?

What lesson is there in all of this for people of this age?

What great blessing did Jehovah bestow upon the penitent people?



## FOURTH QUARTER

### SOME GREAT MEN AND WOMEN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

*AIM.—To study the lives of some of the great men and women mentioned in the New Testament who labored in the preparation for the establishment of the church, and who worked in the church as faithful servants of God, and to gather inspiration from their examples for service today.*

Lesson I—October 3, 1965

### JOHN THE BAPTIST

#### Lesson Text

Luke 1: 57-63; Matt. 3: 1-6; John 1: 19-23

57 Now E-lis'-a-beth's time was fulfilled that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.

58 And her neighbors and her kinsfolk heard that the Lord had magnified his mercy towards her; and they rejoiced with her.

59 And it came to pass on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child: and they would have called him Zach-a-ri'-as, after the name of his father.

60 And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John.

61 And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.

62 And they made signs to his father, what he would have him called.

63 And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.

1 And in those days cometh John the Bap'-tist, preaching in the wilderness of Ju'-dae'-a, saying,

2 Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

3 For this is he that was spoken of through I-sa-iah the prophet, saying.

*GOLDEN TEXT.—"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (Matt. 11: 11.)*

*DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt: 11: 1-6.*

The voice of one crying in the wilderness,

Make ye ready the way of the Lord,

Make his paths straight.

4 Now John himself had his raiment of camels hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his food was locusts and wild honey.

5 Then went out unto him Je-ru'-sa-lem, and all Ju-dae'-a, and all the region round about the Jordan;

6 And they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

19 And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent unto him from Je-ru'-sa-lem priests and Le'-vites to ask him, Who art thou?

20 And he confessed, and denied not: and he confessed, I am not the Christ.

21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou E-li'-jah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered, No.

22 They said therefore unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said I-sa-iah the prophet.

#### Daily Bible Readings

Sept. 27. M. John the Baptist Was a Road-Builder (Isa. 40: 3-5)  
Sept. 28. T..... Malachi Foretold His Coming (Mal. 3: 1-6)

Sept. 29.	W. John Knew His Place and Remained in It (John 3:22-30)
Sept. 30. T.....	John Made No Effort to Deceive Anyone (Luke 3: 15-17)
Oct. 1. F.....	John As a Practical Preacher (Luke 3: 10-14)
Oct. 2. S.....	John As a Courageous Preacher (Mark 6: 14-29)
Oct. 3. S.....	Christ's Appraisal of John (Matt. 11: 1-14)

TIME.—Probably about 4 B.C.; A.D. 27.

PLACES.—A city in the hill country of Judah; the wilderness of Judaea; Bethany beyond the Jordan.

PERSONS.—John the Baptist, his parents, the multitudes, some priests and Levites.

## Introduction

It seems clear from Luke 1: 24-26 that John the Baptist was approximately six months older than Jesus; and it is for this reason that the dates in the lives of both John and Jesus are usually given in the same year. And inasmuch as the chronology of the Bible, insofar as our practical use of it is concerned, is reckoned from the birth of Jesus, a few words regarding that question should be said at this time. Students who use various commentaries and other reference works will notice that different dates are given for the birth of Jesus, and this, of course, is confusing until the matter is better understood. The most common dates which are preferred by modern Bible scholars are from 7 to 4 B.C. But if the dates are reckoned from the birth of Christ, why is it that the date of his birth is given as anywhere from 7 to 4 B.C. The following quotation from *The Concise Bible Dictionary*, included in some editions of the American Standard Version of the Bible, the version from which these lesson texts are taken, is a brief but satisfactory explanation of the question now before us.

*"Chronology of the New Testament.* The date of the birth of Jesus Christ, the central event in the world's history, was first fixed, in the sixth century A.D., by Dionysius Exiguus, a Roman monk, in the year 753 after the building of Rome (A. U. C., *Anno urbis conditoe*). That this was not the exact year of our Lord's birth has been abundantly provided; but the use of the date all over Christendom is too firmly established to be changed. It is certain from St. Matthew that our Lord was born before the death of Herod the Great (spring of 750 A. U. C.). The Nativity can scarcely be placed later than the autumn of 759 A. U. C. (B.C. 5-4). For the date December 25, there is no direct evidence whatever." (P.)

26.) This same authority also suggests 27 A.D. as the date for John's ministry. (Ibid.)

It appears from Luke 16: 16 that John occupied a unique position in Bible history. The passage just referred to says, "The law and the prophets were until John: from that time the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and every man entereth violently into it." The work of John the Baptist, although foretold in the Old Testament (Cf. Isa. 40: 3f), was not authorized by the law of Moses; nor was it continued in the reign of Christ. His work therefore was a special work which God authorized him to do; and it came, as it were, in between the two great dispensations. It appears that what Jesus was saying in the passage just quoted was that the old order was beginning to give way to the new, with the ministry of John, and that men were trying violently to enter into it prematurely, that is, before it was established. But the Lord quickly added, "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the law to fall." (Luke 16: 17; cf. Matt. 5: 17-20.) Although the ministry of John marked a change in history, Jesus makes it clear that the beginning of the one would in no wise interfere with the fulfillment of the other.

That which has just been said is sufficient to show that some knowledge of the mission of John the Baptist is essential to an understanding of the plan and purpose of the New Testament itself. The coming of the Christ was the end toward which the Old Testament pointed (cf. Gal. 3: 24; Rom. 10: 4), but even that great event would not have had the desired result, without due preparation. The world, including God's chosen people, was so engrossed in sin as to make at least a partial reformation essential before any appreciable number would

be willing to receive the Redeemer whom God was sending to rescue men from eternal doom. John the Baptist therefore had the unique task of showing the people of the old dispensation how they could pass suc-

cessfully in to the new; but as is usually the case in such matters, it appears that relatively few were wise enough to heed his admonition, and remain faithful to that which he urged upon them.

### The Golden Text

*"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he"* The words just quoted were spoken by Jesus in response to a question which John had asked him, through some of his, that is, John's disciples. The work of the Baptist was practically finished, and he was in prison. He had heard of the great works of Jesus, and had sent unto him, saying, "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" This question which was characterized by doubt was in marked contrast with the resounding testimony which John bore to Jesus as the latter began his public ministry (cf. John 1: 29-34); and if we did not know that it was true, we could hardly believe that the same person was the speaker on both occasions. The seeming contradiction between the two passages just referred to has called forth some ingenious attempts at explanation; but when we consider the fact that moods of exalted faith and of deep and painful doubt are often found in the same individual, the most natural explanation of John's action is that the two extremes also found expression in him.

The fact that faith sometimes falters, even in the lives of the most devout and spiritual, is a matter of common knowledge. In a world of materialism and sin, a person has to be very careful or he will have his mind diverted from the Lord and his teaching; and when this is done, difficulties often become huge and towering. (Cf. Matt. 14: 22-33.) Examples of the more familiar classic examples of

faltering faith are (1) Elijah, 1 Kings, chapters 17-19; and (2) Peter, Matt. 16: 13-20; Mark 14: 66-72. John began his ministry as a rugged and stern reformer, and the results which followed his efforts were devastating. The more he rebuked the sins of his day, the greater the crowds were that flocked to hear him; and, submitting to his teaching, all the people of Jerusalem, Judaea, and the region round about the river Jordan were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

John had also foretold the coming of the Mighty One, the One who would thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor, and would make an end of all evil. And in common with other Jews of his day, John evidently expected the rule and judgments of Christ to be both temporal and immediate. But when the Baptist addressed his question of doubt to Christ, he was in prison, evil in Herod, the Pharisees, and others was still on the march and undisturbed, and his own hopes and expectations were unrealized. Was it not then, as it ever has been,

Truth forever on the scaffold

Wrong forever on the throne?

And with such things as these in his mind it was but natural that John would raise the question which he did regarding Christ. It is interesting to note that the Lord did not give a direct answer to John's question, but he did give one which John would readily understand. (See Matt. 11: 4-6.) And when John's disciples had departed, and were on their way back to their master, Jesus paid one of the greatest tributes to John which was ever spoken regarding any human being. Read Matt. 11: 7-19.)

### The Text Explained

#### The Birth of John

(Luke 1: 57-63)

*Now Elisabeth's time was fulfilled that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. And her neigh-*

*bors and her kinsfolk heard that the Lord had magnified his mercy towards her; and they rejoiced with her. And it came to pass on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would*



have called his name Zacharias, after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said. Not so; but he shall be called John. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.

The entire first chapter of Luke should be read in preparation for the understanding of this lesson. If this is done, it will be seen that several interesting things took place between the announcement that John would be born, and his actual birth, among which are the following: (1) the punishment which was visited upon Zacharias for his unbelief; (2) the announcement of the forthcoming birth of Jesus; (3) Mary's visit with Elisabeth; and (4) the prophetic song of Mary, sometimes called the *Magnificat*, so called from the Latin Version. (See Luke 1: 46 and note the word "magnify.")

In addition to the information gleaned from Luke 1: 26, 36, to the effect that John was approximately six months older than Jesus, we also learn from the latter verse that the children were related by family ties. The King James Version says that their mothers were cousins, but the original term does not necessarily signify that relationship. The American Standard Version gives the more literal translation, namely, "kinswoman." Mary and Elisabeth may have been distant cousins, but it is hardly probable that they were as closely related as first cousins. Mary belonged to the tribe of Judah. (Luke 1: 32, 69; 3: 23-38; cf. Matt. 1: 1-16.) Many Bible students are of the opinion that Matthew traced the genealogy of Joseph's side of the house, while Luke gave Mary's ancestry. If this is true, then Joseph was called the son of Heli in the sense of son-in-law. Elisabeth belonged to the tribe of Levi. (Luke 1: 5.)

John, who was later called the Baptist, because of the fact that he baptized people, was a child of promise. When the angel made the announcement regarding him to Zacharias, he said, "Thy supplication is heard, and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call

his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God. And he shall go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him." (Luke 1: 13-17; cf. 67-79.)

The neighbors and kinsfolk, upon hearing of the birth of the child, came to Elisabeth to congratulate her and to rejoice with her. Something of what they said and did may be inferred from a similar incident recorded in the Old Testament. "So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he went in unto her, and Jehovah gave her conception, and she bare a son. And the women said unto Naomi. Blessed be Jehovah, who hath not left thee this day without a near kinsman; and let his name be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of life, and a nourisher of thine old age; for thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee, who is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him." (Rom. 4: 13-15.)

Jehovah had authorized his people to circumcise their male children on the eighth day after their birth (cf. Gen. 17: 9-12; Lev. 12: 1-3; Luke 2: 21; Phil. 3: 5); and it appears that that was also the time for the naming of the individual. Many of the people among the Jews named their children after their parents or grandparents. Zacharias had manifested doubt at the angel's announcement regarding the child, and had asked for a sign, which was given to him, namely, his inability to speak until the birth of the child. It also appears that he was deaf, since the people made signs to him, instead of speaking to him. (The difference between Zacharias and Mary with reference to Gabriel's announcements was evidently this: Zacharias had serious doubts about the possibility of a child in his and Elisabeth's old age, while Mary was merely seeking more information, so that she could better understand that which the angel had said unto her.) The "tablet" which

Zacharias asked for and used was probably some kind of material, possibly a piece of wood, covered with wax, for temporary notes. John means "Jehovah is gracious," or, -Gift of God."

The Harbinger and His Message  
(Matt. 3: 1-6)

*And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of through Isaiah the prophet, saying,*

*The voice of one crying in the wilderness,*

*Make ye ready the way of the Lord,*

*Make his paths straight.*

*Now John himself had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about the Jordan; and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.*

It appears that the greater part of John's preaching was done in the rural and open areas of Palestine; but it is certain that he experienced no difficulty in getting an audience to hear his message. The term "wilderness" is not used in the sense of complete barrenness, but rather of an unpopulated and unappropriated territory which afforded free range for shepherds and their flocks. It will be remembered that Moses kept the flocks of Jethro in the wilderness of Midian. (See Ex. 3: 1; Acts 7: 29, 30.) It had been approximately four hundred years since a prophet of God had spoken to Israel; and since the people were in great expectation (Luke 3: 15-17), they were anxious to hear any one who claimed to have a Divine commission.

It has already been pointed out that John was called the *Baptist* because of the particular work which he did, and because he was the first to be baptized by the authority of God, and which was administered by others by the same authority. There is no record of any practice which is comparable to this in any previous age. The "washings" which were authorized by Moses were not "baptisms" which were administered by

others, for the benefit of the ones who were being washed. (Cf. also 2 Kings 5: 10, 14.)

The call to repentance was the dominant message of John. He had come to prepare a people for the reception of Christ; and a change in their attitude and lives was essential to that preparation. The basic meaning of the word "repent" is to change one's mind, to have another mind, to think differently or afterwards. Repentance is not forsaking sin; that is the fruit of repentance. It is, rather, to have another mind regarding sin, to think differently about it, to reconsider. It implies a true knowledge of sin, a conviction of sin, with its guilt, condemnation, and terrible consequences. It means that the sinner changes his thoughts regarding sin, and his attitude toward it. Repentance is produced by godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7: 10), and results in a reformation of life. (Matt. 3: 8.)

It is interesting to observe that John is referred to as a "voice" crying in the wilderness. This implies that his personality was thrown, as it were, into the shadow of Christ. (Cf. John 3: 22-30.) Some one has asked, "What would be the duty of a purely human teacher of the highest moral and spiritual aim, entrusted with a message for the benefit of mankind?" The answer can be found in the attitude and conduct of John the Baptist, namely, a teacher who represents himself as a mere "voice," crying aloud in the moral wilderness around him, and anxious, beyond everything else, to shroud his own insignificant person beneath the majesty of his message. This is the way that Paul felt about his ministry. (See 1 Cor. 2: 1-5.)

John's manner of life, including his dress and food, was in keeping with the work he came to do. He did not need to leave the wilderness and go into the city in search of food; and when his hearers wanted to be baptized, he apparently did not need to change his raiment. In short, John's personal habits were in keeping with the work he came to do. Nothing could have been more appropriate in the preaching of repentance than that he should himself set an example of austerity. He evidently baptized thousands of people, but not every one obeyed his teaching. (Cf. Luke 7: 29, 30.) John indeed was one of

the greatest of men, but when the kingdom should be established, the least in it would be greater than he. This shows that the kingdom was not established when the Lord made that statement.

### John's Disclaimer and Affirmation

#### (John 1: 19-23)

*And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent unto him from Jerusalem priests and Levites to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; and he confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elijah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered, No. They said therefore unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said Isaiah the prophet.*

The record of the apostle John was written long after the other three; and it was no doubt for this reason, in part at least, that he passed over many of the things mentioned by the others, such as the births of John and Jesus, since they were already well known. But John does give some

essential truth in his prologue (1: 1-18) which is not found in the other records. The lesson text of this section actually begins John's history of the life and teaching of Christ.

The term "Jews," used by John usually refers to the ruling class, in this case probably the Sanhedrin. The scribes and Levites were charged, among other things, with teaching the people (cf. Neh. 8: 9); and it was probably for that reason that they were sent by the Sanhedrin to get some information regarding John. The emissaries asked John a series of questions, to which they received negative answers. He denied that he was the Christ, Elijah (Mal. 4: 5, 6; Matt. 11: 11-14), or the prophet (Duet. 18: 15-19; Acts 3: 22, 23). The Jews probably understood that the literal Old Testament Elijah was due to return to the earth, and it was this that John was apparently denying. And, too, he may not have known that he was the "Elijah" referred to. When the messengers continued to press John for an answer, he stated to them his true mission, namely, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said Isaiah the prophet."

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Why are different dates given by various commentators regarding the birth of Jesus?  
What information do we have concerning New Testament chronology?  
What was John's relation to the old and new dispensations?  
Discuss the remark which Jesus made regarding him in Luke 16: 16.  
Why was the mission of John so essential?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Jesus speak these words regarding John?  
Why was John in doubt about the identity of Jesus?  
What lesson do we have here for our day?  
Give other classic examples of exalted faith and painful doubt.

### The Birth of John

Why is it important to read the entire first chapter of Luke just here?  
What are some of the pertinent facts which we learn from it?  
What do we learn regarding the ages and relationship of John and Jesus?  
In what sense was John a child of promise?

What was the attitude of the neighbors and kinsfolk toward Elisabeth and Zacharias?

What important events took place on the child's eighth day and why?  
Why was Zacharias stricken dumb?  
Contrast his attitude with that of Mary.

### The Harbinger and His Message

Where was the greater part of John's preaching done?  
Why were the people so eager to hear

Why was John called the "Baptist"?  
What was the dominant theme of John's preaching?  
Why is repentance so essential?  
What is the meaning of repentance, how is it brought about, and what are its results?  
What is implied in John's referring to himself as a "voice"?  
What lesson should we learn from this?  
What do we know of John's personal habits and why did he maintain them?  
Why is the least in the kingdom greater than John?

### John's Disclaimer and Affirmation

Why does John's record of the gospel differ from the other three?  
Who were the "Jews" who sent messengers to John the Baptist?  
What questions did the emissaries ask John?

What did they mean by asking if he were  
Elijah or the prophet?  
Why did John deny that he was Elijah?  
Who was the promised "prophet"?

What further question did the messengers  
ask John?

What answer did he give them?

## Lesson II—October 10, 1965

### PETER, A MAN OF ACTION

#### Lesson Text

John 1: 40-42; Matt. 14: 27-31; 26: 69-75; John 21: 5-7

40 One of the two that heard John *sp**peak*, and followed him, was Andrew, Si'-mon Peter's brother.

41 He findeth first his own brother Si'-mon, and saith unto him, We have found the Mes-si'-ah (which is, being interpreted, Christ).

42 He brought him unto Je'-sus. Je'-sus looked upon him, and said, Thou art Si'-mon the son of John: thou shalt be called Ce'-phas (which is by interpretation, Peter).

27 But straightway Je'-sus spake unto them, saying, be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the waters.

29 And he said, Come. And Peter went down from the boat, and walked upon the waters to come to Je'-sus.

30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me.

31 And immediately Je'-sus stretched forth his hand, and took hold of him, and saith unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

69 Now Peter was sitting without in the court: and a maid came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Je'-sus the Gal-i-lae'-an.

70 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, and saith unto them that were there, This man also was with Je'-sus of Naz'-a-reth.

72 And again he denied with an oath, I know not the man.

73 And after a little while they that stood by came and said to Peter, Of a truth thou also art *one* of them; for thy speech maketh thee known.

74 Then began he to curse and to swear, I know not the man. And straightway the cock crew.

75 And Peter remembered the word which Je'-sus had said, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

5 Je'-sus therefore saith unto them, Children, have ye aught to eat? They answered him, No.

6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

7 That disciple therefore whom Je'-sus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. So when Si'-mon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his coat about him (for he was naked), and cast himself into the sea.

Golden Text.—*"And he said unto him, Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death"* (Luke 22: 33.)

Devotional Reading.—Matt. 4: 13-22.

#### Daily Bible Readings

Oct. 4. M..... Peter, the Fisherman (Luke 5: 1-11)  
Oct. 5. T..... Peter, an Apostle of Christ (Matt. 10: 2-4)  
Oct. 6. W..... Peter's Great Confession (Matt. 16: 13-20)  
Oct. 7. T..... On the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9: 28-36)  
Oct. 8. F..... In the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 3: 32-42)  
Oct. 9. S..... The First Gospel Preacher (Acts 2: 14-36)  
Oct. 10. S..... At the House of Cornelius (Acts 10: 23-48)

Time.—A.D. 27-30.

Places.—Bethany beyond the Jordan, the sea of Galilee, and Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jesus, Peter, and others.

## Introduction

Peter was among the most dynamic of the Lord's early disciples. Simon, as he was known at first, possessed a winsome personality, and the ability to make many friends. The first men to become disciples of Jesus, so far as the record goes, were two of John the Baptist's followers, Andrew and an unnamed follower, who is generally thought to have been John the brother of James. Simons introduction to Christ is stated in these words: "One of the two that heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ). He brought him unto Jesus. Jesus looked upon him, and said, Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter). (John 1: 40-42.)

The words which Jesus spoke to Simon reveal the Lord's deep insight into the possibilities for usefulness in God's service which were wrapped up in Simon. The latter was chosen to follow Christ, not because of his perfections, but because of the latent power within him, in spite of his many manifest shortcomings. One of the chief characteristics of Peter was his impulsiveness. He had a way of speaking up "on the spur of the moment;" and, as we gather from

Luke's record, he sometimes spoke without "knowing what he said." (See Luke 9: 33.) But notwithstanding this trait in Peter, Jesus loved him from their first meeting, and confidently predicted for him a stable future. One has only to consider the facts in Peter's life as a follower of Christ, in order to see that the Lord's love for, confidence in, and patience with him were fully justified.

The first year of the Lord's public ministry was largely spent in and around Jerusalem, as may be gathered from the first four chapters of John; and there is no indication that Peter or any of the other early disciples followed him continually. But as the Lord was preparing to begin his great Galilean ministry, Peter and some others received that which may be regarded as a call for continuous service. (See Luke 5: 1-11.) It was not long after that call until Jesus chose twelve of his disciples to be apostles. (See Luke 6: 12-16.) The full number of the apostles is listed several times in the New Testament; and it is interesting to note that Peter's name is always placed first. Peter was also a member of that smaller group of apostles, known as the Lord's "inner circle," along with James and John. (See Luke 8: 51; 9: 28; Mark 14: 32, 33.) The influence of Peter will never die; and, as some one has said, he will win every heart today who tries to understand him.

## The Golden Text

*"And he said unto him, Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death"* These words should be read in the light of their full context. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, until thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." (Luke 22: 31-34.)

It is a historical fact that Peter's impulsiveness carried him to the highest heights, as well as to the lowest depths. He sometimes even

dared to rebuke the Lord (cf. Matt. 16: 22), and, as is seen from the passage just quoted, he felt himself above the need of his Master's prayer for his safety. But when Peter realized his mistake, he would shed bitter tears in the valley of humiliation. Jesus, in the passage quoted above, told Peter that Satan had asked to have "you" (plural), that is all of the apostles, "that he might sift you [plural] as wheat: but I made supplication for thee [singular], that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren." It was to this, that is, the Lord's interest in and prayer for his safety, that Peter replied, "Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death;"

and there is no reason for thinking that he did not mean just that.

That which may be considered as Peter's second conversion is recorded in John 21: 15-19. "So when they had broken their fast, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again a second time, Simon son of John, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Tend my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. Now this he spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me."

When Jesus spoke the words to

Peter, in which the golden text is found, the latter boasted of his great love for Jesus; but in the passage which tells of his second conversion, there was no indication of a boastful spirit whatsoever. In each of the two first questions which Jesus addressed to Peter (it is interesting to observe that Jesus still called him Simon, probably because he had not yet become the stable Hock), the word for "love" is from *agapao*, the stronger word for love; but in each reply, Peter used the weaker word for love, namely, *phileo*. But when Jesus came to ask the question for the third time, he used *phileo* instead of *agapao*, that is, he used the weaker instead of the stronger word for love—the same word which Peter had used in both of his other replies; and that is what grieved him. It was as if Jesus implied that Peter had admitted that he no longer loved him in the highest sense of the term; and now he was asking him if he really had an affection for him! But one has only to read the subsequent history of Peter, and the two letters which he wrote, in order to see how truly Peter loved him, and in what manner he strengthened his brethren. There is only one instance in which he showed any sign of wavering, namely, that recorded in Gal. 2: 11ff.

## The Text Explained

### Getting the Best Out of Ourselves

(John 1: 40-42)

*One of the two that heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ). He brought him unto Jesus. Jesus looked upon him, and said, Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter).*

Although Andrew was the first to find Jesus, and was the one who made it possible for Peter to know him, it is a historical fact that Andrew was compelled to live in the shadow of his illustrious brother the rest of the time. This, however, did not detract anything from the true worth of Andrew; for he continued to serve in an admirable manner, as may be seen from the records of the gospel. (Cf. John 6: 8, 9; 12: 20-22.)

But we like to think of Andrew as the one who brought to Jesus a man who became a living illustration of the manner in which a person can rise from an unfavorable situation to one of true greatness.

There are many people who habitually wish that they were better than they are. Possessing a bad temper, they want a good one; timid, they want courage; or being sensual, they want emotional peace. And as they consider the situation, they often wonder where such things can be obtained. Such a view, however, is very erroneous; for no one can put such qualities into us from the outside. They are indeed very essential, if we are to live and enjoy the better life; but they are already in us, imprisoned and undeveloped, like seed which have never been watered, and so have never grown. Jesus said to Peter, "Thou art Simon . . . thou shalt be . . . Peter."

It follows therefore that people should stop trying to be somebody else, or trying to import into themselves virtues from without. Instead, they must be themselves, not necessarily as they now are, but themselves as they are capable of becoming. Jesus says that he came that people may have life, and may have it abundantly. (See John 10: 10.) It is never necessary for people to continue to live on a low level, or even on the level of some one else. The highway of life is littered with human wreckage of people who have tried desperately to be somebody else. In the words of Fosdick, "Here is a woman, for example, who in her girlhood dreamed of being a singer and, balked by circumstances, is now a clerk instead. To her daughter she transfers the thwarted ambition of her youth. Her daughter shall be the singer. Upon her daughter falls the mantle of her early hopes; yes, upon her daughter falls also the terrible hands of a devoted mother pressing a child into a mold so that the girl grows up trying desperately to be not herself but somebody else. Of course, the psychiatrists' offices are full, since so many parents do that kind of thing to their children and so many individuals do it to themselves.

"Be yourself. Never mind if somebody else is wiser, greater, more useful. That is not your affair. Be yourself—at your best. Especially if you are not a ten-talented person; having perhaps but one talent, dare to get out of yourself the best that is there." If one really wants to get the best out of himself, there are some basic principles which he should steadfastly maintain, namely, (1) *Religious faith*. This is the kind of faith which comes from hearing God's word (Rom. 10: 17), and those who possess it believe that their human life has a spiritual origin, backing, and destiny; and that things which are not seen are real and eternal (2 Cor. 4: 16-18). Equipped in this manner and backed by such a philosophy, one is willing to face an unfriendly and difficult world and make every effort to overcome whatever obstacles which may be in his way. (cf. 1 Cor. 10: 13; James 1: 2-8.)

(2) *A worthy ambition*. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, as a young man, wrote the following about himself: "The fact is, I most eagerly

aspire after future eminence in literature; my whole soul burns most ardently for it, and every earthly thought centers in it." Would the parents of such a young man worry about the future of their son, if he felt that way about pleasing God? (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 9; Heb. 12: 1, 2; Phil. 3: 7-11; 2 Pet. 1: 5-11.) Any person who has an ambition to do excellent work in a good field, and who is willing to be guided by Christian principles, is certain to get something out of life before he is through. (3) *True friends*. These are the kind of friends who have faith in us when we lose faith in ourselves, who can discover our unsuspected possibilities and unseal the hidden springs of life. (Cf. 10: 21; John 1: 42.) We need friends who not only can see our possibilities, but who love us enough to tell us the truth about ourselves.

When Faith Falters  
(Matt. 14: 27-31; 26: 69-75)

*But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the waters. And he said, Come. And Peter went down from the boat, and walked upon the waters to come to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and took hold of him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*

Jesus had just fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, and had "constrained the disciples to enter into the boat, and to go before him unto the other side, till he should send the multitudes away." (Matt. 14: 22.) After he did that, he went up into the mountain apart to pray; and when even was come, he was there alone. "But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, distressed by the waves; for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night he came unto them, walking upon the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a ghost; and they cried out for fear." (Verses 24-26.)

The experience of the disciples on that memorable night was not al-

together unique; for Jesus often comes to us in a way which makes us dread rather than welcome his approach. Sometimes he comes to us, demanding that we give up certain pleasures or sins, which we do not want to give up; and he sometimes comes, asking for service which we do not want to render. (Cf. Matt. 25: 14-30; 28: 19, 20; 2 Pet. 1: 5-11.) The disciples were afraid when they first saw Jesus; but he calmed their fears, saying, "It is I; be not afraid;" and he will do the same thing for any mistaken soul who is willing to listen to his word. (Cf. Phil. 4: 6, 7; Rom. 8: 28; Heb. 13: 5, 6.)

Observe the effect the presence of Christ had on Peter. His fears were replaced by faith, and that which before had seemed impossible became a distinct accomplishment. Christ always inspires such faith in the hearts of those who really know him. No one today, of course, can perform a miracle; but it is the firm teaching of the Scriptures that Jesus always delights in a daring and romantic faith. There is not a single instance in the entire New Testament which indicates that he is pleased with a prudent and conservative faith. (Cf. Matt. 9: 20-22; 2 Tim. 1: 12.) Instead of rejoicing in and encouraging such faith today, we are often among the critics and those who discourage such action.

Peter's example is inspiring, even if his faith did falter and cause him to fail. He dared to undertake that which others were afraid to do. One had better fail a thousand times, than to be afraid to undertake anything. Why does such a step as Peter took look so foolish to us? Because of our mistaken view of it. In what had he been trusting to hold him up from a watery grave? Which is better, to trust a little boat, or the sure word of God? When Jesus said, "Come," Peter accepted the invitation; and so should we, regardless of what the situation may be. There are many things we can accomplish, with the Lord's help; if we are willing to do our part. Peter failed to walk on the water, because he placed his mind on the difficulties, rather than on the Lord's promise; and what happened to him, can easily happen to us. One of the great tragedies of the age is that the average Christian walks by sight, rather than by faith. Our lives

would be much richer, if we had more faith like that which was manifested by Peter. May we heed the Lord's invitation to come to him, whatever our condition may be, and he will supply our every need. (Cf. Phil. 4: 13, 19.)

*Now Peter was sitting without in the court: and a maid came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilaean. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and saith unto them that were there, This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I know not the man. And after a little while they that stood by came and said to Peter, Of a truth thou also art one of them; for thy speech maketh thee known. Then began he to curse and to swear. I know not the man. And straightway the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.*

All Bible readers are familiar with Peter's denials of Jesus, but not every one stops to consider the lesson which we may learn from the narrative. One reason for this is that most of us are content, merely to sit in judgment against Peter. But simply making a target of other men's mistakes is both easy and useless. It would do us all good to ask, Am I qualified to sit in judgment upon Peter? (Cf. John 8: 7.) This is not to say that Peter did not sin: he did, most grievously; but it was not because he was a bad man at heart. And furthermore, Jesus, the one who was affected more by Peter's deeds than any one else, had confidence in the ultimate outcome of the apostle's life. (Cf. John 1: 42; Matt. 16: 18, 19.)

It is easy to call Peter a coward, but many of those who do so have never been tested as he was. We should keep in mind that he was a follower of Christ, just as we claim to be; and so, let us ask what we would have done, had we been in his place on that eventful night. Would we have gone to the high priest's house when the soldiers led Jesus there or would we have been with the nine disciples who were next heard of only when all danger had passed? It is easy for one to say.



I am a Christian when the profession brings gain to him and covers him with social respectability but it is something else when the test means the sorrowful vale, the crown of thorns, and the cross.

So, instead of merely condemning Peter, we should make an effort to learn something of the reasons for his fall. In the words of another, "Let us stand by his side and ask him to tell us over again the sorrowful tale of this great turning-point in his life; and ask him to tell us of that love which looked upon him, which brought him up from the depths even to the heights again. And when a man reads of that first denial, let him say, 'My soul, take heed to thyself.' And when he reads that second denial, 'My soul, be not highminded, but humble.' And when he reads that third denial, even with its oaths and curses, once more, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' If we are not ready to come to this story with that spirit do not let us come at all. But if we will come humble and contrite, why, then the story has many things to say to us about the danger of temptation as it comes to us in a very different form from that which we expect."

### Peter's Last Fishing Experience (John 21: 5-7)

*Jesus therefore said unto them, Children, have ye aught to eat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side*

*of the beat, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his coat about him (for he was naked), and cast himself into the sea.*

We learn from Luke 5: 1-11 that Peter was engaged in the fishing business when he was called to be a full-time follower of the Lord; and now, as he is about to enter in upon another phase of his work for Christ, he is again engaged in his old trade. Many Bible students have wondered why these disciples were fishing at this time. We, of course, do not know; but it is reasonable to suppose that they were seeking to be busy at a useful occupation, while waiting for further instructions from their Lord. Jesus had told them that he would meet them in Galilee, after his resurrection (Matt. 26: 32; 28: 7); and that probably accounts for their being at the sea of Galilee.

Peter was soon to get his final lesson from the Lord, before his restoration, as we have already observed; and now the miraculous draught of fishes would impress upon his mind again the truth which Jesus had spoken in Luke 5: 1-11, to the effect that they would become fishers of men. In less than two months, Peter would stand before the great assembly in Jerusalem and win the hearts of many of the people to the Lord.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

How did Peter come to be a disciple of Christ?

What were the Lord's words to him on that occasion?

What was one of his chief characteristics and how was he affected by it?

How did Jesus apparently feel toward that trait?

When did the first disciples of Christ become his constant followers?

What was Peter's place among the apostles?

What can you say of the influence which Peter still exerts over the lives of men?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Peter speak the words of this text?

What effect did Peter's impulsiveness have on him?

How did he feel about the Lord's interest in him?

Under what circumstances was Peter restored to the Lord's favor?

### Getting the Best Out of Ourselves

In what way was Andrew affected by his relationship to Peter?

Why do so many people need to try to get the best out of themselves?

What is the best way to go about getting this done?

What effect usually follows when an effort is made to make one assume the role of another?

What does it mean for one to be "himself"?

What steps are essential for getting the best out of one's self?

### When Faith Falters

Under what circumstances did Jesus walk on the water and why did Peter make his request?

What important lesson should we learn from this and why do we sometimes dread Jesus?  
 What effect did the presence of Christ have on Peter and how should it affect us?  
 With what kind of faith is the Lord pleased?  
 Why aren't we willing to manifest a daring faith?  
 What are some of the lesson which we should learn from Peter's example?  
 How do you account for the fact that Peter denied Jesus?  
 What is the usual attitude of people today toward his conduct in this respect?  
 How did Jesus feel toward him?

Why aren't we in position to condemn Peter for denying Christ?  
 What would be a good practice for us as we read the accounts of his denials?

#### Peter's Last Fishing Experience

Discuss his fishing experience at the beginning of his full-time discipleship.  
 Under what circumstances did he go fishing at the time of this lesson?  
 For what probable reason were they at the sea of Galilee?  
 In what manner did Jesus appear to the fishermen?  
 What was the apparent purpose of this meeting?

### Lesson III—October 17, 1965

## JAMES, A COMPANION

### Lesson Text

Luke 8: 51; 9: 54, 55; Mark 1: 19, 20; 3: 17; Acts 12: 1-3

51 And when he came to the house, he suffered not any man to enter in with him, save Peter, and John, and James, and the father of the maiden and her mother.

54 And when his disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?

55 But he turned, and rebuked them

19 And going on a little further he saw James the *son* of Zeb'-e-dee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending the nets.

20 And straightway he called

them: and they left their father Zeb'-e-dee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after him.

17 And James the *son* of Zeb'-e-dee, and John the brother of James; and them he surnamed Bo-a-ner'-ges, which is, Sons of thunder:

1 Now about that time Her'-od the king put forth his hands to afflict certain of the church.

2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

3 And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. And *those* were the days of unleavened bread.

Golden Text.—“He *took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray*” (Luke 9: 28.)

Devotional Reading.—Mark 14: 32-42.

### Daily Bible Readings

Oct. 11. M..... The Apostles Were Ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor. 5: 18-20)  
 Oct. 12. T..... James, the Businessman (Matt. 4: 18-22)  
 Oct. 13. W..... The Ambition of James (Matt. 20: 20-28)  
 Oct. 14. T..... At the House of Jairus (Matt. 9: 18-26)  
 Oct. 15. F..... James Asked for an Impossible Blessing (Mark 10: 35-45)  
 Oct. 16. S..... Heaven Is a Prepared Place for a Prepared People (John 14: 1-6)  
 Oct. 17. S..... To Suffer for the Lord Is to Partake of His Strength (2 Cor. 12: 7-10)

Time.—A.D. 27-44.

Places.—Capernaum and vicinity, somewhere in Samaria, the sea of Galilee, and Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jesus, James, and others.

### Introduction

James, the man about whom we are to study today, was one of the original apostles of Christ, and a member of the so-called “inner

circle,” along with Peter and John. When the apostles are listed, the name of James is usually placed before that of John; but that is not

always the case, as may be seen by reading Acts 1: 13. This may indicate that James was older than John. Their father's name was Zebedee, and it is generally thought that Salome, mentioned prominently in the gospel records, was their mother. There are many Bible students who think that Salome and the mother of Jesus were sisters; and if that is true, then Jesus, and James and John were cousins. It is natural to conclude, from the record which we have in the New Testament, that James and John had much in common. We shall have more about this further on in the lesson.

We gather from Matthew's account of the life of Christ that James and John were both ambitious men. They evidently shared the common Jewish expectation of an earthly messianic kingdom, and they endeavored to see to it that they would have high positions in that reign. It is also interesting to observe that James and John engaged their mother, pretty much as Adonijah did Bath-sheba (1 Kings 2: 13ff), in an effort to gain their end. "Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, worshipping him, and asking a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wouldest thou? She saith unto him, Command that these my two sons may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? They say unto him, We are able. He saith unto them, My cup indeed ye shall drink: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left hand, is not mine to give; but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared of my Father." (Matt. 20: 20-23.)

### The Golden Text

"He took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray" In his book, *The Inner Circle*, Edgar DeWitt Jones, offers some thought-provoking suggestions regarding the Lord's "inner circle" of disciples. He refers to Peter as the intrepid, James as the undistinguished, and John as the rare, elect spirit—three diverse and varied temperaments, yet all of the Inner Circle. He then goes on to show something of their ministry in this

One of the well-known sayings of Jesus was illustrated in the experiences of James and John, namely, "The one shall be taken, and the other shall be left." Aside from Judas the traitor, James was the first one of the apostles to die; and if one will look at the fact in the case, it will be seen that he was in the church less than fifteen years, from its establishment in A.D. 30, "ill his death in A.D. 44. John, on the other hand, was the last of the apostles to die, somewhere toward the close of the first century of the Christian era. The gospel records were written several years after the martyrdom of James, and after John had become prominent; and that may account for the fact that he was sometimes ranked after the latter. (Cf. Luke 9: 28.)

In speaking of the general character of James, the editor of *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible* says, "When we ask what manner of man he was in his youthful, formative years, we soon find that he had three natural enough human propensities, each of which required, not to be eradicated, but to be touched to finer issues, before he could become a disciple after Jesus' own heart, worthy at length to wear a halo as the first martyr among the Apostles. By nature he was zealous, jealous, and ambitious in the pursuit of earthly ends; and by grace he became so true-hearted and whole-hearted in the service of Christ—so zealous is his cause, so jealous of his honor, so ambitious to follow in his steps—that Herod Agrippa, king of the Jews, could think of no surer way of pleasing his subjects than by offering him as the first victim to their fanatical hate."

capacity; and we should not forget that exalted privileges involves those so blessed in great responsibilities. The first place to which Jesus took these three disciples, as a separate group, was to the house of mourning. More shall be said about this in the discussion of the lesson text. The second place to which they accompanied their Master was to the mountain of prayer. This was the mount of transfiguration.

In reporting the experience just

referred to, Luke says, "And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, that he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling" (Luke 9: 28, 29.) That which followed on that occasion lingered with the disciples during the rest of their lives, if we may judge from Peter's report. In telling his readers why he was diligently reminding them of the things which they should know, Peter wrote, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: and this voice we ourselves heard borne out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount." (See 2 Pet. 1: 16-17.)

The third place to which the three disciples accompanied Jesus was to

*the garden of grief.* When Jesus led his disciples into the garden of Gethsemane, it was for him an experience of the deepest agony, and he seemingly felt that he could not bear the pressure which was upon him, without help; and he therefore made a direct appeal for human sympathy. Jesus had been the comforter of his disciples when they were in trouble or danger, but now he calls upon them for the help which their wakeful sympathy would afford him in this extreme hour of grief and suffering. The Lord's words were, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: abide ye here, and watch with me." The reasonableness of this request, and the heartbreaking tone in which it must have been expressed, make us desire most earnestly that humanity would arise to its opportunity, but we are doomed to disappointment as we continue to read the inspired record. There are times and occasions, of course, when human sympathy may be found, when humanity responds; but in the case now before us, the need was too great for weary men to meet its demands.

### The Text Explained

In the House of Mourning and a  
Flare of Temper

(Luke 8: 51; 9: 54, 55)

*And when he came to the house, he suffered not any man to enter in with him, save Peter, and John, and James, and the father of the maiden and her mother.*

The aim of the lesson now before us is not to present a chronological narrative of the facts in the life of James, but rather to point out some of his privileges, which indicate his standing in the sight of the Lord, and some manifestations of his character. It has already been pointed out that James is looked upon as being a somewhat unimpressive person; but that conclusion does not necessarily follow. James died early, before the history which mentions him was written; and when those who wrote came to their task, they devoted their time and effort, to a large degree, to those who were still alive. But even at that, we have enough information regarding James to insure him an immortal place in the annals of the faithful.

This portion of the lesson text takes us to the first of the recorded instances in which we see James as a member of the inner circle of the twelve apostles. Jesus was in the midst of his great Galilean ministry, and had just returned from the country of the Gerasenes, where he had cast the demons out of the man and had permitted them to enter into a herd of some two thousand swine. When he and his disciples reached Capernaum, "the multitude welcomed him; for they were all waiting for him. And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him to come into his house; for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. But as he went the multitudes thronged him." (Luke 8: 40-42.)

On their way to the ruler's house, Jesus healed the woman with an issue of blood; and just as he was speaking a word of encouragement to her, some one came from the house of Jairus to inform him that his

daughter had died, and that there was therefore no need to trouble the Teacher further. "But Jesus hearing it, answered him, Fear not: only believe, and she shall be made whole." When they reached the house, Jesus did not permit any one to enter into the room where the body of the child was, except Peter, John, and James, and the parents of the maiden. We have no way of knowing just why Jesus chose these three disciples to witness the miracle which he would perform, but we may be sure that his reason was entirely sufficient. They may have needed the experience in order to fit them for other work, or there may have been many other good and vital reasons; but we must content ourselves with the fact that they were the chosen ones; and that their experience in this unique category was to be extended to two other occasions, as we have already seen, namely, the transfiguration and Gethsemane.

*And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire come down from heaven, and consume them. But he turned, and rebuked them.*

The incident of this portion of the lesson text apparently took place during a more or less private journey, which Jesus and his disciples made to Jerusalem, by way of Samaria. "And it came to pass, when the days were well-nigh come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he were going to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire come down from heaven, and consume them? But he turned, and rebuked them. And they went to another village." (Luke 9: 51-56.)

This is apparently the same journey which is mentioned in John 7: 10. (See also John 7: 1-9.) This was one of the times when Jesus had no one who was capable of sharing his awful burden of grief and joy—grief because of the ordeal which was before him, and joy because of what he saw beyond the cross. (Cf. Heb. 12: 2.) On previous occasions he had tried to initiate his disciples into his secret,

but they did not understand. (Cf. Mark 8: 31-33; 10: 32-35.) But even though the disciples did not understand what the thoughts of Jesus were, they did think that he deserved the ordinary hospitality of a night's rest; and when that was denied him, James and John proposed to do something about it.

It was noted earlier in this study that James and John had some traits of character, which were not being used in a manner which was pleasing to the Lord. The traits, in and of themselves, were good, and they did not therefore need to be eradicated. Instead, they needed to be turned to those things which would advance the cause of the Lord. The incident now before us is a case in hand. Zeal is always good, provided it is channeled in the right direction; but it is always evil, if it seeks revenge. (Cf. Horn. 12: 17-21.) The marginal reading of the passage now before us seems to indicate that James and John were seeking to follow the example of Elijah, in 1 Kings 1: 9-12. When Jesus rebuked James and John, the marginal reading adds, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." This apparently was true, whether Jesus actually said it or not. There are many things which we need to learn about our own selves, before we are fully fitted for the service which we are capable of rendering in the cause of Christ.

#### A New Relationship and a New Name (Mark 1: 19, 20; 3: 17)

*And going on a little further, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending the nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the boats with the hired servants, and went after him.*

The incident which is mentioned in this portion of the lesson text took place just as Jesus was beginning his great Galilean ministry. It was pointed out earlier in this series that Jesus spent the greater part of the first year of his public ministry in and around Jerusalem. This means that there was approximately one year, so far as time was concerned, between the thirteenth and fourteenth verses of the first chapter of

Mark. The four disciples who are mentioned in the paragraph from which this portion of the lesson text is taken, had doubtless been with Jesus during much of that first year; but they were called at the time of this lesson to devote their full time to his bidding. (Cf. Matt. 4: 18-22; Luke 5: 1-11, which are parallel passages.)

It is interesting to observe that busy people are often the ones who are called into the Lord's service. This has been true all through the ages, as one may see by reading in practically any part of the Bible. *The Fourfold Gospel* suggests two possible reasons for selecting lowly and, presumably, unlearned men, such as the ones now under consideration, for such high and responsible positions in the work of Christ, namely, (1) their minds would be free from prejudice and better prepared to entertain new truth; and (2) the strength of the gospel was made more apparent by the weakness of its ministers. (Cf. 2 Cor. 4: 7.) If we read only Matthew's and Mark's accounts of the calling of these disciples, we might think that Jesus was alone; but when we read that which Luke says, we know that there was a multitude of people present.

*And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and them he surnamed Boanerges, which is, Sons of thunder.*

The verse just quoted is from a paragraph in Mark which tells of the appointment, and gives the names of the twelve apostles. Simon the brother of Andrew was given the surname of Peter, while the two sons of Zebedee were called Boanerges. The term "Boanerges" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and Bible scholars are not agreed regarding the origin and meaning of this word. Young and Thayer both are inclined to the idea that it had reference to their fiery zeal, the signs of which may be seen in Luke 9: 54, as we have already observed. (Cf. Mark 9: 28.) Vincent, on the other hand, says that "some uncertainty attaches to both the origin and the application of the name. Most of the best texts read *onomata*, names, instead of name. This would indicate that *each of the two* was surnamed a 'son of thunder.' Some, however,

have claimed that it was a dual name given to them as a *pair*, as the name *Dioscouri* was given to Castor and Pollux. The reason of its bestowal we do not know. It seems to have been intended as a title of honor, though not perpetuated like the surname Peter, this being the only instance of its occurrence; possibly because of the inconvenience of a common surname, which would not have sufficiently designated which of them was intended, may have hindered it from ever growing into an appellation. It is justified by the impetuosity and zeal which characterized both the brothers, which prompted them to suggest the calling of fire from heaven to consume the inhospitable Samaritan village (Luke 9: 54); which marked James as the victim of an early martyrdom (Acts 12: 2); and which sounds in the thunders of John's Apocalypse."

#### A Victim of Hatred and Persecution

(Acts 12: 1-3)

*Now about that time Herod the king put forth his hands to afflict certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. And those were the days of unleavened bread.*

The persecution of the church, to which reference is made in this section of the lesson text, is the first such persecution recorded in Acts which had as a chief participant the king himself. In speaking of this Herod, McGarvey says, "This Herod was a namesake of Agrippa, the noted minister of Augustus Caesar whose life by Tacitus is one of the noblest of Latin classics, and he was commonly called Agrippa. He was a grandson of the Herod by whom the infants of Bethlehem were slaughtered, and a nephew of Herod the Tetrarch by whom John the Baptist was beheaded. He grew up in Home, where he wasted what fortune he had inherited in princely extravagance; but while doing so he contracted an intimacy with Caius Caesar, afterward the notorious Emperor Caligula. When the latter ascended the throne after the death of Tiberius, he elevated his friend Agrippa to a small kingdom composed of part of his grandfather's

dominions, which was subsequently enlarged by Claudius until it included all of the territory ruled by the first Herod. He was now in the zenith of his power, and was living in the utmost magnificence. There is not a hint as to the exciting cause of this murder; and there are so many causes which may have instigated it that conjecture in regard to it is vain."

While we do not know what was in the mind of Herod, other than to "afflict certain of church," it is altogether probable that he decided to improve on former methods of persecution, that is, he decided to begin with the principal leaders, instead of dealing with the less influential members. But regardless of how he felt about the matter, one has only to read the entire chapter from which this portion of the lesson text is taken, in order to see something of the miserable end of the arrogant Herod. In speaking of the king who had ordered the execution of the innocent guards, when he had failed to find Peter whom he had imprisoned and who had been miraculously released, Luke says, "Now he was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: and they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was fed from the king's country. And upon a set day Herod arrayed himself in royal apparel, and

sat on the throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people shouted, saying The voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately an angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." (Acts 12: 20-23.)

The average person who thinks in terms of this life probably would say that it was a pity that the life of James was cut off so early; but when one thinks of what it means to be numbered with the "glorious company of the apostles" and to be among the "noble army of martyrs," it will be readily understood that the church's loss was James' gain. (Cf. Phil. 1: 21-24.) When Jesus made his remarks regarding the peril of riches, following the rich young ruler's failure to accept his invitation to give up all and follow him, he said in answer to a question which Peter asked, "Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (See Matt. 19: 23-28.) James therefore lost nothing in death, but rather gained a place of immortal influence which he and the other apostles will exercise through their teaching and example, as long as the kingdom of Christ continues. (Cf. Rev. 6: 9, 11; 20: 4-6.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Who was the James about whom we are to study today?

What is known of his family background?

What indication did he manifest regarding his aim in life?

What lesson did Jesus teach him and his brother John?

In what way did he and John illustrate a well known saying of Jesus?

What is known of the general character of James?

### The Golden Text

What is meant by the "inner circle" of the Lord's apostles and who were its members?

What always follows exalted privileges and why?

In what did the ministry of the "inner circle" involve Peter, James, and John?

What impression was made upon them when they were with the Lord at his transfiguration?

Tell of their experience with him in the garden of Gethsemane?

Why couldn't they respond to his great desire for human sympathy?

What lesson should we learn from these experiences of the three apostles?

### In the House of Mourning and a Flare of Temper

What is the aim of the lesson now under consideration?

Why do people usually think of James as being an unimpressive person?

Why does the character of John tower above that of James?

Tell of the experience of the "inner circle" in the house of mourning.

Under what circumstance did James and John give a manifestation of their temper?

Why was Jesus so "alone" at that time?

Why couldn't his disciples understand his thoughts and feelings?

Show how the zealous trait in the character of James and John was turned into something good.

What great lesson is there in this for us?

### A New Relationship and a New Name

When and under what circumstances were James and John called to be full-time followers of Christ?

Why does the Lord so often call busy people into his service?

What were some of the possible reasons for calling uneducated men to be apostles?

Why did Jesus call James and John Boanerges?

What is known of the origin and meaning of that term?

A Victim of Hatred and Persecution

What was peculiar about the persecution

mentioned in this section of the lesson text?

Who was this Herod?

In what way was he related to the other Herods of the New Testament?

What method did Herod apparently plan to follow in his attempt to persecute the church?

What attitude did he manifest and what end did he meet?

What does the average person usually think about the death of James?

What in reality was his status?

What great gain came to this martyred apostle?

## Lesson IV—October 24, 1965

# MARK, THE USEFUL MINISTER

### Lesson Text

Acts. 12: 12, 25; 15: 36-39; Col. 4: 10; 2 Tim. 4: 11; Phile. 24

12 And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together and were praying.

25 And Bar'-na-bas and Saul returned from Je-ru'-sa-lem, when they had fulfilled their ministrations, taking with them John whose surname was Mark.

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 Pam-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:

10 Ar-is-tar'-chus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Mark, the cousin of Bar'-na-bas (*touching* whom ye received commandments: *it* he come unto you, receive him),

11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is useful to me for ministering.

24 *And so do* Mark, Ar-is-tar'-chus, De'-mas, Luke, my fellow-workers.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is useful to me for ministering"* (2 Tim. 4: 11.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Mark 1: 1-8.

## Daily Bible Readings

Oct. 18. M..... John Mark Was with the First Great Missionaries (Acts 13: 1-5)

Oct. 19. T..... But John Soon Left Their Company (Acts 13: 13-16)

Oct. 20. W..... Opportunity Always Brings Great Responsibility (Matt. 25: 14-30)

Oct. 21. T..... Mark Was Peter's Son in the Gospel (1 Pet. 5: 12, 13)

Oct. 22. F..... The Great Debt Which Disciples Owe Their Teachers (Phile. 15-20)

Oct. 23. S..... The Gospel According to Mark (Mark 1: 1-8)

Oct. 24. S..... Mark's Record of the Great Commission (Mark 16: 14-20)

Time.—A.D. 44-68.

Places.—Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome.

Persons.—Paul, Mark, and others.

## Introduction

The Hebrew name of the man was John, and that designation is about whom we are to study today used alone in Acts 13: 5, 13. But at



sometime in his life he was given the surname of Mark, which was Roman. We have seen in previous lessons of this quarter that Jesus gave surnames to some of his disciples, as, for example, he called Simon Peter, and James and John were called *Boanerges*. The great apostle to the Gentiles was originally called Saul, but he came to be known as Paul. According to Dr. Ramsey, the practice of giving a second name came into general use about the time that Greece spread her culture over the world which Alexander had conquered. Thus, a person would be called by his original name among his own people, but when he went out among people of other nations or races, he would generally use his adopted name. Paul did the greater part of his work outside the Jewish people and he, accordingly, used his Roman name.

The mention of Mark's name in 1 Pet. 5: 13 naturally implies that he was converted to Christ by that apostle. The passage reads as follows: "She that is in Babylon, elect together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Mark my son." This would be a natural consequence, since Mark lived in Jerusalem; and that is where Peter did a great part of his earlier preaching. However, so far as the New Testament record is concerned, Mark was associated with Paul much more than he was with Peter. Many Bible students are of the opinion that the gospel record which bears Mark's name was written by the man about whom we are now studying, but under the direct influence of Peter. *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible* makes the following interesting observation regarding this question:

"We read the pages of St. Mark and we are struck with its crisp and graphic narrative. Picture after picture passes before our eyes, each quickened with a vivid touch which carries us to the heart of the event. There are the animated scenes caused

by the early miracles of Jesus—the crowds who hasten and gather in their joyful excitement, and eagerly bear there sick to his healing touch; and we are made actually to feel the fear of the disciples as they follow their Lord on his journey to Jerusalem. Some of the descriptive expressions are of great value from a chronological point of view; for example, when the hungry villagers are fed by their compassionate Teacher, the narrator informs us that 'they sat upon the *green grass*.' Grass is green only at the passover, and the artless remark affords an important clue when it is our task to compare the first three Gospels with the Fourth. Ere we close the book we are forced to the conclusion that the writer tells no borrowed tale, but had seen the things whereof he writes. The question now presents itself: Who was this man whose memory was a storehouse of sacred scenes? Tradition points to St. Peter."

There is an interesting statement in Mark, following the arrest of Jesus, which some Bible students have thought was a reference to Mark himself. "And a certain young man followed with him, having a linen cloth cast about him, over his naked body; and they laid hold on him; but he left the linen cloth, and fled naked." (Mark 14: 51, 52.) No other gospel writer mentions this, and we, of course, have no way of knowing the identity of the young man in question; but if Mark did not refer to himself, then it is difficult to imagine just why he included this incident in his record. We have no means of knowing what happened to Mark, following the last mention of him in the New Testament (2 Tim. 4: 11—A.D. 68); but tradition says that he was the founder of the church in the great Jewish-Greek city of Alexandria, where it is thought that he died and was buried. This, however, is only tradition.

### The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is in the principal lesson text, and it will be treated in its regular order.

### The Text Explained

The Introduction of Mark to Bible Readers

(Acts 12: 12, 25)

And when he had considered the

thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together and were praying.

The "he" here refers to Peter, and the *thing* which he considered was his miraculous deliverance from the prison, where he was detained by Herod, following the murder of James. (Read Acts 12: 1-19.) The king thought that he was making certain that Peter would be kept in maximum security until after the Passover, at which time he planned to bring him forth to the people; but he did not take God into consideration. "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him." Although Peter was sleeping between two soldiers during the night before Herod meant to bring him out to the people, and was bound with two chains, and guards were before the door; all of that however, meant nothing to the angel of the Lord who came to deliver him. (Cf. Psalm 34: 7, Heb. 1: 13, 14.)

It is interesting to observe that the angel, in giving Peter his freedom, only did that for him which he could not do himself. After the apostle was well away from the prison house, and was on his own, the record says, "And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a truth, that the Lord hath sent forth his angel and delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews." It was then that Peter decided to go to the home of the mother of John Mark; "where many were gathered together and were praying." The following verses clearly indicate that the brethren who were praying were not expecting Peter's release from prison; and that fact has caused some to think that they were not expecting an answer to their prayer. That conclusion, however, is based on the assumption that they were praying for his release, an assumption which has no foundation in fact. While we may not know the specific thing for which they were praying (cf. Acts 12: 5), it is reasonable, in view of Peter's past record, to suppose that they were praying that the apostle's faith would not fail him in the great trial through which he was passing. (See Luke 22: 31-34.)

The house of Mary, according to tradition which may be traced back to the fourth century, was the house containing the *upper room*, where

Jesus and his disciples ate the last passover supper, and where the Lord instituted his own supper. (Cf. Mark 14: 12-16.) This also may have been the "upper room" which figured so prominently in the events of Pentecost. (See Acts 1: 12, 13: 2: 1ff.) It would not be unreasonable to suppose, in the light of the known facts in the case, that John Mark was among the early converts to the gospel of Christ. (See again 1 Pet. 5: 13.) This would be especially true, if the home of this mother was actually the meeting-place of Christ and his disciples, even before the church was established. At any rate, we know that it is a wholesome practice to have godly teachers of the word of the Lord in one's home, and especially if there are young people present.

*And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministration, taking with them John whose surname was Mark.*

The *ministration* referred to here was in connection with the contribution which the brethren in Antioch sent to the needy disciples in Judaea. "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." (Acts 11: 27-30.)

In view of the fact that Mark was soon to be used by Barnabas and Saul in the work of preaching the gospel to others, it is very probable that they had persuaded him to accompany them back to Antioch, where he would have a part in the work they were doing. It apparently was not long after this before the Holy Spirit said to the prophets and teachers in the church which was in Antioch, "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." (See Acts 13: 1-3.)

"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 synagogue of the Jews: and they had also John as their attendant." (Acts 13: 4, 5.) John, that is, John Mark who had come with Barnabas and Saul from his home in Jerusalem, remained with the missionaries until they reached Perga in Pamphylia: "and John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem." (See Acts 13: 13.) We do not know just why Mark turned his back on the work he had promised to do, but we do know that his reason was not satisfactory to Paul, as we shall see in the next section of the lesson text. But whatever the motive which prompted Mark to return to his home, we should learn that once we have put our hands to the plow, we should make every possible effort to be faithful to that which we have pledged ourselves to do. (See Luke 9: 62.)

#### The Lost Opportunity (Acts 15: 36-39)

*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. 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.*

After returning to Antioch from their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas were directed to go to Jerusalem for the so-called conference regarding the Gentile converts to the gospel: and after that question was settled to the satisfaction of all the leaders and other brethren whose sole desire was to do right, they, along with two other brethren, Judas and Silas, men who were prophets, returned to Antioch and resumed their work in that city. But it was apparently not too long before Paul made the suggestion that they go again and visit the churches which they had established on the first missionary journey. And see how they were getting along.

This idea seem to meet with the approval of Barnabas, but he felt that they should take Mark with them, the same Mark who had left the work on the first journey, and returned to his home. This Paul was not willing to do. This placed Mark in the center of a controversy, a controversy which the apostles themselves were unable to resolve, so that they could continue their work together. This gives us some idea of the far-reaching consequences of a failure to be true to a trust. There are many church members who have followed the example of Mark, with the result that other good brethren have been forced to part company with each other, so far as their work was concerned, because of the deep convictions which characterized them.

However, we should hasten to add that Paul and Barnabas did not become estranged as brethren; they simply could work together as they had done in the past. There is no fault to find with either of them, so far as the motives which characterized them were concerned. Barnabas was a man of mild, conciliatory character, and evidently of much natural affection. One can almost hear him pleading his cousin's cause. He probably argued that his former wavering was due to his thoughtlessness and the inconsistency of his untried youth; and he very likely pointed out the fact that no man should be condemned for a single failure. He may even have cited the fact that Peter faltered more than once and gravely disappointed the Lord himself; but that Jesus manifested sufficient confidence in him to restore him to his place of honor among the apostles. Perhaps most people today would agree that Barnabas was right, and that Mark did deserve another chance.

But Paul looked at the situation from another viewpoint. He was a man of stern, unbending sense of duty, of unflinching courage, and of whole-hearted devotion to anything which he pledged himself to do. He knew what it meant to preach the gospel to heathen people, and he felt that those who were commissioned to do that kind of work (see again Acts 13: 1-13) were not at liberty to be governed by their own feelings in such matters. And with such an estimate as this of the all-exacting na-

ture of the work which had been committed to their hands, no one can rightfully censure Paul for demanding faithfulness on the part of all who had a part in it. The whole situation was simply a question of justice and equity. "Paul represents justice, sternly right on a matter of principle. Barnabas represents the modifying, qualifying considerations, which prevent justice from becoming a disabling sternness. But they both felt the extreme importance of a matter of principle"; and it was Mark who was responsible for the demonstration of these two points of view.

The Man Who Came Back  
(Col. 4: 10; 2 Tim. 4: 11; Phile. 24)

*Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you, receive him).*

There are people today who are ready to say that Paul was wrong in his attitude toward Mark, and that the words just quoted may be regarded as an admission of guilt. But that is not necessarily true. It is perhaps better to say that Mark stands before his brethren as an example of a man who had recovered his character, or who had regained his self-respect. His position had been difficult, with the influence of the great apostle Paul against him; but Mark had demonstrated that it is possible for a man to come back. How did he do it? or how may we account for his recovery? There may have been many factors, some of which we are aware, but others may be hidden from us. For example, we know that the influence of Barnabas was brought to bear upon him, and it may well have been that Peter had a hand in the matter too. But it is probable that the most effective agency was that of Paul himself. When Paul refused to endanger his enterprise by taking a "quitter" with him, and when he told him frankly, though lovingly, just what he thought of him, Mark began to come to himself. He began to see himself as he really was, and was made to realize how grievously he had sinned. In the words of Clovis G. Chappell, "There are times when the greatest cruelty we can do our friends is to

be too gentle and too kind to tell them the truth. Many a man has been saved by having some brave Paul or some brave Nathan look him squarely in the eye and tell him exactly what is wrong."

*Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is useful to me for ministering.*

It is in this passage that we can see the greatness of both Paul and Mark. Paul had been forced to take his stand against Mark; but when the latter had recovered himself and was ready and willing to serve in the cause of Christ as a true soldier, Paul could gladly use him. The great apostle would not hold a grudge; the matter between him and Mark was not personal; Mark, in Paul's view of the matter, had been in the wrong; but now that that had been corrected, the apostle can speak of him in the same manner as he could Luke or any of the others of his fellow-workers. In the rendering of the Revised Standard Version, "Get Mark and bring him with you; for he is very useful in serving me."

It is altogether probable that Paul wanted Mark, not to help him in preaching, but to attend to his physical needs; but whatever reason he had for wanting the younger "attendant," there is every reason for thinking that Mark was ready for that service. In the words of Hastings, "How long it took we do not know, but the cure was thorough. The man who had shrunk from possible dangers and disagreeable in Asia became brave enough to stand by Paul the prisoner, and not be 'ashamed of his chain.' So far he had won his way to Paul's renewed confidence, and made himself indispensable by service and sweetness, that the lonely apostle, with the headsman's sword in prospect, fee Is that he would like to have him at hand once more, and bids Timothy bring Mark with him, 'for he is useful to me for ministering;' he can do a thousand things that a man like me cannot do for himself, and he does them 'all for love and nothing for reward.' So he wants Mark once more. Not only Paul's generosity but Mark's patient effort had pasted a clean sheet over the page that told of his desertion, and he became useful for the very service which he had

petulantly and with cowardice flung up."

Paul's words to Timothy regarding Mark are the last words which were spoken concerning him, so far as the New Testament is concerned; and it should rejoice our hearts to know that it is possible for a person who has made serious mistakes to become useful in the Lord's service again. This is substantially the same principle which is illustrated in the case of the prodigal son. It is true that the latter sank deeper in the dregs of degradation than did Mark; but it is also true that when he came to himself and returned in penitence to his father, that he was restored to his former place of sonship. When the Lord receives those who have sinned against him, but who return, he not only forgives their sins; he restores them to their proper relationships—with God, their fellow men, and themselves.

*And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow-workers.*

The words just quoted are a part of a statement of salutation near the close of Paul's letter to Philemon. The full sentence reads as follows: "Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, saluteth thee; and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow-workers." This letter was written during Paul's first Roman

imprisonment, some five or six years earlier than his last letter to Timothy, during his second and final imprisonment in the Imperial City. But it shows that Mark had been back in Paul's favor for a number of years. In fact, it is very probable that Mark wrote his gospel record during the interval between Paul's two imprisonments. The facts which we have regarding Mark can mean much to any person who is willing to give them due consideration. And so, in a beautiful poem by Christina G. Rossetti, we read.

"Once like a broken bow Mark  
sprang aside:

Yet grace recalled him to a worthier course,

To feeble hands and knees increasing force,

Till God was magnified.

"And now a strong Evangelist, St.

Mark

Hath for his sign a Lion in his strength;

And thro' the stormy water's breadth and length

He helps to steer God's Ark.

"Thus calls he sinners to be penitents,"

He kindles penitents to high desire,  
He mounts before them to the sphere of saints,

And bids them come up higher.

— *Poetical Works*, p. 174.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Why did the man about whom we are to study today have a double name?  
In what ways was Mark related to Peter and Paul?  
What indications do we have of the influence of Peter in Mark's record of the gospel?  
What possible personal reference did Mark make regarding himself?  
What is known regarding the closing years of Mark's life and work for the Lord?

### The Introduction of Mark to Bible Readers

Discuss the events which lead up to Mark's introduction to those who read the Bible.  
What important lesson do we learn from the attitude of the angel who delivered Peter?  
What further lessons do we learn from the prayers of the brethren at that time?  
Discuss the probable relation which the house of Mary had in New Testament history.  
What important lesson should we learn from this?

When and under what circumstances did Mark leave Jerusalem?  
What probable reason did he have for going?  
What assignment did he eventually receive?  
What did he do regarding it?

### The Lost Opportunity

What were the principal events which led up to the controversy regarding Mark?  
Discuss the far-reaching consequences of a failure to be true to a trust.  
What was the nature of the effect of Mark's defection on Paul and Barnabas?  
Why was the contention between them inevitable?  
Discuss the merits of both sides of the arguments which each probably made?  
How is it possible for us to justify both Paul and Barnabas, depending upon the viewpoint each assumed?  
What were these viewpoints?  
What was Mark's responsibility with reference to the situation in hand?

### The Man Who Came Back

Why do some people think that Paul was wrong regarding his attitude toward Mark?  
What is another and perhaps a better way to look at the matter?

What were some of the factors which contributed to Mark's recovery?  
 What was probably the most effective one?  
 Give reasons for your answer.  
 What disservice may we often render our friends in such instances?  
 Why did Paul write Timothy as he did regarding Mark?

What does his attitude toward him indicate on the part of both Paul and Mark?  
 What was probably the type of ministering which Mark did?  
 What great principle is illustrated by Mark's restoration?  
 What is suggested by Paul's reference to Mark in his letter to Philemon?

## Lesson V—October 31, 1965

# LUKE, THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN

## Lesson Text

Acts 16: 16-18; Col. 4: 12-17

16 And it came to pass, as we were going to the place of prayer, that a certain maid having a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much gain by soothsaying.

17 The same following after Paul and us cried out, saying, These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim unto you the way of salvation.

18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, being sore troubled, turned and said to the spirit, I charge thee in the name of Je'-sus Christ to come out of her. And it came out that very hour.

12 Ep'-a-phras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Je'-sus, saluteth you, always striving for you in his

prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

13 For I bear him witness, that he hath much labor for you, and for them in La-od-i-ce'-a, and for them in Hi-e-rap'-o-lis.

14 Luke, the beloved physician, and De'-mas salute you.

15 Salute the brethren that are in La-od-i-ce'-a, and Nym'-phas, and the church that is in their house.

16 And when this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the La-od-i-ce'-ans; and that ye also read the epistle from La-od-i-ce'-a.

17 And say to Ar-chip'-pus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

Golden Text.—*"Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you."* (Col. 4: 14.)

Devotional Heading.—Luke 1: 1-3.

## Daily Bible Readings

Oct. 25. M. ....	Luke the Scholarly and Careful Writer (Luke 1: 1-4)
Oct. 26. T. ....	Luke the Great Historian (Acts 1: 1-5)
Oct. 27. ....	W. The Brother Whose Praise in the Gospel Is Spread Abroad (2 Cor. 8: 16-24)
Oct. 28. T. ....	The Companion of Paul (Acts 16: 6-10)
Oct. 29. F. ....	Among the First European Missionaries (Acts 16: 11-15)
Oct. 30. S. ....	On the Trip to Rome (Acts 27: 1-8)
Oct. 31. S. ....	"Only Luke Is with Me" (2 Tim. 4: 9-18)

Time.—A.D. 50-62.

Places.—Philippi, Home, and Colossae.

Persons.—Paul, Luke, and others.

## Introduction

It is generally thought by Bible students that Luke was a Greek; and if this is true, then he was the only Gentile writer of that volume which we know as the New Testament. While there is no direct evidence regarding the subject, it is also thought by many students of the Scriptures that Luke and Titus were brothers,

and that their home was probably in Antioch of Syria. The earliest chronological reference we have to Titus in the New Testament was his going from Antioch to Jerusalem, in company with Paul and Barnabas, for the conference regarding the Gentile Christians. (See Gal. 2: 1-3.) This fact, along with some information

contained in Eusebius, has led many to think that Luke and Titus were natives of the Syrian city which played such an important role in the missionary work of the early church. It is a significant fact that neither the name of Luke or Titus is mentioned in the Book of Acts, although both men were prominent in the work of the Lord at the time which is covered in that historical document; and that is usually explained by suggesting that Luke, as John did later, omitted any personal reference in his writings by name, either to himself or his family.

Practically all Bible students are united in thinking that Luke wrote both the gospel record which bears his name and the Book of Acts; and from the abrupt manner in which the later book ends, it is also thought that the sacred historian intended to write a third volume in his historical set which would cover a later period of church history. If such a volume was ever written, we have no trace of it. It is easy to see from the information contained in the New Testament regarding Luke that he was an educated physician, and a dedicated follower of Christ. While we must consider his writings which have come down to us as being inspired, that is, as being written under the supervision of the Holy Spirit, it is also true that he made a thorough and intensive investigation of all the pertinent facts before he wrote, as may be learned by reading his preface to the Book of Luke. (See Luke 1: 1-4.)

In speaking of the character and ability of Luke as a writer, *The New Bible Dictionary* notes that from the contents of the two books which we have from his pen we have come to know the author in a very intimate way. He was a humble and disciplined writer, who always kept himself in the background, so that the full light might fall on the great theme of his two-fold history, namely, the glad tidings that Jesus Christ is both Lord and Saviour, and that the victorious Redeemer chose, equipped,

and used his apostles, and especially Paul, to proclaim the gospel throughout the then known world. It is clear from the literary style of Luke and Acts, and from the character of the contents of the two books, that Luke was thoroughly trained, both as a physician and as a writer. His qualities as one of the best and most reliable historians of antiquity are both recognized and admitted by most impartial scholars today.

Those who are willing to take the time and to make the effort to acquaint themselves with the terminology which Luke employs in his writings, will be impressed with the fact that he was skilled in many fields, and that his knowledge of material things covered a wide range. For example, Luke's exclusive narratives regarding the birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus are such as would interest a physician, to whom such personal disclosures would be confided. (Cf. Luke 2: 19.) When Luke reported the healing of Peter's wife's mother, he said that she 'was holden with a *great fever*.' (4: 38; cf. Matt. 8: 14; Mark 1: 30.) Luke alone, among the gospel writers, reports the story of the good Samaritan, with its first-aid episode. (10: 25-37.) When reporting the Lord's teaching regarding the peril of riches in which he said, "For it is easier for a camel to enter in through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (18: 25), Luke uses a different word for "needle" from the one employed by Matthew and Mark. Their word is *rhapshis*, whereas, Luke's term is *belonē*, which signifies a surgical needle. A. T. Robertson points out that the great detail and minute accuracy with which Luke describes the voyage and shipwreck of Acts 27 throws more light upon ancient seafaring, than everything else we possess 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*.

### The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is a part of the principal text, and it will be considered in its proper place.

## The Text Explained

### The Historian and Gospel Narrator

#### (The Books of Luke and Acts)

Both of the books which are attributed to Luke were addressed to someone whom he called Theophilus. Bible students are not agreed as to the identity of this addressee, that is, they are not certain whether the term was used to conceal some well known individual, or whether it was the actual name of a person. The latter is probably true, and the fact that Luke does not use the same phraseology in referring to him in Acts, which is used in Luke, has led some to think that Theophilus was converted to Christianity between the writings of the two books. If Theophilus was a real person, he must have been a Gentile, as his name indicates; and Luke was evidently trying to interest him in the religion of Christ. At any rate, no one can read the two books which are ascribed to Luke, without being impressed that he is reading a historical narrative which never becomes dull and uninteresting.

Our aim in this lesson is to learn as much as we can about Luke, and what better source do we have for our information than the books which he wrote. His name occurs only three times in the entire New Testament—Phile. 24; Col. 4: 14; 2 Tim. 4: 11. Some one has referred to Luke as the poet-painter among the evangelists; and it is not surprising therefore that Renan, who was a good judge of style, calls his gospel record the most beautiful book in the world. He goes on to say, "There is scarcely an anecdote or a parable proper to Luke which does not breathe the spirit of mercy, and of appeal to sinners. The Gospel of Luke is especially the Gospel of pardon, and of pardon obtained by faith. 'There is more joy in heaven over a sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.' 'The Son of man is come not to destroy men, but to save them.' Any quantity of straining is lawful to him, if only he can make each incident of the gospel history a history of pardoned sinners. Samaritans, publicans, centurions, guilty women, benevolent pagans, all those whom Pharisaism de-

spises, are his clients. The idea that Christianity has pardon for all the world is his alone. The door is open; conversion is possible to all.

"It is no longer a question of the law; a new devotion, the worship of Jesus, has replaced it. Here it is the Samaritan who does the good deed, whilst the priest and the Levite pass indifferent by. There a publican comes out of the temple justified by his humility, whilst the irreproachable but haughty Pharisee goes out more guilty than before. Elsewhere the sinful woman is raised by her love for Jesus, and is permitted to bestow on him particular marks of tenderness. Elsewhere, again, the publican Zacchaeus becomes at the first onset a son of Abraham, by the simple fact of his having shown eagerness to see Jesus. Luke adds the taste for humility. 'That which is highly esteemed amongst men is abomination in the sight of God.' The powerful shall be cast down from his throne, the humble shall be exalted; there, in brief, is the revolution wrought by Jesus. Now, the haughty is the Jew, proud of his descent from Abraham; the humble is the gentle man who draws no glory from his ancestors, and owes everything that he is to his faith in Jesus." And what more can be said of Acts!

### The Companion of Paul

#### (Acts 16: 16-18)

*And it came to pass, as we were going to the place of prayer, that a certain maid having a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. The same following after Paul and us cried out, saying, These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim unto you the way of salvation. And this she did for many days. But Paul, being sore troubled, turned and said to the spirit, I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out that very hour.*

It is clear from the opening words of both Luke and Acts that the same person wrote them both; and while there is no direct testimony as to the identity of the writer, it is certain that both books came from the same pen. And since practically all con-



servative Bible scholars regard Luke as the author of both Luke and Acts, we shall proceed on the assumption that such is the truth. Any one who will read the closing part of Luke and the opening part of Acts, will be able to see an overlapping which makes it easy for the reader to follow the continuity of thought, as the twofold historical narrative unfolds itself.

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 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 from which this portion of the lesson text is taken.

After Paul and Barnabas decided to go their separate ways as they revisited the churches which they had established on their first missionary journey, and had selected new companions. Luke devotes the remainder of the Book of Acts, almost exclusively, to the experiences and work of Paul, beginning with the latter's second missionary journey. He does mention the fact that Barnabas, after choosing Mark to go with him, "sailed away unto Cyprus: but Paul chose Silas, and went forth, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches." (Acts 15: 39-41.)

This journey by Paul and Silas took them to Derbe and Lystra, where Timothy was selected to accompany them; and on through other cities in that area, as they pushed forward in a generally westward direction. "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." (Acts 16: 6-10.)

It is in the paragraph just quoted that we are first introduced to the famous "we" passages of the Book of Acts. Up to verse 10 the pronouns are in the third person, but beginning with that verse, the first person is used, which implies that Luke joined the missionary party at Troas. Just where he came from is not known; but since he does not go with Paul and the others beyond Philippi (cf. Acts 17: 1), he may have been living in that city at the time of Paul's visit, or, again, he may have remained with the new church which was established there, as the others continued their southwestward journey. Several years later, as Paul was returning to Jerusalem from his third missionary journey, Luke rejoined him in Philippi, and continued on with him to the Jewish metropolis. (See Acts 20: 5, 6.)

There are some Bible students who think that Luke may have been the man whom Paul saw in the vision at Troas, and who urged the apostle to come over into Macedonia, and help us. (Cf. *Harper's Bible Dictionary*.) This could well have been the case, and if so, it would be natural for the historian to conceal that fact by the manner in which he reported the incident. And, too, if that is what happened, it easily accounts for Luke's having joined the missionary party in that coastal city, and then remaining in Philippi, where he was probably living at the time, after the others had finished their work there. It would also fit in with the fact that Luke again joined Paul, when the latter passed through Philippi on his way to Jerusalem, as he was concluding his third missionary journey.

We know from the history con-

tained in Acts 20: 5-21: 17 that Luke went with Paul all the way to Jerusalem; and inasmuch as he went with the apostle from Caesarea to Rome, when Paul was being taken to the Imperial City to appear before Caesar (Acts 27: 1-28: 16), it is quite probable that Luke remained in Caesarea during the apostle's two-year confinement there. It is not unlikely, in fact, that Luke gave up his medical career, as he joined Paul in Philippi, in order to devote his time to ministering to the aged apostle (cf. Phil. 9, and writing his history of Christ and the early church, with special emphasis in the latter part to the work of Paul. There are those who think that Luke gathered much of the material for his books during the two years in Caesarea. (Cf. Acts 24: 22, 23.)

But whatever may be the truth regarding the things suggested in the two preceding paragraphs, we do know that Luke did make thorough preparation for the writing which he did (Luke 1: 1-4), and certainly no one can think of a better source for gathering his information than during the time just referred to. He had easy access to Paul, and the apostle could certainly acquaint his friend and physician with all the relevant facts he would need for the great work he plan to undertake. Paul was in prison in Caesarea during the years 58-60; and it is clear from the closing part of Acts that that volume of Luke's history was completed before Paul was released from his two-year Roman imprisonment. (Acts 28: 30, 31.) Luke, of course, was written before Acts, and it is altogether possible that the beloved physician wrote the Third Gospel during Paul's Caesarean imprisonment. (Cf. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. II, p. xi.)

The last of the "we" passage in this section of Acts is in the portion of the lesson text now under consideration. Lydia and her household had been converted to Christ, and the missionaries were being entertained in her home. (See Acts 16: 11-15.) We do not know how long the brethren had been in Philippi, but we do know that as they continued to frequent the place of prayer, "a certain maid having a spirit of divination met us, who

brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. The same following after Paul and us cried out, saying, These men are servant of the Most High God, who proclaim unto you the way of salvation." This procedure continued for many days; but Paul, not wishing to be identified with demons, charged the demon in the name of Christ to come out of the maiden; and it came out that very hour. This, of course, clearly demonstrated to the people of Philippi that the religion of Christ was completely different from and entirely opposed to demons.

### The Salutation of the Beloved Physician (Col. 4: 12-17)

*Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, saluteth you, always striving for you in his prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. For I bear him witness, that he hath much labor for you, and for them in Laodicea, and for them in Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you. Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church that is in their house. And when this epistle had been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye also read the epistle from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.*

The three churches referred to here, namely, those in Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis, were all in the Lycus valley of ancient Phrygia. It appears from the general tone of Paul's letter to the Colossians that that church was relatively faithful to the teaching which they had received from their founder and minister Epaphras (cf. Col. 1: 7), but the letter from which this section of the lesson text is taken was written to warn the Christians in Colossae against an insidious doctrine which later came to be known as *The Colossian Heresy*. When Paul wrote the Colossian letter, the church in Laodicea had evidently not yet become lukewarm. (See Rev. 3: 14-22.) The territory in which these cities were located was later incorporated

in what came to be known as the Roman province of Asia.

The gospel apparently reached this area during the time that Paul was in the city of Ephesus. All indications point to the fact that the church in Colossae was the least important, as the expression is commonly understood, of any to which Paul's epistles were addressed. It is not definitely known when or by whom the church in Colossae was founded: but from Col. 1: 6, 7; 4: 12, 13, one would naturally infer that Epaphras took the lead in planting the cause in that city. The expression "on our behalf" seems to indicate that Paul directed the work of Epaphras in Colossae, and it is quite probable that the latter established the church there during Paul's long stay in Ephesus. There is no indication that Paul himself ever visited Colossae, but it is quite obvious that he maintained a vital connection with the church there (cf. Col. 2: 1), and he seems to have kept informed regarding conditions within the congregation (cf. Col. 1: 3, 4; 2: 5).

We learn from Phile. 23 that Epaphras was Paul's fellow-prisoner at the time he wrote Colossians (Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians were all written at the same time, during Paul's first Roman imprisonment, the one mentioned in Acts 28). Demas and Luke were among the apostle's fellow-workers. (Phile. 24.) Judging from the manner in which Paul spoke of Archippus in Phile. 1, 2, it is altogether possible that he was the son of Philemon and Apphia. He appears to have been that which we

would call the "minister" of the church in Colossae, or at least one of the principal teachers there. All the men who are mentioned in this part of the lesson text were Gentiles. Demas was the one who later forsook Paul, "having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica." (See 2 Tim. 4: 9, 10.) Only Luke was with the aged apostle at the time he wrote his last letter to Timothy, and he was probably serving as his physician. (See 2 Tim. 4: 11.) It was as "the beloved physician" that Paul spoke of him in his letter to the Colossians.

What happened to Luke after the martyrdom of Paul no one knows. *The New Bible Dictionary* says that "according to the anti-Marcionite prologue to his Gospel, he continued to serve the Lord without the distraction of family responsibilities until he died in Boeotia in Greece at the age of 84. Through intimate contact over many years with Paul and many other Christian leaders (e. g. Philip, Timothy, Silas, Mark, Barnabas, James the brother of Jesus, etc.), and as a consequence of the fact that he was in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 21: 17 ff.), Caesarea and other places intimately associated with Jesus and his first apostles, Luke had the very best opportunity to obtain first-hand knowledge regarding our Lord and the history of the earliest Christian church. That he definitely and purposefully made full use of those opportunities is claimed by him in Luke 1: 1-4, and is corroborated by the sterling quality and historical accuracy of both Luke and Acts."

## Questions for Discussion

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

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What is peculiar about Luke as a writer of the New Testament?  
What is thought to have been his family background and early home?  
What particular writing did he do? Give reasons for your answer.  
If he wrote by inspiration, why was it necessary for him to make preparation?  
What can you say of his ability as a writer?  
What peculiarity is noted in his writing? Cite some examples.

### The Historian and Gospel Narrator

To whom did Luke address both of his books?  
Who was Theophilus? Give reasons for your answer.

What was his purpose in writing to him?  
What is the aim of this lesson?  
What is our best source of information regarding Luke?  
How many times does Luke's name appear in the New Testament?  
In what way do many scholars regard Luke's writing?  
What are some of the principal characteristics of the Book of Luke?

### The Companion of Paul

How did Luke go about connecting the two books of the New Testament which he wrote?  
Give some of the salient facts regarding the Book of Acts.  
What peculiarity is observed about Luke's method of writing?  
What are the principal facts which lead up to the time that Luke joined the company of Paul and those with him?  
In what way do we see the providence of God at work?

How do we know when and where Luke became a member of Paul's party?  
 How long did he continue with them?  
 Give reasons for your answer.  
 When was he next associated with Paul, so far as the record is concerned?  
 What circumstances may indicate that Luke continued with the apostle for some years?  
 What were some of their experiences in Philippi?

The Salutation of the Beloved Physician

What three churches are referred to in this section of the lesson text?

Where were they located and what do we know of them?  
 What appears to have been Paul's relationship with the church in Colossae?  
 Under what circumstances was the church there apparently established?  
 Who were the men associated with Luke in this part of the lesson text?  
 What happened to Demas who was associated with Luke each time the letter's named is mentioned?  
 Who was Archippus and what exhortation did Paul have for him?  
 What is known of Luke's later life?  
 In what way did he improve his opportunities?

## Lesson VI—November 7. 1965

### STEPHEN, THE FIRST MARTYR

#### Lesson Text

Acts 6: 5-15; 7: 54-60

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Ste-phen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Proch'-o-rus, and Ni-ca'-nor, and Ti'-mon, and Par'-me-nas, and Nic-o-la'-us a proselyte of An'-ti-och;

6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them.

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Je-ru'-sa-lem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

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, loo-k-ed 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;

53 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 they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"* (Acts 7: 59.)

Devotional Reading.—Acts 8: 1-3.

## Daily Bible Readings

- Nov. 1. M..... The Occasion of a Great Persecution against the Church (Acts 8: 1-3)  
 Nov. 2. T..... Stephen's Death Was a Milestone in Church History (Acts 11: 19-26)  
 Nov. 3. W..... Stephen's Death Made a Profound Impression on Paul (Acts 22: 17-21)  
 Nov. 4. T..... A Great Defense before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7: 1-7)  
 Nov. 5. F..... Unrighteous Judges Denounced (Acts 7: 51-53)  
 Nov. 6. S..... The Servant Is Not Greater Than His Master (Matt. 10: 24-33)  
 Nov. 7. S..... The Cause of the Martyr Is Not Lost (Rev. 6: 9-11)

TIME.—A.D. 31, 32.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Stephen, the Sanhedrin, and others.

## Introduction

Stephen was a man whose zeal literally ate him up; and our minds are so firmly fixed on his martyrdom, that we almost forget that he was anything else but a martyr. No one, of course, should seek to detract anything from the glory of the death which Stephen died, but we should remember that it was his loyalty to Christ and the gospel message which led the way to his untimely passing. But was his death untimely? In his last public address before his crucifixion, Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." (John 12: 24.) Stephen was not content to serve tables alone in Jerusalem, but ventured out into the arena of life and became one of the most zealous and forceful preachers we know anything about. There is nothing about his life and work which is not commendable.

As Stephen continued his labors for Christ, his forensic ability brought him in contact with many leaders of his day, who were opposed to the cause of Christ. It is altogether probable that among the number he debated with from the synagogues of Jerusalem, was none other than Saul of Tarsus; and as we stand in the blaze of Stephen's glory and his life was being taken from him, we see a young man at whose feet the garments of his murders were laid, and who was consenting to his death, who was destined to become the greatest single force for the furtherance of the cause of Christ here on earth,

namely, the great apostle to the Gentiles, Paul. We have no way of knowing what thoughts passed through his mind as he watched the persecuted man die for Christ; but we do know that it made a lasting impression upon him. (Cf. Acts 22: 17-21; 26: 10.) It may well have been that Stephen's life, in the providence of God, was given for that of Paul; and if so, it is certain that Stephen lost nothing in the transaction, as we shall see further on in this study.

The early Christians in Jerusalem must have felt that they had been struck a terrible blow when Stephen was killed, and indeed they had; but disheartening as that tragic event was, it turned out to be, in the providence of God, the most effective means of extending the borders of the kingdom of Christ. Even before his body could be buried, the opposition began to assert itself. Luke says, "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." But he was not able to imprison all of the Lord's people; for "they therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word." (See Acts 8:1-4.) The examples of both Stephen and the persecuted Christians should encourage all of us to trust in the providence of God, whatever may come to us.

## The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is found in the principal text, and it will be dealt with in its proper order.

## The Text Explained

### Stephen, a Man of Many Talents

(Acts 6: 5-9)

*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 Tirnon, and Parmenas, and Nicholaus a proselyte of Antioch; whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them.*

The occasion for the selection of the seven men just mentioned was this: Some of the Grecian Jews were murmuring against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution of food. This was the first time the unity of the infant church had been threatened; and the situation called for immediate action on the part of the apostles. As Lowell would say, "New occasions teach new duties," and that is exactly what happened here. In fact, it is easy to see, throughout the New Testament, that many of the things which the Lord has ordained for the church and individual Christians, have been made known by various situations which arose from time to time.

"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." (Acts 6: 2-4.) This is the saying which pleased the whole multitude, and the threatened crisis was peacefully averted. And what was done on that occasion can be done now, if brethren are willing to listen to the teaching of the apostles; for there is not a situation which can arise today among brethren, but that the Scriptures have the answer for it, if they are willing to search for it and accept it. (Cf. Acts 2: 42; 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17; 2 Pet. 1: 3.)

The seven men who were selected and appointed for the work at hand were the first deacons in the church. It is true that they are not called "deacons" in the text, but they were appointed to *serve tables*, or to minis-

ter to *tables*, as the marginal note has it; and inasmuch as the word "serve" (*diakoneo*) is the verb from which the noun *diakonos* (deacon) is derived, 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 which is used in the text now under consideration. 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 Jerusalem 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 early church; which was later designated by the term "deacon:" they simply were not called deacons at first.

It should also be observed that the selection of the men to serve tables was made by the church, and not by the apostles. This does not mean that the brethren were free to select just any seven men; on the contrary, the character of the men to be chosen was carefully stated by the apostles themselves. This same principle must be followed today in the selection of the men who are to serve, namely elders and deacons; and if brethren will make sure that they are guided by that principle, no mistake will be made in their choice. (Cf. 1 Tim. 3: 1-13; Tit. 1: 5-9; 1 Pet. 5: 1-3.) Too often brethren pay little or no attention to that which the apostles have said regarding the character and fitness of men for the eldership and diaconate, and allow their own preferences, or dislikes, to govern them in that which they do. One has only to look about, in order to see how far short of the Lord's will many congregations have fallen in the matter of the selection of the men who are expected to serve as leaders and helpers. All seven of the men selected in Jerusalem were from the murmuring group.

*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 gospel is God's power to save. This is true because when the word

of the Lord is received into the heart, it will cause the people in question to do as God directs. Only the obedient will be saved (cf. Heb. 5: 8, 9); and the only way in which one can know what God wants to do is to learn his will (cf. Matt. 7: 21-23). 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. (Cf. Horn. 1: 5; Gal. 1: 23; Jude 3.)

*And Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people. But there arose certain of them that were of the synagogue called the synagogue of the Libertines, and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen.*

When people of ability, both natural and acquired, become devoted servants of the Lord, they will soon find themselves engaged in every effort of which they are capable, in furthering the cause of Christ. That was true of Stephen. He evidently left the tables, at least for the time being, and devoted himself to the proclamation of the gospel. The Spirit gave him miraculous power, and he was therefore able to perform miracles for the purpose of confirming the gospel message which he and others were preaching. The progress of the word which was being spoken was taking its toll among the opposition, and that aroused certain of their teachers to open conflict with Stephen. However, his ability as a teacher and a debater was such as to make it impossible for them to make any headway with him, as the next section of the lesson text clearly shows.

### The Gathering Storm (Acts 6: 10-15)

*And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake. 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 laic: 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. And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been The face of an angel.*

We do not know the names of the men who disputed with Stephen, but from the facts which we have regarding Paul, it is entirely probable that he was among the number. (Cf. Acts 22: 3: 7: 58: 22: 17-20.) If Saul was one of the disputants, the immediate effect of the contest, as Taylor points out, was only to inflame the rage of the controversialist; but we may well believe that the truths which he heard from the lips of Stephen became the germs, much of 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. (Cf. 1 Cor. 2: 6-10.) If the men who heard Stephen speak had possessed the proper attitude of mind, the results would have been entirely different. (See 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 learn the truth or hold to it after he has learned it: and they 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.)

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 instances the result was the death of the men in question. But that was as far as the religious bigots could go. (Cf. Luke 12: 1-5.) They could not destroy the influence of Jesus, but they did accelerate it; and in the case of Stephen, the blood of the martyr became the seed of the kingdom. (See Acts 8: 1-4; 11: 19-26.) If one wonders about the features of Stephen as he stood before the Supreme Court (Sanhedrin) of the Jewish people, let him remember that which has already been said about his character; and then consider the fact that he knew that he was standing where Jesus stood, and fully understood that the judges were not there to try him, but to condemn him. He also was aware of the fact 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 which showed in his face, 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. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly 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. But they cried out 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. 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.*

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 stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them that showed before of the coming of the Righteous One; of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers; ye who received the law as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not." (Acts 7: 51-53.)

In saying that the members of the Sanhedrin were "cut to the heart," Luke means that they had inwardly felt the effects of the charge which Stephen had leveled against them. Taylor says that he had touched the sore spot of 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 for "they were cut" (*diaprio*) occurs only here and in Acts 5: 33. There is a different word 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.

The vision which Stephen was permitted to behold was evidently vouchsafed to him to encourage him in the most critical experience of his life. He knew that his earthly sojourn was about over, and he was permitted to see 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 his cause; and this record has been preserved for the instruction and



comfort of all others who are called on to make the supreme sacrifice.

The reaction of the judges to the description which Stephen gave of his vision was 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 they 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"?

The name of Saul appears in the New Testament at this point for the first time, that is, the man who later became the apostle Paul; but he never would have become an apostle, if he had been unwilling to listen. (Cf. Acts 22: 1-16.) There are some people who are wont to question the accuracy of the record of the stoning of Stephen by the Jews, on the ground that they had no right to inflict capital punishment, that prerogative being reserved to the Romans.

Mobs in this country do not have the right either, but the fact does not prevent lynchings now and then. Some Bible students are of the opinion that the incident we are now considering 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.

Not only did Stephen imitate Jesus in praying for his enemies and murderers, but the fact that he addressed his words to Jesus shows that he regarded him as being 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, as has already been noted; and perhaps on many more. The idea of death as a sleep, advanced by Jesus and the New Testament writers (cf. 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 the same original root—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." (See Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, in loco.)

Stephen stood the supreme test which can be applied to any life. He was "faithful unto death." We do not know whether or not Stephen realized the full significance of his act with reference to the future of Christianity; but there is one thing of which we may be sure, namely, that a great crisis had come—

Once to every man and nation  
comes the moment to decide;  
In the strife of Truth with False-  
hood, for the good or evil side,  
and Stephen was more than con-  
queror through him that loved him.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What was the basic reason for all of Stephen's suffering and death?  
How do people usually evaluate such a death?  
What good may we see in it?  
What far-reaching influence did Stephen exert?

What was the immediate effect of his martyrdom?

### Stephen, a Man of Many Talents

Give the facts which lead up to our meeting with Stephen.  
In what way did the apostles deal with the situation which threatened to disturb the peace of the church?  
What important lesson should we learn from this?  
How do we know that the seven men who

were appointed were the first deacons in the church?  
 Who selected these men and what meaning does the principle have for our day?  
 What does Luke say about the progress of the word at that time?  
 What significance was attached to the fact that many priests were obedient to the faith?  
 What does it mean to obey *the* faith?  
 What did Stephen do in addition to his work of serving tables?  
 What type of opposition did he encounter?

#### The Gathering Storm

Who was probably among the men who disputed with Stephen? Give reasons for your answer.  
 Discuss the contrast between the attitudes of the opposing sides of the controversy.  
 What effect does an inflamed mind and a raging heart have on their possessor?  
 Who alone are such people injuring? Give reasons for your answer.  
 What do people who are not interested in learning new truth usually do when

they can't meet an argument relative to it?

#### Rage and Martyrdom

What "things" enraged the Jewish Sanhedrin?  
 What is the meaning of their being "cut to the heart"?  
 Why, apparently, was Stephen permitted to behold the heavenly scene?  
 What application does the record of it have for us?  
 Why did the judges react so violently to Stephen's charge against them?  
 In what way is this same attitude often seen today?  
 What is your usual reaction to new and disturbing ideas?  
 Why do some question the accuracy of Luke's record of the stoning by the Jews?  
 What Christ-like trait did Stephen manifest?  
 What new concept of death did Jesus and the New Testament writers introduce into Christian thinking?

### Lesson VII—November 14, 1965

## PHILIP, THE EVANGELIST

### Lesson Text

Acts 8: 4-13, 26-31

4 They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word.

5 And Philip went down to the city of Sa-ma'-ri-a, and proclaimed unto them the Christ.

6 And the multitudes gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard, and saw the signs which he did.

7 For *from* many of those that had unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice: and many that were palsied, and that were lame, were healed.

8 And there was much joy in that city.

9 But there was a certain man, Si-mon by name, who beforetime in the city used sorcery, and amazed the people of Sa-ma'-ri-a, giving out that himself was some great one:

10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is that power of God which is called Great.

11 And they gave heed to him, because that of long time he had amazed them with his sorceries.

12 But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of

Je'-sus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13 And Si'-mon also himself believed: and being baptized, he continued with Philip; and beholding signs and great miracles wrought, he was amazed.

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: and same is desert.

27 And he arose and went: and behold, a man of E-thi-o'-pi-a, a eunuch of great authority under Can-da'-ce, queen of the E-thi-o'-pi-ans, who was over all her treasure, who had come to Je-ru'-sa-lem to worship;

28 And he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet I-sa'-iah.

29 And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran to him, and heard him reading I-sa'-iah the prophet, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31 And he said, How can I, except some one shall guide me? And he besought Philip to come up and sit with him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women*” (Acts 8: 12.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 8: 32-40.

### Daily Bible Readings

Nov. 8. M.....	One among the Seven Chosen to Serve Tables (Acts 6: 1-6)
Nov. 9. T.....	The Father of Four Daughters Who Prophesied (Acts 21: 7-14)
Nov. 10. W.....	Parental Responsibility (Eph. 6: 1-4)
Nov. 11. T.....	The Responsibilities of an Evangelist (2 Tim. 4: 1-8)
Nov. 12. F.....	The Place of Evangelists in the Early Church (Eph. 4: 7-16)
Nov. 13. S.....	Some More Duties of an Evangelist (1 Tim. 4: 13-16)
Nov. 14. S.....	An Evangelist Should Make Diligent Preparation (2 Tim. 2: 14-26)

TIME.—Probably A.D. 33.

PLACES.—The city of Samaria, and on the way between Jerusalem and Gaza.

PERSONS.—Philip, the Samaritans, Simon, and the Ethiopian Eunuch.

### Introduction

There are three “Philips” mentioned in the New Testament, namely, (1) Philip the apostle; (2) Philip the evangelist; and (3) Philip the tetrarch, the latter being a half-brother of Herod Antipas, the man who slew John the Baptist. (See Luke 3: 1.) It was this last Herod, that is, Herod Philip, described as being one of the better Herods, whose wife left him to live with her half-brother-in-law, Herod Antipas; and it was her daughter who became the occasion for the death of John the Baptist. (See Matt. 14: 1-12; Mark 6: 14-29; Luke 3: 18, 19.) Philip the apostle is not referred to outside the gospel records, except in Acts 1: 13, which is the last thing the New Testament says of him. This Philip apparently was a friend of Peter and Andrew (they all lived in Bethsaida), and he was personally invited by Jesus to become one of his disciples. He also was the one who found Nathanael, and urged him to meet Jesus with his famous “Come and see.” (See John 1: 43-51.)

Philip the evangelist, the man about whom we are to study today, is nowhere referred to in the New Testament, outside the Book of Acts, and in that book in only three chapters, namely 6, 8, and 21. He was one of the seven men who were chosen by the Jerusalem church to serve tables; and he was the only one of that group, other than Stephen, who became a gospel preacher, as that expression is generally understood, so far as the record goes. Following the martyrdom of Stephen, Philip, apparently being driven out of Jerusalem with the other members of the church (see Acts 8: 1), preached the

gospel in Samaria, as we shall see in the lesson now before us. After his experience with the Ethiopian eunuch, Luke says, “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.” (Acts 8: 39, 40.)

The next we hear of Philip the evangelist, he was living in Caesarea. He had four virgin daughters, who prophesied. It was in this home that Paul, Luke, and others were entertained, on their way from Philippi to Jerusalem. Paul had just finished his third missionary journey, and was going to Jerusalem with the brethren who were taking the collection for the poor saints in that area (see 1 Cor. 16: 1-4). Luke had joined the company in Philippi (Acts 20: 1-6.) It was also in Philip's home that Agabus delivered his famous prophecy regarding the forthcoming arrest of Paul in the city of Jerusalem, at which time the brethren pled with the apostle not to go on to the Jewish capital. But Paul was committed to the task of taking the contribution to Jerusalem; and he would not be persuaded. The brethren then ceased their pleading and said, “The will of the Lord be done.” (See Acts 21: 7-14.)

Although the incident just referred to is the last mention we have in the New Testament regarding Philip the evangelist, it is interesting to note that Eusebius includes in his *Ecclesiastical History* some reference to

this Philip as *an apostle*; and that may be the reason why some people today do the same thing. The first reference is to an epistle by Poly-crates who make mention of "the apostle Philip, and his daughters, thus: "For in Asia, also, mighty luminaries have fallen asleep, which shall rise again at the last day, at the appearance of the Lord, when he shall come with glory from heaven, and shall gather again all the saints. Philip, one of the twelve apostles who sleeps in Hierapolis, and his two aged virgin daughters. Another of his daughters, who lived in the Holy Spirit, rests at Ephesus." Eusebius also speaks of the apostle John, and then he goes on to say, "This may suffice as to their death; and in the dialogue of Caius, which we mentioned a little before, Proclus, against whom he wrote his disputation, coinciding with what we have already advanced concerning the death of Philip and his daughters, speaks thus:

'After this there were four prophetesses the daughters of Philip at Hierapolis in Asia, whose tomb, and that of their father, are to be seen there.' Such is his statement. But Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, mentions the daughters of Philip, tarrying in Caesarea of Judea, and as endued with the gift of prophesy, in these words: 'We came to Caesarea, and having entered the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the seven, we abode with him. But he had four virgin daughters that prophesied.' But as we have thus set forth what has come to our knowledge respecting the apostles and the apostolical times, as also respecting the sacred books that they have left us, both the disputed writings, though publicly used by many in most of the churches, and those that are altogether spurious, and far removed from the correct doctrine of the apostles, let us now proceed to our history in order." (Chapter 31.)

### The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is in the printed text, and will be considered at the proper time and place.

### The Text Explained

#### Philip's Preaching and Miracles

(Acts 8: 4-8)

*They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word. And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them the Christ. And the multitude gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard, and saw the signs which he did. For from many of those that had unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice: and many that were palsied, and that were lame, were healed. And there was much joy in that city.*

The dispersion of the church from Jerusalem brought to an end, of course, the need for serving tables, to which Philip and others had been appointed (Acts 6: 1-6), if indeed the need had continued that long. Stephen had been murdered, and his death had been the occasion for the great persecution which had been raised against the Jerusalem church. All the brethren, with the exception of the apostles, had been driven out of the city by the terrible persecution, and were scattered abroad through-

out the regions of Judaea and Samaria. (See Acts 8: 1-3.) Jesus had told his apostles, just before his ascension, that they would be his "witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1: 8.) Jerusalem had been thoroughly worked; and now the time had come for the work to begin in the adjacent territory.

Although disputed by Josephus and others, it appears that the Samaritans were the descendants of the mixed marriages of the poorer people who were left in Samaria, following the captivity by the Assyrians, and some foreigners who were settled there by the conquerors just referred to. But whether this was true or not, John says that "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." (John 4: 9.) This would suggest that the orthodox Hebrews probably would have little or no desire to preach the gospel to the people of Samaria, and that the latter would not be too enthusiastic about hearing it, if the message had been proclaimed by them. (Cf. the Lord's experience with the woman of Sa-

maria, in John 4.) It may have been providential therefore that a Hellenistic Jew, rather than a Hebrew, went into Samaria as a gospel preacher.

Bible students are not agreed regarding the identity of the city in which Philip did his preaching. The definite article is in the original of the text now in question (see Westcott and Hort), and that seems to indicate that the reference is to the capital city itself. Herod had recently rebuilt the city, and had changed the name to *Sabaste*, the Greek word for Augusta, in honor of Augustus Caesar. It is very probable that the work which Jesus did in Samaria (see John 4: 39-42) prepared the way for the success which accompanied Philip's labors. Jesus foresaw this when he said to his disciples, "Say ye not, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest. He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. For herein is the saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not labored: others have labored, and ye are entered into their labor." (John 4: 35-38.) In his poem, *Harvest*, P. J. O'Reilly says,

"Down the furrow strides the sower—  
From his hand the live seed leap—

In his heart the hope of harvest  
Little knowing who will reap!

"Harvest comes in, teeming—teeming—

Golden stalk and laden ear,  
But the sower's sleeping—sleeping  
In the earth he held so dear!

"So through life, if I am sowing,"  
What to me the toil or gain?

If my brothers reap the harvest  
I shall not have lived in vain!

Where, asks David Thomas, could the disciples of Christ get a better reception for the gospel message, than where Jesus himself had preached? Samaria, as it were, became the bridge over which the gospel passed from Jerusalem to the great outside world. The acceptance of the Samaritan Christians by the Jewish brethren was the first step in bringing the Gentiles to Christ.

This is plainly indicated by the events which are recorded in Acts 8: 14-17.

God has always seen to it that his word was fully confirmed and established before he asked any one to believe and accept it. And until that was done, wherever the gospel was preached, there was some one present who could perform miracles for the purpose of showing beyond question that the spoken word was indeed God's word. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name they shall cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark 16: 14-18.) This does not mean that every individual believer would be able to work miracles, but rather there would always be some one in new fields who could do these things. (Cf. Mark 16: 19, 20; Heb. 2: 1-4.) This was true in Philip's ministry among the Samaritans, as the lesson text now under consideration plainly affirms; "and there was much joy in that city."

#### Simon the Sorcerer and Philip's Success

(Acts 8: 9-13)

*But there was a certain man, Simon by name, who beforetime in the city used sorcery, and mazed the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is that power of God which is called Great. And they gave heed to him, because that of long time he had amazed them with his sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. And Simon also himself believed: and being baptized, he continued with Philip; and beholding signs and great miracles wrought, he was amazed.*

The Samaritans claimed to believe in Jehovah, but they received no part of his word except the Pentateuch, that is, the five books of Moses — Genesis through Deuteronomy.

That, indeed, was God's word, but it was not all of his revealed will to his people. It was necessary for the people of that age to know that which the law said, but it was also essential that they also be familiar with the preaching of the prophets. If the latter had been true of the Samaritans, it would have been much easier for them to have rejected the sorceries of Simon as being false. But when people accept only a part of that which God has spoken, and are unfamiliar with other portions of his revealed will, it will be much easier for them to be led astray by false teachers.

It appears natural to gather from such statements as this, "And Jesus said, ... Ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power," (Mark 14: 62), that the Lord substituted the term "Power" for God, which was evidently a practice of the pious Jews of his day. (Cf. Luke 22: 69.) When the angel revealed to Mary that she would become the mother of God's Son, he said to her, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High." (Luke 1: 32.) This and similar statements apparently became the basis for impostors who claimed messianic stature to work their deception. Accordingly, Simon, like Theudas (Acts 5: 36), gave "out that himself was some great one." But when the spurious is exposed to the genuine, it is not difficult for honest people to see the difference. The people who saw Philip's miracles, and heard his message, plainly saw that Simon was no more than a mere magician, a charlatan.

The theme of Philip's preaching in Samaria was "the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ." The prophets had predicted the coming kingdom (cf. Dan. 2: 44), and both John the Baptist and Jesus had preached that it was at hand (see Matt. 3: 1, 2; Mark 1: 14, 15). The kingdom of Christ was established on the first Pentecost following the Lord's ascension, and those who heard the gospel message, and responded to its requirements were delivered out of the power of darkness, and were translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. (Col. 1: 13.) Satan had long usurped the kingdoms of the world, (that is, the

*inhabited earth*, marginal note (Luke 4: 5-7), a fact which Jesus nor any one else denied); but now with the kingdom of Christ firmly established, people had an opportunity to be freed from the reign of evil, and become citizens of the heavenly kingdom. And when people believed that which Philip said regarding the kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Jesus had said in the early part of his public ministry that one must be born into the kingdom (John 3: 3-5), but we know from this and other parts of the New Testament that Jesus was referring to the obedience of the gospel which would later be preached. When people hear the gospel and believe it, they are begotten of the Spirit (1 John 5: 1); and when they are baptized into Christ, they are born of water (Tit. 3: 5-7). Or, to state the same thing in another way, to believe and obey the gospel is to be born of water and the Spirit. Simon himself did precisely what the others in Samaria did; and if the latter were in the kingdom or church (cf. Matt. 16: 18, 19, where the two terms are used interchangeably), so was Simon. Only those with a theory to defend will deny this.

#### Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (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. 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. 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.*

When a person gives himself unreservedly to the Lord, there will al-

ways be work for him to do; and while we cannot in this age of the world expect to be miraculously directed into fields of labor, we can depend upon the providence of God. There are many, many honest people who will obey the gospel when they hear it; and if we are willing to be used of the Lord in taking the message to them, it will not be difficult for us to find many fields which are white unto the harvest.

Philip apparently was in Samaria when the angel spoke to him, and if so, he was some thirty-six miles north of Jerusalem. Gaza was on the seacoast, southwest of Jerusalem. By consulting a map, it will be easy for one to see the relative positions of Samaria, Jerusalem, and Gaza. The "desert" probably referred to an uninhabited 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; it was simply uninhabited. Arndt-Gingrich says that the term for desert, as used here, means *lonely*. (Cf. Acts 1: 20.) The word "desolate," in the passage just referred to is from the very same original term. "Let his habitation be made desolate," that is, uninhabited.

Philip promptly obeyed the voice of the angel; and when he reached the designated road, he saw the man whom Luke describes in the text now under consideration. The eunuch was either a Jew or a proselyte, and was that which we would call the Secretary of the Treasury in the queen's cabinet. The original word for "Candace" is *Kandake*, which was the title of the queen of Ethiopia, just as the king of Egypt in Old Testament times was called the pharaoh, or our chief executive, the president. *The New English Bible* ren-

ders verse 27 in these words: "So he set out and was on his way when he caught sight of an Ethiopian. This man was a eunuch, a high official of the Kandake, or Queen, of Ethiopia, in charge of all her treasure." This eunuch was evidently a devout man, and had probably been to Jerusalem to worship during one of the annual feast days; and as he was returning to his home, he was engaged in reading his Bible. Philip, however, did not know that the Lord wanted him to contact the man in the chariot. He had done that which the angel told him to do, and that was all the instruction he had at the time he saw the Ethiopian.

At this point the Spirit spoke to Philip, in these words: "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." That is all the Spirit said, so far as the record goes; and it is in marked contrast with the popular denominational teaching on the subject of conversion today. The Spirit knew that that was all the instruction which Philip needed. He simply wanted to get the two men together; for he knew when a man with Philip's evangelistic fervor came in contact with a man who was interested in the word of God, that the evangelist would know what to do. The remainder of the narrative in the chapter from which this lesson is taken tells the story of the eunuch's conversion to Christ, and what happened to Philip. The closing verses of the chapter say, "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." It is easy to see from the record that Philip was one of the pioneers in taking the gospel to men of other nations. He simply took hold of the opportunities which came to him for preaching the gospel, regardless of who his hearers were, or where they lived.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

How many "Philips" are mentioned in the New Testament? Name them.

What is known of Philip the tetrarch?  
What can you say of Philip the apostle?  
Where do we get our information regarding Philip the evangelist?

Give the principal facts regarding the man about whom we are to study today.

## Philip's Preaching and Miracles

What was the occasion for Philip's going to Samaria with the gospel message?  
 In what way did Jesus speak of the manner in which his disciples would be his witnesses?  
 Who apparently were the Samaritans?  
 What special preparation did Philip have for preaching to them?  
 In what Part of Samaria did Philip preach?  
 What apparently made it easier for Philip to get his message across to the Samaritans?  
 What important lesson should we learn from this?  
 What should every Christian seek to become?  
 What relative importance was attached to the conversion of the people of Samaria?  
 Why was Philip enabled to perform miracles?  
 Why can't the Lord's people work miracles today?

## Simon the Sorcerer and Philip's Success

What seemingly made it easier for Simon to deceive the people of Samaria?  
 Why is it important for people to accept all of God's revealed word?  
 Why did the people think of Simon as that power of God which is called Great?

What kind of impression was he apparently trying to make upon the people?  
 What was the theme of Philip's preaching in Samaria?  
 Why did he preach things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ?  
 What is the kingdom of Christ and what is its purpose?  
 Why did Christ establish a kingdom?  
 How can people become citizens of his kingdom?  
 Give reasons for thinking that Simon was, or was not, sincere when he believed and was baptized.

## Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

What always happens when a person gives himself unreservedly to the Lord?  
 What means does God have for helping such people in their work for him?  
 Why is it easy to find fields which are white unto the harvest?  
 Where was Philip when the angel spoke to him?  
 What instruction did he give to the evangelist?  
 To what "desert" did he refer? Give reasons for your answer.  
 Whom did Philip see and what was he doing?  
 What further instruction did Philip receive?  
 Why was it so brief?

## Lesson VIII—November 21, 1965

## BARNABAS, THE GENEROUS

## Lesson Text

Acts 4: 36, 37; 11: 22-26; 13: 1-3; 15: 25, 26

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.

22 And the report concerning them came to the ears of the church which was in Je-ru'-sa-lem: and they sent forth Bar-na-bas as far as An'-ti-och:

23 Who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord:

24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

25 And he went forth to Tar'-sus to seek for Saul;

26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto An'-ti-och. And it came to pass, that even for a whole

year they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people; and that the disciples were called Chris'-tians first in An'-ti-och.

1 Now there were at An'-ti-och, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers, Bar-na-bas, and Sym'-e-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.

25 It seemed good unto us, having come to one accord, to choose out men and send them unto you with our beloved Bar-na-bas and Paul,

26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Je'-sus Christ.



GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith; and much people was added unto the Lord."* (Acts 11: 24.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 15: 36-41.

### Daily Bible Readings

Nov. 15. M.....	Barnabas Befriends Paul (Acts i): 26-30)
Nov. 16. T.....	On a Benevolent Journey (Acts 11: 27-30)
Nov. 17. W.....	Experiences in a Foreign City (Acts 13: 42-52)
Nov. 18. T.....	Refused to Be Worshipped as a God (Acts 14: 8-18)
Nov. 19. F.....	Appointing Elders in Every Church (Acts 14: 19-23)
Nov. 20. S.....	At the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15: 1-5)
Nov. 21. S.....	Commended by the Apostles (Gal. 2: 6-10)

TIME.—A.D. 30-50.

PLACES.—Jerusalem, Antioch, and Tarsus.

PERSONS.—Barnabas, Saul, and others.

### Introduction

The narratives which are found in the Bible are remarkable for the frankness with which they record the faults of the best of people. This has nothing in common with the cynical spirit which characterizes most historians, as may be seen by reading practically any of their writings. It is their practice to fasten upon the weak places in the noblest of their subjects, somewhat like an insect on the bruised portion of the ripest fruit, as they endeavor to show that all goodness is imperfect, and that none is genuine. And on the other hand, the frankness of the writers of the Scriptures has nothing in common with that dreary melancholy which sees only failure and fragments of men, and which has no hope of ever reaching anything beyond the common average of excellence. But the Bible candidly admits that all of its noblest characters have fallen short of continuous purity; but with boldness or hope, along with its frankness, the Word of God teaches the weakest of his people to strive toward, and the most sinful to expect, perfection in the service of Christ. (Cf. Matt. 5: 48; Phil. 3: 12-16.) The Bible is a mirror which gives back all images without distortion.

The value of such a revelation as that which is contained in the Scriptures lies in the fact that it gives to all men the encouragement to do their best with their own lives, by showing that much may be accomplished by secondary characters and by ordinary means. The average person cannot hope to attain the heights of such men as Peter, Paul, and John; but all of us can aspire to, and can justly have the hope of succeeding in the

accomplishments of such men as Andrew and Barnabas. The character which we are to study today is a simple one. It does not concern a man who was especially distinguished for his great strength, his commanding personality, his eloquence of speech, or his dialectic skill. But Barnabas was a man, for all that; and the impression which he left upon the sands of time has not been obscured.

If we should consider the character of Barnabas apart from all other people, we would likely think of him as being a much greater person than he is usually regarded as being; but when we look at him in the light of his associates, his stature is somewhat diminished. This does not make Barnabas any smaller in fact; it only makes him appear so. The reason for this, of course, is seen in the greatness of those with whom he is compared. Paul, for example, was a much greater man than Barnabas in intellectual power and perhaps in force of character. The splendid moral and spiritual qualities which belonged to Paul were united with a gifted mind, an eloquent tongue, an originating genius, and the boundless energy which belong to the makers of history. Such men inevitably go to the front, and win the leading places in the estimation of the world. Yet no one can read and study the story of Barnabas without realizing that he is one of God's people who have been pressed out of their proper place. Although it was unintentionally done, such men have been dwarfed in history by the greater prominence, wider reach, and visible influence, of some of their contemporaries.

## The Golden Text

This part of the lesson is found in the principal text, and it will be considered in its proper place.

## The Text Explained

### A Son of Exhortation and 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.*

Any one who is a careful reader of the Bible will be impressed with the great importance which is everywhere attached to names. It frequently happened in the Old Testament that a person's name was changed, because it no longer adequately described his character; and that practice was continued during the New Testament period. Jacob, for example, was at first a "heel-catcher" (cf. Gen. 25: 24-26, and marginal note); but when he became a man whom God could use in his service, his name was changed to Israel (see Gen. 32: 22-28). Jesus knew that the name "Simon" would not be suitable for the man who would one day cease his wavering and become as stable as the rock; and so he said to him, "Thou art Simon . . . thou shalt be called . . . Peter." (John 1: 42.)

And so it was with Joseph, one of the early Christians and the man about whom we are now studying. His place in the work of the Lord was so distinct that his original name would not adequately describe him: and so the apostles called him "Barnabas," which Luke parenthetically explains to mean "Son of exhortation," or, as the marginal note has it, "Son of consolation." And as in the case of Barnabas, the change in names was so complete that no one today knows that man by his first or original name. There is indeed nothing said regarding the occasion for the change in names, as in the cases of Jacob, Peter, and others; but it is not difficult for us to see, even in the short record of Barnabas which is in the New Testament, a singular degree of correspondence between his character and his name.

There was some reason also why

Luke saw fit to single out Barnabas as a liberal-hearted Christian, that is, as an example of those who sold their possessions, in order to provide for the less fortunate. It may have been because of the prominent place in the history of the church which he later occupied, or it should have been in order to provide a suitable contrast to the case of Ananias and Sapphira which immediately follows. (Acts 5: 1-11.) But whatever may have been Luke's reason for his remark regarding the generosity of Barnabas, we know that it was in keeping with his character. Many others were doing the same thing (Acts 4: 32-35), but only the name of Barnabas among them is given. Luke's record of these events was written long after they took place, and that fact should be taken into consideration when we endeavor to reason regarding the singling out of the generosity of Barnabas.

We are not told where the field of Barnabas was located, but since he was a native of Cyprus, it may have been on that island. Being a Levite, Barnabas would not have an inheritance in Israel, as the members of the other tribes did. (Cf. Lev. 25: 32-34; Num. 35: 1-8; Deut. 12: 12; 18: 6-8.) The field, of course, could have been in one of the suburbs of a Levitical city of Palestine. But wherever his property may have been located, Barnabas was himself proficient in the grace of stewardship. He had learned the truth of the teaching of Jesus who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (See Acts 20: 35.) This son of generosity recognized the ownership of God, and was willing to put himself and all that he had at his Father's disposal. It seems fair to assume from 1 Cor. 9: 1-10 that Barnabas disposed of his means of a livelihood, and gave himself over entirely to the work of preaching the gospel.

### A Trusted Emissary and a Good Man (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. 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 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.*

Attention was directed in an earlier lesson to the fact that Luke was an orderly writer, and we can see an example of that characteristic as we begin our study of this section of the lesson text. He mentioned in the first part of chapter 8 the scattering of the disciples from Jerusalem, due to the persecution which arose in connection with the martyrdom of Stephen; and he traced the spread of the gospel as a result of their efforts through Acts 8: 1 to 11: 18. And then going back to Jerusalem, as it were, Luke began the tracing of another thread of his historical record of the missionary endeavor of the early church, as set forth in Acts 11: 19-21, namely, "They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews. 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. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord."

It was with reference to the situation referred to in the passage just quoted that furnished the occasion for the sending of Barnabas to Antioch, as set forth in this section of the lesson text. Jerusalem was the headquarters of the apostles (cf. Acts 8: 1), and that city was still their base of operation. 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. And the fact that Barnabas, rather than Peter or one of the

other apostles, was sent to investigate the conditions in Antioch, was probably due to the fact that Peter had already explained the reception of the Gentiles (Cornelius and his household) to the Jerusalem brethren. (Acts 11: 1-18.) 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 was 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 him to rejoice; and, bringing into use the exceptional powers of exhortation for which he was signally noted, "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 for them to make a success of the holy calling. (Cf. Rev. 2: 4; Phil. 3: 12-14.) A doctrinal teacher and a consecrated exhorter make a wonderful team in gospel work.

Barnabas is specially called a "good man," which evidently is more than simply uprightness of character. (See Rom. 5: 7 for the difference between a "righteous" man and a "good" man.) A *righteous* man simply does that which he ought to do, and endeavors to give to every man that which is due him. The *good* man does all that the *righteous* man does, but he does more; he also does all that he can to promote the well-being of those with whom he has to do. The fact that Barnabas is called a good man is one of the few examples in which a New Testament writer pays a personal tribute to another individual. But just because a person is

sometimes called a good man is not always impressive to the average person today. It appears that people of this age 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.

The attitude just referred to is largely 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 fellow. 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 "full of the Holy Spirit" (cf. Eph. 5: 18), which implies that he was deeply spiritual, and he was also characterized by an abiding faith. He had faith in God, and also faith in his fellow men. On one occasion when Paul was finding it difficult to identify himself with the Lord's people in Jerusalem, because "they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple," it was Barnabas who "took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus." Paul was then received by the brethren, and "he was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord: and he spake and disputed against the Grecian Jews; but they were seeking to kill him." (See Acts 9: 26, 29.) Paul indeed owed much to his friend Barnabas.

And then later on, following the Jerusalem conference of Acts 15, Paul proposed to Barnabas that they go again and visit the churches which they had established on their first missionary journey. Barnabas apparently was agreeable to the suggestion, but "he 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." A sharp contention arose between Paul and Barnabas, with the result that the two fellow-workers "parted asunder

one from the other." Barnabas chose Mark to go with him, while Paul decided on Silas as his fellow-laborer. It is not surprising therefore to read that "much people was added unto the Lord" in Antioch, as the result of the labors of Barnabas in that city. Barnabas showed himself a friend to others.

Barnabas evidently soon saw that there was a need for additional help with the work he was trying to do, and he therefore went to Tarsus to seek for Saul, who had been sent back to his homeland by the Jerusalem brethren, when they knew that his life was being threatened. (Cf. Acts 22: 3; 9: 28-30.) Barnabas knew of the character and ability of Saul, and he evidently felt that he would be an ideal helper with the new work in Antioch. The original word for "seek" in Acts 11: 25 occurs in only one other instance in the New Testament, namely, Luke 2: 44, 45. It means, according to Robertson, to seek up and down, back and forth, to make a thorough search till success comes. It is possible that Barnabas knew that Saul had been called for work among the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9: 15; 26: 12-18), 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. A year-long meeting followed; and it was there that the disciples were for the first time called Christians.

#### A Faithful Teacher and a Beloved Brother

(Acts 13: 1-3; 15: 25, 26)

*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. And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work where unto I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*

In their great book, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, Conybeare and Howson note that "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."

Antioch, as one naturally gathers from the preceding section of the lesson text, 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. These men were called "prophets and teachers." It has been pointed out from time to time that a "prophet" was one who spoke for God, and that means that they spoke by inspiration. This may not have always been true of "teachers." All prophets were teachers, but not all teachers were prophets. Conybeare and Howson observe that "it is sufficient to remark there the 'prophecy' of the New Testament does not necessarily imply a knowledge of things to come, but rather a gift of exhortation with a peculiar force of inspiration."

Of the five men who are mentioned in the text, as being in the church in Antioch, we are primarily interested at this time in the first one and the last, namely, Barnabas and Saul, later called Paul. (See Acts 13: 9.) They were the ones whom the Holy Spirit had chosen for the first great missionary endeavor among the Gentiles, which was soon to begin. Up to this point, Barnabas had been in the lead; and his name is still mentioned first in the text now under consideration, with that of Saul coming last. The two men were duly separated and properly commissioned for the work which they had been

called to do; and they were soon on their way.

The story of the first missionary journey by Barnabas and Saul is a thrilling one; but it is a recorded fact that they had not travelled very far, before the order of their names was reversed. When they left Antioch, it was Barnabas and Saul; but when they had finished their work on Cyprus, the scene of their first labors, it was "Paul and his company." When events proved that Paul was the best qualified man to be the leader, Barnabas quietly fell into the second place; and it was not long until he was allowed to drop completely out of the picture. B. C. Goodpasture, in his book, *Sermons and Lectures*, points out that "Barnabas had been overshadowed by Paul. No jealousy, no resentment, no bitterness. Barnabas was a good man." All of this implies that Barnabas was entirely free from selfishness: his sole interest was in the progress of the gospel.

There is, in fact, not a single trait of character which belonged to Barnabas that any Christian cannot imitate. As Brother Goodpasture further observes, "Barnabas is the kind of man that we could imitate. If we were thinking about Moses or David or Paul, we might think that they were five-talent men, tall and apart from us. But Barnabas was a man down on the common level. What he did we can do. We can do good to people as Barnabas did."

*It seemed good unto us, having come to one accord, to choose out men and send them unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

This passage gives us some idea of the devotion which these fellow-workers had for the cause of Christ, and the manner in which the apostles and other leaders among the brethren felt toward them. They were indeed beloved brethren. Regardless of what came up in the life of Barnabas, he could not be swayed from the pathway which he believed to be going in the right direction.

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What can you say regarding the frankness which characterizes the narratives of the Bible?

Why is this true?

What encouragement do we get from this?

What is the relative standard for judging character?

What should every individual endeavor to do regarding his own character?

A Son of Exhortation and of Generosity

What of the importance which is attached to names throughout the Bible?

Give some illustrations of the practice of changing the names of individuals.

Why were the names of some people changed after they became adults?

Why was the name of Joseph changed to Barnabas?

What evidence do we have that his character warranted this change?

What possible reasons did Luke have for singling out the generosity of Barnabas?

In what way did he demonstrate his generosity?

What did the law of Moses specify regarding the property rights of Levites?

What evidence do we have that Barnabas devoted his full time to preaching the gospel?

A Trusted Emissary and a Good Man

What evidence do we have in this lesson that Luke was an orderly writer?

Trace the course of events which lead up to this section of the lesson text.

Why was Barnabas, rather than one of the apostles, sent to Antioch?

What were the relative locations of Cyprus and Antioch?

How was Barnabas affected when he saw the work which had been done among the Gentiles?

What exhortation did he give the young disciples of Christ?

Why was his exhortation so important?

Why do a doctrinal teacher and an exhorter make a good gospel team?

In what sense was Barnabas a good man?

What is the difference between a "righteous" man and a "good" man?

In what ways did Barnabas demonstrate his faith in God and in man?

Where did Barnabas seek for help in the work in Antioch?

A Faithful Teacher and a Beloved Brother

What important point is reached in Acts in this section of the lesson text?

What noticeable change had taken place regarding the relative positions of Antioch and Jerusalem?

In what way was the church in Antioch especially blessed?

Who were the prophets and teachers and what do these terms suggest?

What call did the Holy Spirit make?

How did the relative positions of Barnabas and Saul indicate the greatness of Barnabas?

In what ways did Barnabas show himself an example worthy to be followed?

## Lesson IX—November 28, 1965

### TIMOTHY, A YOUNG PREACHER

#### Lesson Text

Acts 16: 1-3; 17: 14, 15; Phil. 2: 19-24; 2 Tim. 1: 3-5

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.

14 And then immediately the brethren sent forth Paul to go as far as to the sea: and Si'-las and Tim'-o-thy abode there still.

15 But they that conducted Paul brought him as far as Ath'-ens: and receiving a commandment unto Si'-las and Tim'-o-thy that they should come to him with all speed, they departed.

19 But I hope in the Lord Je'-sus to send Tim'-o-thy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort,

when I know your state.

20 For I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state.

21 For they all seek their own, not the things of Je'-sus Christ.

22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child *serveth* a father, *so* he served with me in furtherance of the gospel.

23 Him therefore I hope to send forthwith, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me:

24 But I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall come shortly.

3 I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, how unceasing is my remembrance of thee in my supplications, night and day

4 Longing to see thee, remembering thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;

5 Having been reminded of the unfeigned faith that is in thee; which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lo'-is, and thy mother Eu-ni'-ce; and, I am persuaded, in thee also.

Golden Text.—*"Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season"*  
(2 Tim. 4: 2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Tim. 2: 1-5.

### Daily Bible Readings

Nov. 22. M.....	Paul's Son in the Gospel (1 Tim. 1: 1, 2)
Nov. 23. T.....	An Encouragement to Paul in His Preaching (Acts 18: 5-11)
Nov. 24. W.....	Preparing the Way for a Journey into Macedonia (Acts 19: 21, 22)
Nov. 25. T.....	Reminding the Brethren of Paul's Ways in Christ (1 Cor. 4: 14-17)
Nov. 26. F.....	Paul's Fellow-Worker (1 Cor. 16: 10-12)
Nov. 27. S.....	Paul's Charge to Timothy (1 Tim. 1: 3-11)
Nov. 28. S.....	"Come before Winter" (2 Tim. 4: 19-22)

TIME.—A.D. 50-68.

PLACES.—Lystra, Beroea, Philippi, and Rome.

PERSONS.—Timothy, Paul, and others.

### Introduction

*The Greater Men and Women of the Bible* notes that among the friends of Paul, there is no one who appeals more to our interest and sympathies than Timothy. Not only was he associated with the apostle during a longer period than any of his other companions; he apparently was regarded with an altogether peculiar affection and esteem. If he had followed the example of John, Timothy might have called himself "the disciple whom Paul loved;" for the great apostle to the Gentiles never paid a greater tribute to any of his fellow-workers, than the one he penned regarding Timothy, as we shall see further on in our study for today. It is easy to see from Paul's writings that Timothy shared his spiritual father's outward labors and intimate thoughts. He was with Paul when the apostle could not or would not have the companionship of others. Timothy was sent on some of the most delicate missions, and was given places of great responsibility with some of the most important congregations. When Paul was in his last and most lonely imprisonment, it was Timothy whom he summoned to console him and to receive his last instructions. Everything therefore which we can learn regarding Timothy is significant for the light it throws upon the characters of both the pupil and the master.

It appears that Timothy's home was in Lystra, or possibly Derbe; and since Paul found him to be a fairly well developed young man in the principles of Christianity, when he visited those cities near the beginning of his second missionary journey; and when we add to this the fact

that Paul frequently referred to Timothy as his son in the gospel, it is almost certain that Timothy, along with his mother and grandmother, was converted during the previous missionary journey which was made by Paul and Barnabas. In his final letter to Timothy, Paul says, "But thou didst follow my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, patience, persecutions, sufferings; what things befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: and out of them all the Lord delivered me." (2 Tim. 3: 10, 11.) The passage just quoted strongly implies that Timothy may have been an actual witness to the stoning of Paul in Lystra. (See Acts 14: 19, 20.)

We learn from Paul's last letter to Timothy that the latter owed his early training, and the moulding of his character, to his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois (2 Tim. 1:5), and in that same letter Paul also speaks of his part in the spiritual instruction of his son in the faith, along with that of his mother and grandmother. "But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 3: 14, 15.) There was therefore never a time in Timothy's conscious experience when the majestic words of the law, the songs of the psalmists, and the preaching of the prophets were not familiar to his ear. The Old Testament was no less a part of the growing boy's life, than

the sky which was above him or the ground upon which he lived.

Timothy was as much in living touch with the word of God, as with nature, even before his growing mind had learned to harmonize the messages which fell upon his attentive ear. (Cf. Psalm 19: 1-14.) His wistful eyes looked up into the faces of those godly mothers who taught him, and lo! the words of the Sacred Writings on the lips of believing parents became, as is their wont, a manifestation of the love of God and the faith of Lois and Eunice, as they passed through an open door into the heart of their little son. It would be a wonderful thing if parents today

could always be made to realize the importance of teaching the word of God to their little children; for then it would be much easier for them to learn the truth from godly teachers when they grow up. Paul certainly had no difficulty in teaching Timothy. (Cf. Eph. 6: 1-4; Col. 3: 21.) In the words of Tennyson,

"Happy he  
With such a mother! faith in  
womankind  
Beats with his blood, and trust in  
all things high  
Comes easy to him, and though he  
trip and fall,  
He shall not blind his soul with  
clay."

### The Golden Text

*Preach the word: be urgent in season, out of season.*" These words can best be understood in the full light of their context. "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 long-suffering 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. For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing." (2 Tim. 4: 1-8.)

These words were written by Paul, just after he had urged Timothy to "abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of;" and then reminded him of the origin and purpose of the Sacred Writings, namely, "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." (See 2 Tim. 3:

14-17.) When we remember that only those who do the will of God can be pleasing to him (cf. Matt. 7: 21-23), it should be relatively easy for us to understand why Paul urged his son in the gospel to preach the word; and to be urgent in season, and out of season. There is never a time for any faithful gospel preacher to relax in his effort to get people to hear, believe, and obey that which is written.

The original word for "preach" means to herald abroad or proclaim, to publish the good news. The word of God is the only thing that Timothy was authorized to preach; and the charge should be understood in the light of the passage which was quoted in the preceding paragraph. That which Paul says there makes it plain that nothing else but the word of God is needed in order to make the man of God complete, and to furnish him completely unto every good work. The expression "be urgent in season, out of season" shows the manner in which Timothy, and all other gospel preachers, as for that matter, must preach. The word "urgent" means to be on hand, to be ready to preach; and the expression "in season, out of season" signifies that the preaching must be done whether the time is convenient or not (cf. Acts 24: 24, 25), or whether or not it is welcomed by those who hear it. The preaching must be done by God's faithful messengers, and those who hear it will be judged according to their reaction to that which is proclaimed. (Cf. Rom. 2: 16; Ezek. 2: 1-3; 3, 16-21.)



## The Text Explained

### The Companion and Helper in the Gospel

(Acts 16: 1-3; 17: 14, 15)

*And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra: and behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a 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.*

We learn from the preceding verse of chapter 15 that as Paul and Silas began that which was the former's second missionary journey, they "went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches." Silas was Paul's companion, but Luke wrote as if Paul was travelling alone. It is reasonable to suppose that Paul was glad to see his home city of Tarsus, while in Cilicia; but there is nothing said about their remaining there for any appreciable length of time. Paul probably preached in Tarsus and other places in Cilicia, when the Jerusalem brethren sent him to Tarsus (Acts 9: 30); and it is possible that at least some of the churches which were confirmed in Cilicia on this journey, were established by him at that time.

When Paul and Silas left Tarsus, their journey took them across the Taurus mountains, by the Cilician gates, through which Alexander had one time passed. It probably took them four or five days to go from there to Derbe, which was the farthest point which he and Barnabas visited on their first missionary journey. Luke does not say anything about the stay of Paul and Silas in that city, before going on to Lystra, the place where Paul was stoned on the first journey, as already mentioned. It was apparently in Lystra that Paul found Timothy; and since his Christian reputation was so good, the apostle wanted him to accompany him and Silas, probably to take the place which was formerly filled by John Mark. It is probably not out of place to suggest that when a young man prepares himself for Christian service, that there will always be a place for him to fill. There

is no indication that Timothy, in making that preparation, was doing anything more than that which he considered to be his Christian duty; but while doing that, he was improving his talents and was ready for greater service when the call came.

Years later when Paul addressed a letter to Timothy, he had this to say. "This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies which led the way to thee" (1 Tim. 1: 18); and it is altogether possible that Timothy was singled out for the work which we are now considering by the prophetic utterances of Silas, since we know that the latter was a prophet (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. This should be an impressive lesson to all young people who are entrusted with responsibilities in Christian service. No man or woman will ever regret having done that which was expected of him or her.

Inasmuch as Paul's plan was to preach to the Jews first, 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 his Jewish brethren 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." Paul could do this as a matter of a family mark, because Timothy was a Jew in part; but when it came to circumcising Titus, who was a Greek, the apostle flatly refused to yield to the desires of the Judaizers, because of the principle which was involved. (See Gal. 2: 3-5.) It seems fair to assume that Timothy received some kind of a spiritual gift, probably at this time (cf. 1 Tim. 4: 14; 2 Tim. 1: 6, 14); and it may have been from this time and onward that he was known as an evangelist (cf. 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 the apostle in some special assignments, and joined with him in sending sev-

eral of the epistles which have come down to us. Timothy was indeed a useful man in the service of Christ.

*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 his as far as Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timothy that they should come to him with all speed, they departed.*

After leaving Lystra, Paul, Silas, and Timothy continued to preach the gospel and strengthen the churches in various parts of Asia Minor, until they were providentially led to the seaport city of Troas, where Luke joined them. It was there that they received that which they considered a call to Macedonia, and within a relatively short time they were preaching in Philippi and Thessalonica. Persecutions befell them at both places, but they were not forced to leave either city before a congregation of believers was established. It appears that Luke remained in Philippi, when the other three missionaries continued their journey; and that probably accounts for the fact that Paul was not as anxious about the welfare of that church as he was regarding the one in Thessalonica. We do not know how long it was before Silas and Timothy joined Paul in Athens; but we do know that the apostle thought it good to be left alone in that city, while he sent Timothy to establish the Thessalonian church. (See Acts 17: 16; 1 Thess. 3: 1-10.) Silas and Timothy later rejoined Paul in Corinth (Acts 18: 5), from which place the apostle wrote 1 Thessalonians, the first of his epistles which have come down to us. Both Silas and Timothy joined with him in the salutation.

#### Timothy As Paul's Messenger (Phil. 2: 19-24)

*But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state. For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child serveth a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the gospel. Him therefore I hope*

*to send forthwith, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me: but I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall come shortly.*

When Paul wrote the epistle from which this section of the lesson text is taken, he was apparently nearing the end of his first Roman imprisonment. Earlier, during that incarceration, he had written three of his other epistles, namely, Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians. Paul was frequently in prison (2 Cor. 11: 23), and he had to depend upon trusted assistants to help him keep in contact with the various churches in which he was especially interested. The church in Philippi was one which was closest to his heart. This church had also manifested a great interest in him, had helped him in his missionary activities (Phil. 4: 15, 16; of. 2 Cor. 11: 8, 9), had sent Epaphroditus with a gift to his prison house (Phil. 4: 18), and had no doubt showed their love for him in other ways; and with all of these things in his mind and his constant desire that the brethren would continue their growth in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, it was natural for Paul to want to hear about their state.

Timothy was the man whom Paul decided to send to Philippi for the purpose of learning about the state of the brethren there; and when he said, "For I have no man like-minded, who will care truly for your state. For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ," he was not making a sweeping indictment against all of his fellow workers. Instead, he evidently was saying that Timothy was the only one available whom he could send with complete confidence. The marginal reading for "truly" is *genuinely*. The original word from which it is translated is *gnēsios*, and it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. This adverb is derived from the adjective *gnēsios*, which means born in wedlock, that is, a legitimate birth, or, as we would say, "like a brother." (See 1 Tim. 1: 2; Tit. 1: 4; Phil. 4: 3; of. 2 Cor. 8: 8.)

The idea which Paul was endeavoring to convey to the Philippians was that Timothy realized his relationship to the Lord and to them, and that he had a *brother's* interest in them. When Paul said that they knew "the

*proof of him,"* he was saying that they knew that Timothy had been thoroughly tested. This probably refers to the time that Timothy was with Paul in Philippi during their first visit to that city (Acts 16: 11-40), when they had the opportunity of observing him closely, especially with reference to his devotion to the Lord, as he served with Paul in the furtherance of the gospel, and his reaction to persecution. It is a wonderful thing for a person, and especially a young person, to conduct himself so that those who are associated with him can have utmost confidence in him; and that others may know that he has a genuine interest in them.

### Timothy's Fitness for the Ministry

(2 Tim. 1: 3-5)

*I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, how unceasing is my remembrance of thee in my supplications, night and day longing to see thee, remembering thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; having been reminded of the unfeigned faith that is in thee; which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and, I am persuaded, in thee also.*

It is interesting to observe how Paul remembered what he owed to the faith of his forefathers; and then went on to remind Timothy that he was also indebted to the faith of his grandmother and his mother. Paul's reference to his forefathers implies that his God-fearing life was the result of the training and example which his fathers had given him. The thought which the apostle expresses here should make a deep impression on all parents, and especially Christian parents, today. The future of the children is in the hands of their parents, to a very great extent; and they will certainly be held responsible for the manner in which they treat their opportunities. Paul always maintained a good conscience (cf. Acts 23: 1; 24: 16), and that was largely due, let it be repeated, to the blessings which he received from those who went before him.

It was characteristic of Paul to

pray for his brethren (cf. Rom. 1: 8-10; Eph. 1: 15, 16; Phil. 1: 3-11; 1 Thess. 1: 2, 3; Phile. 4-6); and it is interesting to note that in each of the cases cited, including the one we are now considering, direct mention is made of the faith of those for whom the prayers were offered, except in the case of the Philippians, and it is implied there. The close attachment which Paul and Timothy had for each other, along with the devotion which the latter demonstrated for the cause of Christ, would lead the apostle to maintain an unusual interest in his son in the gospel. Timothy apparently was naturally timid; and when Paul recalled the tears which he had seen his child in the faith shed, he could not help but remember him before the throne of grace. Those tears had touched Paul deeply, and had increased the tender feeling which he had for him; and he continually longed to see him, for he knew that such an experience would fill him with great joy.

But it was evidently Timothy's faith which was uppermost in the mind of Paul, as he wrote these words, the faith which had made the younger man the devoted servant of Christ that he was. It should be emphasized again, however, that the faith which was Timothy's did not come to him without effort; it was deep-rooted, and it owed much of its stability to maternal training and example. The New English Bible renders the passage we are now considering in these words: "I am reminded of the sincerity of your faith, a faith which was alive in Lois your grandmother and Eunice your mother before you, and which, I am confident, lives in you also." Such a faith can come to one only by diligent teaching, and steadfast devotion to the truth. It is therefore no wonder that Paul said to Timothy, "But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make the wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 3: 14, 15.)

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

How do those who are acquainted with Timothy through the word feel toward him?

Why was he so close to Paul?  
 How long did that close companionship last?  
 Where was Timothy's home?  
 When did he probably become a Christian?  
 How can we account for the religious character of Timothy?  
 Why is religious training so vital?  
 Why do so many parents, relatively speaking, fail to realize this truth?

#### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of the golden text?  
 Why is it so important to preach the truth?  
 What is the primary meaning of "preach"?  
 What does it mean to be urgent in season, and out of season?  
 What will always be the result of faithful gospel preaching?

#### The Companion and Helper in the Gospel

Trace the journey of Paul and Silas from Antioch in Syria to Lystra.  
 What usually happens when a young person prepares himself for useful service?  
 What was Timothy apparently doing all the time he was making such preparation?  
 What, seemingly, was the reason behind Paul's going to Timothy?  
 Why did Paul circumcise Timothy?  
 Why did he refuse to permit Titus to be circumcised?  
 What principle was involved in the two cases?

What role did Timothy have in Paul's work in Macedonia?  
 Why was he sent to Thessalonica after persecution drove Paul away?

#### Timothy As Paul's Messenger

When and at what place did Paul write his letter to the Philippians?  
 Why was he anxious to send Timothy to them?  
 What tribute did he pay his son in the gospel?  
 What did he mean by saying that he had no other such person to send to them?  
 What is the meaning of caring *truly* for their state?  
 In what ways had Timothy proved himself to be a worthy servant of Christ?

#### Timothy's Fitness for the Ministry

What use did Paul make of the generations of faith?  
 How did that faith affect his own life?  
 Of what did he remind Timothy?  
 What impression should all of this make on Christian parents today?  
 Why was Paul always able to maintain a good conscience?  
 Why did Paul pray for his brethren so often?  
 What tender memories did he have regarding Timothy?  
 What did those and other recollections of his son in the gospel cause him to do?  
 Why did he long to see Timothy?  
 Give again the details of how Timothy's faith came to him?  
 What exhortation did Paul give him regarding these matters?

### Lesson X—December 5, 1965

## MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS

### Lesson Text

Luke 1: 26-30; 2: 48-51; Mark 3: 31-35; Acts 1: 14

26 Now in the sixth month the angel Ga'-bri-el was sent from God unto a city of Gal'-i-lee, named Naz'-a-reth,

27 To a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

28 And he came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord *is* with thee.

29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this might be.

30 And the angel said unto her. Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God.

48 And when they saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing.

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?

50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Naz'-a-reth; and he was subject unto them: and his mother kept all *these* sayings in her heart.

31 And there come his mother and his brethren; and, standing without, they sent unto him, calling him.

32 And a multitude was sitting about him; and they say unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

33 And he answereth them, and saith, Who is my mother and my brethren?

34 And looking round on them that sat round about him, he saith, Behold, my mother and my brethren!

35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

14 These all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

Golden Text.—*"And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God"* (Luke 1: 30.)

Devotional Reading.—John 2: 1-5.

### Daily Bible Readings

Nov. 29. M.....	The Privileges and Responsibilities of Motherhood (1 Tim. 2: 8-15)
Nov. 30. T.....	Matthew's Account of the Birth of Jesus (Matt. 1: 18-25)
Dec. 1. W.....	.....The Angel's Explanation to Mary (Luke 1: 34-38)
Dec. 2. T.....	.....Mary's Visit with Elisabeth (Luke 1: 39-45)
Dec. 3. F.....	.....Mary's Song of Praise (Luke 1: 46-55)
Dec. 4. S.....	.....Luke's Account of the Birth of Jesus (Luke 2: 1-20)
Dec. 5. S.....	.....The Mother at the Cross (John 19: 25-27)

Time.—Probably about 4 B.C.—A.D. 30.

Places.—Nazareth, Jerusalem, and somewhere in Galilee.

Persons.—Mary, the angel, and others.

### Introduction

The many legends which have grown up around Mary, the mother of Jesus, have all but hidden her true self from our view. If, however, we are willing to read the New Testament record for what it says, it will not take us long to discover that the traits of her character which have been preserved for us are relatively few in number. If we compare her portrait with that of Jesus, it will easily be seen that hers "is but a dim shadow, flitting across the page for a moment here and there, and then fading away into total obscurity." If we should try to evaluate the personality of Mary, it is practically certain that we could do no better than Christina G. Rossetti has done in the following poem:

"Whereto shall we liken this  
Blessed Mary Virgin,  
Fruitful shoot from Jesse's root  
graciously emerging?  
Lily we might call her, but Christ  
alone is white:  
Rose delicious, but that Jesus is  
the one Delight:  
Flower of women, but her First-  
born is mankind's one flower:  
He the Sun lights up all moons  
thro' their radiant hour.  
"Blessed among women, highly  
favored," thus  
Glorious Gabriel hailed her, teach-  
ing words to us:  
Whom devoutly copying we too  
cry "All hail!"  
Echoing on the music of glorious  
Gabriel."

Of the four Gospel writers, Luke gives the fullest and most intimate account of the mother of Jesus. Matthew begins his record with only a few words regarding Mary, and then passes immediately to the scenes of Bethlehem, and the visit of the Wise-men, that is, the order of Wisemen, otherwise known as the *Magi*. Mark begins his account with the preaching of John the Baptist, and the public ministry of Jesus; while John, who is in reality an interpreter of ideas rather than a biographer, is entirely silent regarding these matters. It is only in Luke that we find the story of the journey to Bethlehem, the account of the shepherds in the fields who heard the angels sing, as well as the stories of the visit of Mary to Elisabeth, the circumcision of Christ, the blessings of Simeon and Anna, and the visit to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old. The last mention which is made of Mary in the New Testament is in the opening chapter of Acts, which also was written by Luke.

In her book, *Women of the Bible*. Metta N. Thomas says, "Of all the portraits in the Bible there is none more beautiful or impressive than that of Mary, the mother of our Lord. The artist mixed his colors for this portrait as though he were going to paint not one, but many blossoms of a delicate and flower-like purity, which distinguishes her and makes her the queen of women. What we chiefly feel as we gaze at this por-

trait is the vital force of purity. The artist draws this characteristic out as he would paint a lovely Madonna lily. There are also other impressions we get that sink deep into our souls. She is a type of the violet with its modesty, of the little fragrant spice pink for pure love, and of the heliotrope for tenderness. A refreshing, lasting fragrance clings to her down through the ages, and

"Like a vase in which roses have  
once been distill'd—

You may break, you may shatter  
the vase if you will,  
But the scent of those roses will  
cling to it still."

No picture of Mary would be complete without including in it her own words, which are popularly known as *The Magnificat*, the Latin term for her song in Luke 1: 46-55.

And Mary said,  
My soul doth magnify the Lord,  
And my spirit hath rejoiced in  
God my Saviour.

For he hath looked upon the low  
estate of his handmaid:

For behold, from henceforth all  
generations shall called me  
blessed.

For he that is mighty hath done to  
me great things;

And holy is his name.

And his mercy is unto generations  
and generations

On them that fear him.

He hath showed strength with his  
arm;

He hath scattered the proud in the  
imagination of their heart.

He hath put down princes from  
their thorns,

And hath exalted them of low de-  
gree.

The hungry he hath filled with  
good things;

And the rich he hath sent empty  
away.

He hath given help to Israel his  
servant,

That he might remember mercy  
(As he spake unto our fathers)

Toward Abraham and his seed for  
ever.

### The Golden Text

This part of our study is found in the lesson text, and it will be considered in its proper place.

### The Text Explained

#### The Birth of Jesus Foretold

(Luke 1: 26-30)

*Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee. But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this might be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God.*

The "sixth month," mentioned in the text now before us, has reference to that which is said in the preceding verses, namely, "And after these days Elizabeth his wife conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord done unto me in the days wherein he looked upon me, to take away my reproach among men." It has been said that every godly Jewish woman entertained the hope that she might be the mother

of the promised Messiah; and that is what caused women to attach an unusual significance to every word and deed which were out of the ordinary. This was especially true with Elisabeth and Mary, inasmuch as it had been some four hundred years since the voice of an angel had brought a message to the Lord's people.

Gabriel is one of the two angels whose names are recorded in the Bible. The other one is Michael, who is declared to be an archangel. (Jude 9.) The angel-status of Gabriel is nowhere referred to in the Scriptures, but he appears in the pseudepigraphical book of Enoch as an archangel. Gabriel himself says that he stands in the presence of God (Luke 1: 19), and there are four references to his appearances to people here upon the earth, namely, (1) Dan. 8: 15-27, where he interpreted to Daniel the vision of the ram, the he-goat, and the little horn; (2) Dan. 9: 20-27, where he told him about the seventy weeks and the anointed prince; (3) Luke 1: 8-20, where he announced

to Zacharias that he and his wife Elisabeth would become the parents of a son, who in time became John the Baptist; and (4) Luke 1: 26-38, where he revealed to Mary that she would become the mother of God's Son. Thus it can be seen that, so far as the record is concerned, Gabriel's duties were to deliver messages from God to men, in which he explains his purposes to his people. The Bible tells us that the angels are God's ministers, and makes it plain that they continue to serve him. There is no reason for their bringing a special revelation to us, but we are plainly told that they all are "ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation." (See Heb. 1: 6-14.)

Luke alone tells us where Mary lived before the birth of Christ. The little town of Nazareth must have been rather insignificant, since it is nowhere mentioned in the Old Testament, the Talmud, nor in Josephus; although the latter does refer to more than two hundred towns and cities in Galilee. We should remember, however, that it is not necessary for a town to be great, in order for great people to live in it or come from it. On the contrary, a great person can make an insignificant place famous. When Nathanael asked, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" his reference was to the smallness and insignificance of the town, in comparison with the great things which were then ascribed to it by the intimation that the Messiah lived there! (See John 1: 43-51.)

In saying that Mary was "betrothed" to Joseph, Luke means that she was engaged to him, as we would express the matter. In commenting on this, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* says, "The Jewish law held espousal or engagement to be as binding as marriage. An engagement was completed after negotiations had been carried on by the groom's representative and the dowry money had been paid to the girl's father. After the betrothal, the groom could claim the bride at any time. The legal aspect of marriage was included in the betrothal; the wedding was merely a recognition of the agreement that had already been established." This should help us to understand

why Joseph regarded the apparent misconduct of Mary with such grave concern. (See Matt. 1: 18-25.)

The words which Gabriel spoke to Mary came to her as a complete surprise. There is every reason for believing that she was a good woman, for otherwise she would not have found favor with the Lord. Or, to express the same thing in another way, she was the kind of woman which God could use in his service. This should be a lesson to all of us; for no one ever knows when God can use him in his service, providentially speaking, if he (or she) is the kind of person which will fit into God's purpose. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28.) There is no indication that Mary doubted the words of Gabriel; she simply did not understand them, and her questions were evidently intended to seek further information. It appears that her attitude was the very opposite from that which was manifested by Zacharias, when Gabriel spoke to him. (See Luke 1: 8-23.) When the angel had explained the matter to Mary, her response was, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." (Luke 1: 38.)

#### The Heart of Mary Laid Bare (Luke 2: 48-51)

*And when they saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them; and his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.*

The verses just quoted are the closing part of that section in Luke's record of the gospel narrative which tells of the time that Jesus was lost by his parents, after their visit to Jerusalem during the feast of the passover. After they had fulfilled their days there, they started with the caravan on the return trip to their home in Nazareth, and they went a day's journey before they missed their son. Luke says that they supposed that he was among

their kinsfolk and acquaintance: but when they found him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him. "And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them, and asking them questions: and all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers." (See Luke 2: 41-47.)

Only a mother who has actually, or who has even temporarily, lost a child can imagine the anguish which Mary suffered during the anxious hours of the search for her young son. And when they finally found him, they did not rush up to him and put their arms about him; but, as Luke says, they were astonished. Joseph and Mary evidently stood in as much awe in the presence of the renowned teachers, as peasants do in the presence of kings; and it was natural therefore for them to be astonished when they saw their twelve year old son talking freely with them, and even commanding their attention and respect. The question which Mary asked Jesus implies that they thought that he understood when they were to leave the city, and that he was expected to depart when they did. In referring to Joseph as the "father" of Jesus, it should be remembered that he was only his legal father: and inasmuch as the true facts of his birth were not generally known, both Luke and Mary spoke of Joseph as being the father of Jesus. (Cf. Luke 3: 23.) Only those who are not willing to consider all the facts in the case endeavor to use this incident against the truth of the virgin birth of Jesus. Incidentally, this is the last time that we see Joseph alive, so far as the record goes.

There is every reason for thinking that Jesus had always been an obedient child, and it is for this reason that Mary's was a puzzled question. It indeed was full of love, but she must have felt for the first time that he had taken himself into his own keeping; and this one act apparently foreshadowed the time when he would take his whole life into his own hands, go his own way, and leave her outside altogether. The time had passed when she could hold him as a babe upon her bosom, and the time was already at hand, as it

were, when he would travel his solitary way to the cross, and leave her weeping at its foot. She was, even then, bidden to stand by and watch her son do his work and live his life in a way which she could not understand. There is no marvel therefore that her questions on that occasion still ring with the pain which she suffered when she asked them. There is no wonder that she went home, and although Jesus was subject unto them, and kept all these sayings in her heart; for she must have realized that her life with her son would never be the same again. She had seen and heard too much on the day that they found him in the temple with the doctors of the law, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

### A Vital Lesson and Mary's Finale

(Mark 3: 31-35)

*And there come his mother and his brethren; and, standing without, they sent unto him, calling him. And a multitude was sitting about him; and they say unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answereth them, and saith, Who is my mother and my brethren? And looking round on them that sat round about him, he saith, Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*

Many Bible students are of the opinion that there is a direct connection between the paragraph just quoted, and the first two verses of the preceding paragraph. The latter passage says, "And he cometh into a house. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself." (Mark 3: 19b-21.) The expression "his friends" is a translation of *hoi par' autou*, which literally means those from the side of him, that is Jesus, or those belonging to him. Robertson notes that the idiom most likely means the family or kinspeople of Jesus, a use which is common in the Septuagint; and if this is true, then the "friends" who came to get Jesus were his mother and his brethren, who are specifically named in the section of



the lesson text we are now considering. The verses quoted above are rendered by Moffatt in these words: "Then they went indoors, but the crowd gathered again, so that it was impossible even to have a meal. And when his family heard this, they set out to get hold of him, for men were saying, 'He is out of his mind.'"

When Mary told Jesus that she and Joseph had sought for him sorrowing, Jesus responded, "How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" The marginal reading is, *about my Father's business*. The original words are *en tois tou patros mou*, which literally say "in the things of my Father." Both Vincent and The Interpreter's Bible admit that "about my Father's business" is a legitimate rendering, but they both prefer the expression "in my Father's house," which, according to the Greek idiom, is probably the better rendering. That question, however, belongs to textual critics; but regardless of which translation is preferable, Jesus told his mother that he was under obligation to his Father. That is the situation which confronts us in the section of the lesson text we are now considering. Jesus was so busy with the people around him, that he could not even eat a common meal (cf. John 4: 31-34); and some of the people thought that he was out of his mind. His mother and his brethren (see Matt. 13: 55) evidently heard about it, and they came to where he was, no doubt to take him to their home for a rest.

But instead of going into the house and taking hold of Jesus, Mary and her other sons acted more cautiously. Rather, they apparently passed the word on to him that they were there, and would like to see him. Perhaps they felt that once they got in touch with him, they could persuade him to go with them, and thereby ease the strain which was upon him. Mary was evidently motivated by a natural maternal impulse, in spite of the revelations which Gabriel made to her. His brethren, too, acted naturally; for they did not believe in him. (John 7: 5.) But Jesus soon showed them that he would not toler-

ate any interference on the ground of earthly relationships; and he incidentally demolished the idea that he was subservient to his mother in matters pertaining to his Father's work. Jesus made no reference to the "paternal relationship," since he had no father, other than God. It is a fact, worthy of notice, that in the only two instances in which Mary figured in the public ministry of Jesus, prior to his crucifixion, she was reproved by him. (See John 2: 4, and the text now under consideration.) This fact, as *The Fourfold Gospel* (McGarvey and Pendleton) points out, not only rebukes those who worship Mary, but especially condemns the doctrine of her immaculate conception.

The only relationship with Jesus which counts for eternity, is that spiritual kinship which comes only by doing the will of the Heavenly Father. Not only must those who please the Lord love him more than they love their closest relatives (Matt. 10: 34-37): they must also oppose in them anything which is contrary to the Lord's will (Luke 14: 25, 26).

*These all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.*

This is the last mention of Mary in the New Testament; and we have no further definite information regarding her. One tradition has it that she met an early death in Jerusalem, while another says that she went to Ephesus with John, who was apparently her nephew and the one to whom Jesus committed her care (John 19: 26, 27), and lived to a ripe old age. Both traditions, obviously, cannot be true; and it is possible that neither one is. We simply do not know what happened to the mother of our Lord. However, there is one thing that we do know, namely, her final appearance in history was as a disciple of Christ, and not as the object of any idolatrous homage. And what better advice can we have than the words of the mother of Jesus to the servants, when she said, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." (John 2: 5.)

### Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction  
How alone can we get a true picture of the mother of Jesus?

What is the best criterion for evaluating her personality?  
 Where can we find the greatest amount of information regarding her?  
 What kind of portrait does the inspired painter give of her?  
 What can you say of the influence which she has left behind her?  
 Discuss the beautiful song which she herself uttered.

#### The Birth of Jesus Foretold

In what way is the appearance of Gabriel to Mary dated?  
 How did the godly women of the Jewish people feel about the coming Messiah?  
 What information do we have in the Bible regarding Gabriel?  
 What does the writer of Hebrews say about the ministry of angels?  
 What do we know regarding the town in which Mary lived?  
 What was the Jewish idea of a " betrothal"?  
 What was Mary's reaction to the message of Gabriel?  
 What important lesson should we learn from her selection to be the mother of God's Son?

#### The Heart of Mary Laid Bare

Under what circumstances were the words of this section of the lesson text spoken?  
 How must Mary have felt regarding her "lost" son?

What did she and Joseph do when they found him?  
 Why did Luke and Mary both speak of Joseph as being the father of Jesus?  
 What effect did the response of Jesus to his mother's questions evidently have on her?

#### A Vital Lesson and Mary's Finale

Why did Mary and her other sons apparently go to see about Jesus?  
 Who evidently said that he was beside himself?  
 In what way do the facts of this section of the lesson text fit in with those of the previous section?  
 What did Jesus mean by saying that he must be in his Father's house?  
 Why was the Lord willing to continue his work, to the extent that he could not have the time to eat his daily food?  
 How did Mary and her other sons go about contacting Jesus?  
 What was their evident purpose and in what ways were they motivated?  
 What relationship with Jesus will count for eternity?  
 How alone can that relationship be brought about?  
 What vital lessons did Jesus teach on the occasion we are now considering?  
 What is the last appearance we have of the mother of Jesus?  
 What is known of her future?  
 What do we know regarding her?

### Lesson XI—December 12, 1965

## MARY AND MARTHA, FRIENDS OF JESUS

### Lesson Text

Luke 10: 38-42; John 11: 1-5, 19, 20; 12: 1-3

38 Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word.

40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving; and she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

41 But the Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things:

42 But one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

1 Now a certain man was sick, Laz'-a-rus of Beth'-a-ny, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

2 And it was that Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and

wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Laz'-a-rus was sick.

3 The sisters therefore sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

4 But when Je'-sus heard it, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.

5 Now Je'-sus loved Martha, and her sister, and Laz'-a-rus.

\* \* \* \* \*

19 And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother.

20 Martha therefore, when she heard that Je'-sus was coming, went and met him: but Mary still sat in the house.

1 Je'-sus therefore six days before the passover came to Beth'-a-ny, where Laz'-a-rus was, whom Je'-sus raised from the dead.

2 So they made him a supper there: and Martha served; but Laz'-

a-rus was one of them that sat at meat with him.

3 Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of pure nard, very pre-

cious, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.

Golden Text.—*“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus (John 11: 5.)*

Devotional Reading.—John 11: 17-29.

## Daily Bible Readings

Dec. 6. M.....	The Value of Companionship (Eccl. 4: 7-11)
Dec. 7. T.....	The Beauty of Friendship (1 Sam. 18: 1-5)
Dec. 8. W.....	Friends Should Be Carefully Selected (2 Sam. 13: 1-6)
Dec. 9. T.....	The Value of True Friendship (Prov. 18: 19-24)
Dec. 10. F.....	The Friendship of Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1: 15-18)
Dec. 11. S.....	The Friendship of the World Is Fatal (James 4: 1-4)
Dec. 12. S.....	Abraham, the Friend of God (James 2: 21-23)

Time.—A.D. 28-30.

Place.—Bethany.

Persons.—Jesus, Mary, Martha, and others.

## Introduction

When we think about the life of Christ here upon the earth, we usually think of his active ministry—as he went from place to place teaching the people, working miracles, and doing the many things which blessed the people wherever he was at any given time. The things just mentioned did make up a great part of his life here among men, but that is not the whole story. There were also quiet hours in his life, when he was privileged to relax, as it were among friends. It would be both a pleasant and profitable practice for one to go through the four gospel records, and endeavor to select the homes in which Christ would most certainly find a welcome. There were, for example, the houses of Peter and Andrew, James and John, Matthew, Zacchaeus, Jairus, and the house where he turned the water into wine, to name only a few of them. But it is doubtful if there was a house in all the land where Jesus enjoyed going more, than to the house which was the home of Martha, Mary, and their brother Lazarus. And it is also very probable that there was no household in Palestine which extended to our Lord a warmer welcome, and who enjoyed his visit more, than the two sisters and the brother which have just been named.

Mary and Martha are two of the well known women of the New Testament; and they are loved and admired by all who are acquainted with the facts which are found in the Sacred Volume concerning them. We

learn from John, as we shall see further on in this study, that the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus was in Bethany, a village a little less than two miles from Jerusalem. It appears that during the time of Jesus the route from Jerusalem to Bethany was a footpath over the Mount of Olives, and this was also apparently the route of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem a few days before his crucifixion. The modern village of Bethany is called el-'Azariyeh; and it is located on a motor road between Jerusalem and Jericho. There is nothing said in the New Testament regarding the financial circumstances of the family of Bethany which we are now considering; but it is not difficult to get the impression that they, if not actually wealthy, were in good material condition.

But whatever may have been their material standing, there is every reason for thinking that they lived a simple life, a life into which Jesus could enter and feel perfectly at home. It is very probable that he visited with these friends whenever he had the opportunity. The New Testament records three occasions during which Jesus was with the family now under consideration, and we shall, in this study, discuss them. There are some Bible students who endeavor to make the anointing of Jesus in Luke 7: 37-50 parallel with the anointing which took place in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper; but there is no foundation in fact for this contention. The Simon

in Luke 7 is not the same as Simon the leper, and neither is there any indication that the Mary of the lesson new before us was the sinful

woman of Luke 7. The effort to identify the two Marys of the passages just referred to is seen especially in Bible dictionaries.

## The Golden Text

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

## The Text Explained

### Mary and Martha in the Home

(Luke 10: 38-42)

*Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving; and she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. But the Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

The lesson which we have for to-day illustrates one of the principles or rules of Bible study, which should always be remembered by Bible students, namely, that one portion of the Scriptures often supplements or makes plain others. This is especially true of the gospel records. Luke does not give the name of the village referred to in the text, nor does he say that Martha and Mary were the sisters of Lazarus; but John does both. While we do not know just where Jesus was when he spoke the parable of the Good Samaritan, it was probably somewhere in Judaea, perhaps not too far from Bethany. The text now before us says, "Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village;" and, as we have already seen, that village was Bethany, the one which was near Jerusalem. (Cf. John 1: 28.)

The manner in which Luke spoke of Martha and her sister Mary indicates that Martha was the older, and as such she would have the responsibility which usually goes with housekeeping. And, as has already been pointed out, entering into such a home must have been refreshing, even to Jesus. It will be recalled

that Jesus said during his public ministry that "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." (Luke 9: 58.) From all that which we know about the earthly life of Christ, he never had a place which he could call his own. He lived in the home of Joseph and Mary until he was about thirty years of age; and from that time onward, he was dependent on the hospitality of his friends. He did not therefore know the comforts and conveniences which are usually found in the homes of those who are settled in their own houses. This, of course, should make us appreciate our homes more, and become more keenly aware of the meaning of hospitality.

That Jesus often longed for fellowship is clearly indicated by the fact that he frequently communed with his Father; and that he needed the quietness and peace which others usually find within their own homes is clearly seen from the fact that he often retired to the solitude of the desert or the mountain. Therefore, from what we know of the relationship between Jesus and the family of Bethany, it appears safe to conclude that he often found their home a haven of quiet and rest, where he sought refuge from the hardships which his Judæan ministry imposed upon him. The home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus was, as it were, a land-locked harbor, where one could find protection from the wild gusts of fierce passion and bitter malice which confronted Jesus, as he steered his course amid the angry billows and sunken rocks of the neighboring Jerusalem. In Bethany there was always a home which offered a loving welcome, and there were hearts which responded with a sincere affection, as the editor of *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible* so well expresses the matter.

As strange as it may seem, the original word for "sat" in verse 39 occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It literally means "sat beside," and in the case now before us, she sat beside the Lord's feet and went on hearing, that is, listening to his teaching. To sit at the feet of a teacher was the ancient pasture of a pupil, and, as McGarvey and Pendleton point out, Martha honored Christ as a *guest*, while Mary honored him as a *teacher*. But Martha soon discovered that she had undertaken more than she could well do alone. There does not seem to be any reason for saying that she wanted Mary's place beside the Lord's feet; she simply wanted her sister to help her with that which she considered suitable entertainment for their guest. Lamar thinks that Martha must have felt that when the matter was brought to the Lord's attention, that he would immediately recognize that she was right about the need for additional help; and with that in mind, it appears that her words were a mild rebuke to Jesus for not seeing the situation sooner, and sending Mary on her way.

The original word for "cumbered" is not found anywhere else in the New Testament. The marginal reading is *distracted*, which appears to be the exact meaning of the term. According to Vincent, the verb literally means "to draw from around." Thus, Martha's attention, instead of centering around Jesus, was drawn hither and thither "about much serving." Vincent also points out that the aorist "did leave" indicates that Mary had been helping her sister, before she was drawn away by the presence of Jesus. The Greek word for "help" is *sunantilabētai*, which, according to Robertson, is a double compound word, namely, *sun*, with; *anti*, at her end of the line; and *lambanomai*, middle voice of *lambano*, to take hold. The whole expression may be expressed in this way, Bid her "take hold and do her part along with me." The verb which we are now considering occurs in the New Testament only here and in Rom. 8; 26.

The "many things" about which Martha was anxious and troubled apparently refer to the many things which she was trying to do, for the

comfort and pleasure of Jesus and her household. While the "one thing" which was needful could mean either one simple dish or meal which would suffice for the occasion (so Robertson, Clarke, et al., of. John 4; 34), or to the most important duty or privilege. The first of these views seems better suited to the context. It is not wrong to satisfy the needs of the physical man, but it is wrong to emphasize that to the neglect of the spiritual. Many women spend much more time and effort than is necessary in preparing a big Sunday dinner; and when that is done, there is little time left or interest in the higher things of life. This, apparently, was the lesson which the Lord wanted Martha to see and understand; and it is still one of the lessons which is sorely needed today.

#### Mary and Martha in Deep Sorrow (John 11: 1-5, 19, 20)

*Now a certain man was sick. Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha. And it was that Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. The sisters therefore sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. But when Jesus heard it, he said. This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.*

This section of the lesson text gives us a closer view of the relationship which existed between Jesus and the family of Bethany which we are considering. If we had only the record of Luke, that is, the one which makes up the first section of the lesson text for today, we would only know that they were intimate friends; but we would not know how close the relationship was between them. It is here that we learn that it was characterized by a deep and abiding love. "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick," and "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." And then, later on in the narrative, as the Jews expressed the matter, "Behold how he loved him!" This was in response to John's comment, "Jesus wept." (See John 11; 35, 36.)

While our purpose at this time is not to discuss the raising of Lazarus from the dead, it seems that just a few general words regarding the question will not be out of place; for no one can read even a small portion of the full narrative, without thinking of the whole story. Some Bible students have wondered why so signal a miracle as the raising of Lazarus from the dead is mentioned only by John. We have no direct answer to this question, but it is probably correct to say that the narrative is the climax of a series of signs, which is designed to show the full meaning of the gift of the Son of God to the human race. Earlier in his record, John pictured Christ as the fountain of living water, the light of the world, the Good Shepherd, and now he is shown to be the resurrection and the life.

No earlier mention of the Bethany family was made by John, and there may have been a basic reason for that omission. The only other gospel writer to mention the family was Luke, but he says absolutely nothing about Lazarus. His only reference to the household was the one we have already considered, namely, the one which told of a certain woman named Martha, who lived in a certain village, and who had a sister named Mary, received Jesus into her house. Why the silence regarding Lazarus? and why not be more specific regarding the location of the home. We do not, of course, know for certain why these things were so, but in view of John's statement in chapter 12, it is reasonable to conclude that the matter was not mentioned by the Synoptic writers, for the reason that it might be fatal to Lazarus. John's statement just referred to is as follows: "The common people therefore of the Jews learned that he was there: and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests took counsel that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus." (John 12: 9-11.)

The Synoptic Gospels were written while the record of Lazarus' resurrection was still fresh in the minds of the Jewish people; and probably for the reason just mentioned, those

writers did not mention it. But when John came to write his record, Lazarus may have already died; but if he was still alive, the Jews already having lost their nation, would have little interest in killing him. John, as has been previously noted, was not so much a narrative writer, as the other three were; but was more of an interpreter of the thoughts and ideas of Jesus. There was therefore no occasion for an earlier mention of Lazarus in his record. But, as the matter stands, we have in John's gospel the fullest record of the relationship between Jesus and the Bethany family.

With the close relationship existing between Jesus, and the two sisters, and the brother in Bethany, it was but natural for Mary and Martha to send word to Jesus, when they knew that Lazarus was seriously ill. It also appears reasonable to suppose, from the later record, that they expected their friend to come to them, when he received their message. "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." (John 11: 21, 32.) But John explains in his record why Jesus did not go to the Bethany home immediately. "But when Jesus heard it, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." And that, of course, is exactly what happened, both then and on down through the ages since. "Many therefore of the Jews, who came to Mary and beheld that which he did, believed on him." (John 11: 45.)

*And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother. Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary still sat in the house.*

We do not know why the sisters did not go together to meet Jesus, when they heard that he was nearing their home. Perhaps they felt that the strain would have been too great, if they had tried to reveal their hearts to him at the same time. At any rate, it appears that the older one went first, the one who had the responsibility of the household; and then the younger, after having showed due consideration to her sister, took her turn. Their grief was mutual, and it is not surprising that their first words to him, though

spoken at different times, were the same. Their thoughts, however, were on the present situation. They evidently thought that all had been lost, because Jesus did not come earlier. Jesus, however, had no apology for their disappointment; but he did have a message which would bring both faith and joy to their hearts. In the words of George Matheson,

"If Thou hadst come, our brother  
had not died."

Thou one who loved, to One who  
came so late;

Yet not too late, had she but  
known the fate

Which soon should fill the mourn-  
ers' hearts with tide

Of holy joy. Now she would al-  
most chide

Her awful Guest, as though his  
brief delay

Had quenched her love and driven  
faith away.

"If Thou hadst come," oh could we  
to say,

Our heart's impatience and with  
meekness stay

To hear the Voice of Wisdom ere  
we speak.

We mourn the past, the tomb, the  
buried dead,

And think of many a bitter thing  
to say,

While all the time True Love stands  
by so meek,

Waiting to lift anew the drooping  
head.

### Mary and Martha Demonstrate Their Gratefulness

(John 12: 1-3)

*Jesus therefore six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus raised from the dead. So they made him a supper there: and Martha served; but Lazarus was one of them that sat at meat with him. Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of pure nard, very precious, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.*

The incident mentioned in this section of the lesson text, is also reported by Matthew (26: 6-13) and Mark (14: 3-9); but it appears significant that neither Matthew nor Mark mention the names of either of the three members of the family of

Bethany, the ones who had such a prominent part in the event. This seems to confirm the observation, previously made, regarding the silence of the earlier writers regarding the resurrection of Lazarus. And, too, it is noticeable that both Matthew and Mark mention the fact that the supper was in the house of "Simon the leper," while John omits that fact altogether. We have no means of knowing who this Simon was, but he was most likely a man whom Christ had healed of his leprosy.

We are likewise in the dark as to why the supper was held in Simon's house, rather than in the house of Martha, since she did the serving, and Lazarus was a guest of honor. There are some Bible students who think that Simon may have been Martha's husband, and that might have been true; but we have no definite information regarding that. It could have been that Simon wanted to furnish the house for the supper, to show his own gratitude for what Jesus meant to him; and that the two families simply went together and honored Jesus. Martha, as in Luke's record, was still the one who was responsible for the food which was eaten, while Mary showed her personal devotion to the honored guest.

The deed which Mary performed on the occasion now before us has been described as "the economy of love's wastefulness;" and it must have helped Jesus to bear the agony of the thorns and the nails which were soon to pierce his flesh. It should also be observed that that which gave splendor to her ministry was the fact that, seemingly, it had no practical purpose, for to others it seemed wasteful, extravagant, and unnecessary; but nothing which we can do for the Lord is ever wasteful or unnecessary. Robertson says that "nard" is the head or spike of an East Indian plant, very fragrant. The marginal note is *liquid nard*. Some idea of the value of these concentrated perfumes may be gained from the price of attar of roses. Peloubet says that four hundred full-grown roses are needed to furnish one ounce of oil, which sells for as much as one hundred dollars an ounce, or twelve hundred dollars for an amount equal to Mary's gift. Jesus had been a true

friend to Mary and her family, and there was no sacrifice too great for her to make for him.

But great as that friendship was, it is nothing to be compared to the friendship which a redeemed child of God enjoys. But when one beholds the avaricious and miserly spirit which characterizes the giving (?) on the part of some professed

Christians, he is made to wonder if such people realize what it means to be saved from sin, or what a friend they have in Jesus. Matthew and Mark say that Mary anointed the head of Jesus, while John says that she anointed his feet, and wiped them with her hair. She probably did both, "and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment."

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

What usually comes into our minds when we think of the life of Christ here among men?

What does the Bible reveal regarding his "quiet hours"?

What were some of the homes in which he would find a warm welcome?

Give some of the facts regarding the subjects of our study for today.

On how many occasions was Jesus identified with them, so far as the record is concerned?

Where was their home village of Bethany located?

#### Mary and Martha in the Home

What important rule of Bible study is illustrated in this lesson? Discuss it.

What impression does one get from the manner in which Luke speaks of Mary and Martha?

Why would Jesus especially enjoy going to their home?

How do we know that he often longed for fellowship and quiet and peaceful hours?

In what way must the home of Mary and Martha seem to him?

What is peculiar about the term for "sat" in verse 39?

What complaint did Martha make and why?

What was her real trouble and what did

she evidently expect Jesus to do about it?

What reply did he make to her and what is the lesson which we should get from it?

#### Mary and Martha in Deep Sorrow

What additional information do we get here regarding the relationship of these friends?

What probable reason did John have for discussing the case of Lazarus here?

Why is Lazarus probably not mentioned by the other gospel writers?

What prompted Mary and Martha to send for Jesus?

What did Jesus say when he received their message?

What did they evidently expect him to do?

What did the sisters do when they heard that Jesus had arrived in Bethany?

What apparently was their feeling at that time?

#### Mary and Martha Demonstrate Their Gratefulness

What is peculiar regarding Matthew's and Mark's report of the incident recorded here?

In whose house was the supper held?

In what familiar roles did Martha and Mary appear at that time?

In what way has the deed of Mary been described and is the description justified?

How did Jesus feel about what she did?

What can you say of the value of her gift?

Why was she so generous toward Jesus?

What lesson should we learn from this?

## Lesson XII—December 19, 1965

### DORCAS, A FRIEND OF THE POOR

#### Lesson Text

Acts 9: 32-42

32 And it came to pass, as Peter went throughout all parts, he came down also to the saints that dwelt at Lyd'-da.

33 And there he found a certain man named Æ'-ne-as, who had kept his bed eight years: for he was palsied.

34 And Peter said unto him, Æ'-ne-as, Je'-sus Christ healeth thee: arise, and make thy bed. And straightway he arose.

35 And all that dwelt at Lyd'-da and in Shar'-on saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

36 Now there was at Jop'-pa a certain disciple named Tab'-i-tha, which by interpretation is called Dor'-cas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she fell sick, and died: and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper chamber.



38 And as Lyd'-da was nigh unto Jop'-pa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men unto him, entreating him, Delay not to come on unto us.

39 And Peter arose and went with them. And when he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dor'-cas made, while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed: and turning to the body, he said, Tab'-i-tha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41 And he gave her his hand, and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

42 And it became known throughout all Jop'-pa: and many believed on the Lord.

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

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Prov. 31: 10-31.

### Daily Bible Readings

Dec. 13. M.....	Religion Which Is Pure and Acceptable (James 1: 26, 27)
Dec. 14. T. ....	One's Attitude toward the Poor Is Vital to His Welfare (1 John 3: 17, 18)
Dec. 15. W. ....	God Loves a Cheerful Giver (2 Cor. 9: 6-9)
Dec. 16. T. ....	God Will Not Tolerate Oppression of the Poor (James 5: 1-6)
Dec. 17. F. ....	Even Small Service Brings Its Reward (Matt. 10: 40-42)
Dec. 18. S. ....	Christian Kindness May Be Widely Applied (Rom. 12: 17-21)
Dec. 19. S. ....	How to Make Friends Who Count (Luke 16: 9-13)

TIME.—Probably about A.D. 40.

PLACES.—Lydda, Sharon, and Joppa.

PERSONS.—Dorcas, Peter, and others.

### Introduction

When James wrote his epistle, he included in it a statement regarding the poor, which is familiar to all Bible readers. He said, “Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” (James 1: 27.) James, of course, does not mean to say that this is all of religion; instead, he gives that which may be considered a practical demonstration of that which is essential to pleasing God. The adjectives “pure” and “undefiled” present the positive and negative qualities of acceptable religion; and the two examples which he cites are (1) benevolence, and (2) personal purity. We are primarily concerned with the first example in this study.

Marvin R. Vincent, in commenting on the passage quoted in the preceding paragraph, says, “James strikes a downright blow here at ministry by proxy, or by mere gifts of money. Pure and undefiled religion demands *personal contact* with the worlds sorrow: to *visit*, the afflicted, and to visit them *in their affliction*” Dr. Vincent then quotes from Lecky's *History of European Morals*, Vol. II, p.

98, as follows: “The rich man, prodigal of money, which is to him of little value, but altogether incapable of devoting any personal attention to the object of his alms, often injures society by his donations; but this is rarely the case with that far nobler charity which makes men familiar with the haunts of wretchedness, and follows the object of its care through all the phases of his life.”

The apostle John says, “But whoso hath this world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth.” (1 John 3: 17, 18.) This statement is in keeping with the picture of the judgment which Jesus sets forth in Matt. 25: 31-46, along with his comments regarding those who will be there. After describing the glory and majesty of the King upon his throne, the Lord next gives the reason for the public acknowledgement of the righteous. The acts which are mentioned here are deeds of mercy, and they fall in the category of good works; and they also, of course, pre-

suppose a background of faith and love. The fatherless and widows, mentioned by James, could be afflicted without necessarily being poor; but they are usually thought of as being in need. The original word for

*affliction*, as used by James, means, according to Amdt-Gingrich, to be in difficult circumstances. (Cf. 2 Cor. 8: 13, where the same original term is found.)

### The Golden Text

*"A worthy woman who can find?  
For her price is far above rubies"*

These are the opening words of an acrostic poem, that is a poem in which the first letter of each of the twenty-two verses begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in a descending scale. (There are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet.) The words of the poem are apparently those of "king Lemuel; the oracle which his mother taught him." (Prov. 31: 1.) We do not know who Lemuel was, but we do know that the poem which he gave regarding the worthy woman is immortal. It would be a good practice for every person who regards the Bible as being the word of God, and especially every woman who aspires to be a wife and mother. It is doubtful if any comments on the golden text can be given which will equal the reading of the context itself; and inasmuch as it was written in poetic form, the quotation is from the Revised Standard Version, which is one of the clearest and easiest to read of the translations we have of this scripture.

A good wife who can find?

She is far more precious than  
jewels.

The heart of her husband trusts in  
her,  
and he will have no lack of gain.

She does him good, and not harm,  
all the days of her life.

She seeks wool and flax,  
and works with willing hands.

She is like the ships of the mer-  
chant,  
she brings her food from afar.

She rises while it is yet night and  
provides food for her household  
and tasks for her maidens.

She considers a field and buys it;  
with the fruit of her hands she  
plants a vineyard.

She girds her loins with strength  
and makes her arms strong.

She perceives that her merchandise  
is profitable.

Her lamp does not go out at  
night.

She puts her hands to the distaff,  
And her hands hold the spindle.

She opens her hand to the poor,  
and reaches out her hands to the  
needy.

She is not afraid of snow for her  
household,  
for all her household are clothed  
in scarlet.

She makes herself coverings;  
her clothing is fine linen and  
purple.

Her husband is known in the gates,  
when he sits among the elders of  
the land.

She makes linen garments and sells  
them;  
she delivers girdles to the mer-  
chant.

Strength and dignity are her cloth-  
ing,  
and she laughs at the time to  
come.

She opens her mouth with wisdom,  
and the teaching of kindness is  
on her tongue.

She looks well to the ways of her  
household,  
and does not eat the bread of  
idleness.

Her children rise up and call her  
blessed;  
her husband also, and he praises  
her:

"Many women have done excel-  
lently,  
but you surpass them all."

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is  
vain,  
but a woman who fears the Lord  
is to be praised.

Give her of the fruit of her hands,  
and let her works praise her in  
the gates.

### The Text Explained

**Peter at Lydda and a Case of Healing**  
(Acts 9: 32-35)

*And it came to pass, as Peter went*

*throughout all parts, he came down  
also to the saints that dwelt at  
Lydda. And there he found a cer-*

*tain man named Aeneas, who had kept his bed eight years; for he was palsied. And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ healeth thee: arise, and make thy bed. And he straightway arose. And all that dwelt at Lydda and in Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.*

When the Lord appeared to Saul on the Damascus road, and to Ananias in the city, he told both of them that the former would become a missionary to the Gentiles and the kings of the earth; and Luke, after recording some facts regarding Saul's conversion and early ministry, interrupted the narrative to show how the Gentiles came to be recognized as gospel subjects. Peter had been given the keys of the kingdom (Matt. 16: 19), and it was his privilege, therefore, to open the doors to both Jews and Gentiles, which he did for the former on Pentecost of Acts 2, and for the latter at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10).

The work of Peter had been largely featured in the first part of the Book of Acts, and now the sacred historian resumes his narrative regarding the apostle to the circumcision. (Cf. Gal. 2: 7, 8.) Peace for the church throughout Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria, had been restored, following the conversion of Saul (Acts 9: 31), and a great period of growth was experienced. This condition enabled Peter to engage in a peaceful evangelistic journey throughout the area; and as he went about from place to place he came to the saints who dwelt in Lydda, in the northwestern part of Judaea, about ten miles inland from the Mediterranean sea, and some fifteen miles southeast of Joppa. Lydda was the Old Testament town of Lod, which was built by the sons of Benjamin. (1 Chron. 8: 12.)

While engaged in his work in Lydda, Peter found a man by the name of Aeneas, who had been bedfast for eight years; and he healed him. Jesus had authorized such miracles during the early years of the church for the purpose of confirming the word (cf. Mark 16: 15-20); and Luke, by citing the case in hand, shows how the principle worked. The original for "shall accompany" means to *attend or be present* wherever believers were. The Lord did not promise miraculous power to all believers

during the early age of the church; but he did provide for the presence of such power where the gospel was being preached. And, as the text new before us declares, the miracle wrought by Peter had the desired effect; for "all that dwelt at Lydda and in Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord." Sharon was the maritime plain which lay between mount Carmel and Joppa.

### The Death of Dorcas and the Call for Peter

(Acts 9: 36-39)

*Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she fell sick, and died: and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper chamber. And as Lydda was nigh unto Joppa, the disciples hearing that Peter was there, sent two men unto him, entreating him, Delay not to come unto us. And Peter arose and went with them. And when he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.*

The marginal reading for "Dorcas" is *Gazelle*, and her place in the sacred history is chiefly that of a benefactress of the poor, especially poor women, including widows. There is not much said in the Scriptures regarding the personal life of Dorcas: but that which is said speaks volumes. *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible* expresses her case in this way: "The special charm of Dorcas' charities lies in the fact that she worked for the poor with her own hands. She is celebrated for her 'good works' as well as for her 'almsdeeds.' If the latter means her gifts, the former would point to her personal actions. Perhaps she remembered her Lord's commendation, 'I was naked and ye clothed me,' and thought that, if it was true that in clothing the poor she clothed Christ, she would do it with no other hands than her own, for it might be that she would, in spirit at least, draw virtue from the hem of his garments while she made them."

Many of the women whose names are found in the New Testament were women who performed service in connection with the work which Christ and the apostles were doing; and what is true of the New Testament is also true of the Old Testament. Jehovah has always had work for godlike women to do. It would be a profitable exercise to go through the Bible and consider how many varied and noble activities the women whose names are found therein engaged in. We might call this "Stewardship in the Lives of Women." And if this is done, it will be seen that in most of the instances the women in question were supplying some kind of a need; maybe not always to the poor, with reference to material things, but to people who did not have that which they actually needed, that is, not until they came in contact with these women.

(1) There was the woman with a little room—the stewardship of hospitality. (2 Kings 4: 8-10.) There are many occasions when Christian women today can use their homes to further the cause of the Lord and to his glory. Guests, for example, who really need such a place, weekly Bible study, where neighbors may be invited in, students who are away from home, working young people, all of whom may be greatly blessed by such consideration. (2) The woman with the needle—the stewardship of sewing. (Acts 9: 36-39.) This is the special case we are studying today. Women who engage in this type of work may win many people to Christ, by supplying clothing, etc., for the needy in the community, for those in other places who have lost their possession through fires, storms, floods, etc. Then there are children and elderly people who are in homes and other places which have been provided for their care; students in school, who are having difficult times making ends meet; missionaries, both in this country and abroad who are not adequately supported.

(3) The woman with the costly offering—the stewardship of money. (John 12: 1-3.) There are times when an offering of this type will do untold good, both by way of supplying a need, and by giving personal encouragement. Lovers delight

in showing their love by gifts; and when love overflows, gifts are spontaneous. One may give without loving; but he cannot love without giving. (Cf. John 3: 16; 1 John 3: 17, 18; 5: 3.) One has only to read that which said about Mary's gift (Mark 14: 8, 9), in order to see something of its moral and spiritual worth. (4) The woman with an hour—the stewardship of time. (Luke 10: 38-42.) Time has been described as the stuff out of which life is made; and it is often a life saver, when one is willing to devote it to a good cause.

(5) The woman with a little son—the stewardship of the family. (1 Sam. 1: 24-28.) The home and the family are woman's God-given sphere—the places where her greatest and most enduring influences are exerted. The story is told of a woman who was engaged in some type of social activity, who called on another woman in the latter's home. During the course of their conversation, the caller asked the hostess if she was engaged in any kind of literary work. The latter replied that she was writing three books. This announcement immediately interested the visitor, and she asked about the nature of the books which she was writing. Before answering, the woman in whose home the conversation was taking place went to a nearby door, opened it, and brought in her three small children, and said. Here they are!

(6) The woman with a message—the stewardship of the gospel. (John 4: 28-30, 39.) When a person comes in contact with Jesus and submits to his will, he can then become a great influence in bringing others to him. The woman of Samaria is a good illustration of how the principle works. Christian women often can influence people in the right direction, and Peter makes it plain that a Christ-like life is sometimes more convincing than words. (See 1 Pet. 3: 1, 2.) Women have unlimited opportunities in this respect. (7) The woman with a little—the stewardship of sacrificial giving. (Mark 12: 41-44.) There is no responsible woman in the church today who is unable to make some kind of contribution to the Lord and the cause for which he died; and when one is willing to use what she has, she will always find herself, not

only making a contribution to the Lord's work, but also becoming an inspiration and encouragement to others. (Cf. 1 Pet. 4: 10.)

### The Raising: of Dorcas and the Effect on the People (Acts 9: 40-42)

*But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning to the body, he said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa: and many believed on the Lord.*

J. W. McGarvey, in commenting on the events now under consideration, says that nothing could be more graphic than this brief narration, or more touching than the incident itself. Amid the march of imposing events which are moving before us, it drops in like a wild flower in a stately forest. It opens a vista through the larger events of the history, lets light in upon the social sorrows of the early saints, and discloses a scene with the like of which our own experiences have made us familiar. Here is the same tender care for the lifeless body, the same distress felt by all, the same desire for the presence of him who has been our religious counsellor; the same company of weeping women, and of men standing by in mournful silence; the same recounting with sobbing voices of the good deeds done by the departed; and, beyond all this to which we are accustomed, a group of poor widows holding up before Peter as he comes in the tunics and mantles which Dorcas made for them and

their children while she was yet with them.

What a memorial! How much richer and more to be desired than monuments of marble and bronze covered with flattering inscriptions! Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; and blessed are the living in whose softened hearts is treasured at such an hour the remembrance of such a life as Dorcas had lived. As Peter stood there for a moment in tearful silence, did he not seem to himself to be standing once more in the home of Jairus, and surrounded by the weeping family and friends. He must have remembered that Jesus put all the people out, except Peter, James, and John, and the parents of the dead child; and then going to the place where the little girl's body lay, he took hold of her hand and raised her from the dead.

Peter followed the Lord's example, except that he knelt down and prayed. Peter knew that he was a man, but his trust was in the power of God. He understood that any miracle which he might perform was only the power of God working through him. But he was confident that his prayer had been heard; and then with the voice of authority he called to the dead woman to arise. She opened her eyes, looked upon Peter; and when he gave her his hand, she stood up. The others were then called in, and Peter presented her alive. This, as in the case of Aeneas, had a profound effect on the people of the seashore city of Joppa, with many of them believing on the Lord. The raising of one dead person was a great day for the saints in Joppa; but what will it be for all of God's people when all the dead of all the ages come from their tombs!

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

What does James teach regarding one's attitude toward the needy?

What important lesson should we get from this?

What mistake do people with money often make in this respect?

How general is the teaching with reference to the poor in the New Testament?

#### The Golden Text

In what setting are the words of this text found in the Bible?

What kind of poem is this and who apparently wrote it?

What is the value of the poem to people today?

What are some of the qualities which are found in a good wife?

Why is she valued so highly?

What kind of influence does a good wife have on her entire household?

#### Peter at Lydda and a Case of Healing

Discuss the general setting of the lesson text which we are to consider today.

Why did Luke introduce the work of Peter immediately following his account regarding Paul?

What, in fact, are the places of Peter and Paul in the Book of Acts?  
 Locate the places referred to in this lesson on the map.  
 What New Testament teaching did the healing of Aeneas illustrate?  
 What was the general effect of the miracle?

#### The Death of Dorcas and the Call for Peter

What kind of woman was Dorcas?  
 In what did the glory of her work for others consist?  
 What do we learn from the Bible about the work of good women in general?  
 What does the expression "stewardship in the lives of women" imply?  
 How may they manifest the stewardship of hospitality?  
 Discuss the stewardship of sewing.  
 Under what circumstances may the stewardship of money become appropriate?  
 In what way can the stewardship of time prove to be a blessing?

In what stewardship relationship is the greatest influence of women found?  
 How may women fulfil their stewardship with reference to the gospel?  
 How do we know that every responsible woman can do something for the Lord?

#### The Raising of Dorcas and the Effect on the People

What effect does the incident of this section of the lesson text have on the reader of the Book of Acts?  
 What are some of the impressions which the passing of a good person has upon those who knew him best, especially those who were blessed by his good works?  
 What must have come into the mind of Peter at the time of this lesson?  
 Discuss the steps he took in raising Dorcas from the dead?  
 What was the general effect of this miracle?

### Lesson XIII—December 26, 1965

## LYDIA, A WOMAN WHO PUT GOD FIRST

### Lesson Text

Acts 16: 11-15, 35-40

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 tarrying certain days.

13 And on the sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down, and spake unto the women that were come together.

14 And a certain woman named Lyd'-i-a, a seller of purple, of the city of Thy-a-ti'-ra, one that worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

\* \* \* \* \*

Golden Text.—*"Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth Jehovah, she shall be praised."* (Prov. 31: 30.)

Devotional Reading.—Prov. 14: 1-7.

### Daily Bible Readings

Dec. 20. M.....First Things First (Matt. 6: 19-34)  
 Dec. 21. T.....A Vital Question Which Every One Should Consider (Matt. 16: 24-26)

35 But when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go.

36 And the jailor reported the words to Paul, *saying*, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore come forth, and go in peace.

37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us publicly, uncon-demned, men that are Romans, and have cast us into prison; and do they now cast us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and bring us out.

38 And the serjeants reported these words unto the magistrates: and they feared when they heard that they were Romans;

39 And they came and besought them; and when they had brought them out, they asked them to go away from the city.

40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into *the house of* Lyd'-i-a: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them and departed.

Dec. 22. W.....	"What Is Your Life" (James 4: 13-17)
Dec. 23. T.....	The Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matt. 25: 1-13)
Dec. 24. F.....	When the Master Goes Home with a Man (Luke 19: 1-10)
Dec. 25. S.....	Paul's Great Example (Phil. 3: 7-14)
Dec. 26. S.....	Christ Shows the Way (Phil. 2: 5-11)

TIME.—A.D. 50.

PLACE.—Philippi.

PERSONS.—Lydia, Paul, and others.

## Introduction

As may be seen by the time of this lesson, the church of the New Testament had been in existence about twenty years; and so far as the record goes, there had been no effort made to plant the cause in Europe. It is possible, of course, that some of the people who were converted at Jerusalem on the memorial Pentecost of Acts 2 may have returned to their European homes and preached the gospel in those areas; but there is no record of such activity. The lesson which we are studying today tells the story of the first work of that kind which was ever done west of Asia, and so far as is known, Lydia was the first person to respond to the call of Christ in that part of the world. She was not a native of Europe, as we shall see further on in this study, but she apparently had the honor of becoming the first Christian outside the country in which the religion of Christ was born.

Not only will it be of interest to us to learn of Lydia's conversion; it will also be helpful to us to know how it was that Paul came to go to Philippi in the first place. Some months earlier, following his disagreement with Barnabas regarding John Mark, Paul chose Silas as his co-laborer and began his second great missionary journey. Instead of going through Cyprus, as he and Barnabas did on their first journey, and as Barnabas and Mark did on their trip, Paul and Silas took the northwestern route, and went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches. They then crossed the Taurus mountains, probably through the Cilician Gates, and in due time came to Derbe (the farthest point eastward on the first journey) and next to Lystra. It was at the latter place, apparently, that they found Timothy, and, after due preparation, he accompanied the missionaries on their journey.

Leaving Lystra, Paul and his com-

pany continued on their northwestern journey through the cities, delivering the decrees, that is the decisions, which were made by the apostles and elders at the Jerusalem conference, with the result that the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily. The Holy Spirit forbade them to preach in the province of Asia, but they did go through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia; and when they came over against Mysia, they made an effort to go into Bithynia; but when the Spirit of Jesus would not permit that, they passed by Mysia and came down to the seacoast city of Troas. It was there that Paul had his vision, a man of Macedonia calling for help; and when he related the matter to his companions, including Luke who joined them in Troas, they all concluded that God was calling them to preach the gospel on the continent of Europe.

The missionaries made immediate plans to cross the Aegean Sea, and in two days they landed at Neapolis, which was the seaport town of Philippi, some ten miles inland. The latter city was a Roman colony, which means that it enjoyed certain special privileges, and was responsible to Rome rather than to the local governor. There appears to have been considerable wealth there, which made it attractive for outside business interests to settle there, and that probably accounts for the fact that Lydia was there. And so, as in the case of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, God was bringing together preachers of the gospel and people who would respond to its message, when they learned its truth. There was, as we have already seen, miraculous intervention on the part of Paul and his company, but the principle of bringing such people together is the same, whether with miraculous intervention, as in the

early days of the church, or with providential guidance, as in our day. The Lord is interested in the salvation of every person (cf. 1 Tim. 2:

3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9): and we may be sure that he is not idle with reference to his providential capabilities (cf. Matt. 28: 20b; Rom. 8: 28).

### The Golden Text

*"Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth Jehovah, she shall be praised."* After describing the characteristics or traits of the ideal woman, the writer gives, as it were, a caution, namely, Let no one think that just because she has charming manners and physical beauty, she meets the requirements of the worthy woman; for those traits, while not undesirable in and of themselves, are transitory, and are therefore both deceitful and vain. Adam Clarke notes that "sickness impairs them, *suffering* deranges them, and *death* destroys them." But a woman who fears, that is, who has the proper reverence for, Jehovah, shall be praised, that is, she shall be commended by both the Lord and Those who are his people. Even people who are not in covenant relationship with the Lord, but who possess high ideals of moral virtue, will commend a woman whose life is in keeping with true religious ideals.

We have, during the quarter which ends today, been studying the characters of some men and women of the New Testament; and the woman whose character we are considering today is the fourth among the women of the series. It is a noticeable fact that not a single word is written in the Scriptures regarding their cultural charm and physical beauty; but all of them are both admired and loved by those who are acquainted with their record: and the Lord, too, has seen fit to commend them; for they all have an immortal place in

the Sacred History. Cultural charm and physical beauty can indeed be a positive asset to any God-fearing woman; but no one should be deceived into thinking that they are the most important things in one's life. If such a person does not have the proper attitude toward the Lord, such traits, in the words of A. R. Fausset, often minister to pride, indolence, lust, and bad temper. They are at best ephemeral, fleeting, evanescent.

The apostles of Christ, in their epistles which have come down to us, teach precisely the same lesson, which the wise man of old taught, as may be seen from the following passages, namely. (1) "In like manner, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment; but (which becometh women professing godliness) through good works. (1 Tim. 2: 9, 10.) (2) "In like manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, even if any obey not the word, they may without the word be gained by the behavior of their wives; beholding your chaste behavior coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Pet. 3: 1-4; of. 2 Cor. 4: 16-18.)

### The Text Explained

The Arrival of Paul and His  
Company in Philippi  
(Acts 16: 11, 12)

*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 this city tarrying certain days.*

The term "therefore," in the first

part of this section of the lesson text, has reference to the situation out of which the resolution to go to Philippi came. This background was set forth in the introductory remarks of this lesson. The voyage on this occasion only took two days. The expression "we made a straight course" is suggestive; for "a straight course" is a nautical term for sailing before the wind." Samothrace was an island in the Aegean sea, about half way between Troas and Neapolis. At a



later date (Acts 20: 6), it took Paul and his company five days to go the same 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 both; or it could have been that the winds were contrary.

It is interesting to note the lesson which Paul drew from the idea of the "Roman colony," when he wrote his letter to the Philippians. (See Phil. 3: 17-21.) It was pointed out in an earlier lesson that some Bible students think that Luke may have been the "man of Macedonia" whom Paul saw in the vision. This, of course, could have been true, and it does not seem unreasonable to think so, in view of Luke's relationship to the city, which is revealed later on. Some might think that the expression "we were in this city tarrying certain days" indicates that they were there only temporarily; but if Luke was himself a permanent resident, he certainly would not, since he never even so much as mentions his own name, accommodate the language of his historical account to his own situation, rather than to that of the missionaries themselves.

#### The Conversion of Lydia and Her Household (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. 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. 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.*

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 Jewish people, or more particularly, Jewish proselytes, had a place of prayer, outside the city, and attended only by women, 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 an impressive lesson to the "few" of the Lord's people today in any location.

Although Luke says that "we" spake unto the women, it appears from verse 14 that Paul was at least the principal speaker. Lydia was a merchant woman from Asia, the seat of one of the seven churches of Asia. (Rev., chapters 2 and 3.) The fact that she was a dealer in purple, either the dye or the fabric, or both, which would evidently be very expensive, indicates that, while probably 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 Lydia's character may be learned from the statement of the text, "one that worshipped God," and from the further consideration that in the heathen city of Philippi, 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 the sabbath day, Lydia 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 banks 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 permit business, pleasure, company, and practically anything else, to keep them from worshipping on the Lord's day as the New Testament directs. (Cf. Luke 8: 14; Rev. 1: 10; Acts 2: 42; 20: 7; Heb. 10: 25ff.)

People today who read the account of Lydia's conversion may 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 her heart's condition was not due to inherited depravity, nor to the hardness of a sinful life; her character, as we have already seen, was wholly against such an idea. Lydia's heart was closed in the same sense in which the hearts of other pious Jews and Jewish proselytes were closed, that is, by their misconception, and consequent attitude, regarding Christ. It was their understanding that the Messiah was coming to the earth to establish an earthly kingdom; and it was for that reason that their hearts were steadfastly 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.

There are many people today, both in the church and out of it, whose hearts are closed to certain truths which are vital to their salvation. The same principle is involved in their case, as was involved in Lydia's. This same truth was taught by Jesus in the parable of the sower. When he explained the meaning of the seed which fell by the way side, he said, "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the evil one, and snatcheth away that which hath been sown in his heart. This is he that was sown by the way side." (Matt. 13: 19.) When any one does not understand the truth, he will almost certainly reject it; for if he is at all sincere, he will not want to accept that which he believes to be out of harmony with the will of God.

As long as Saul of Tarsus misunderstood the truth regarding Jesus, he not only did not accept him as being God's only begotten Son; he did everything within his power to destroy the church and put an end to his teaching. But when that same man met Jesus on the Damascus road, and was convinced that he was the Christ, he began that day to give his life to him and devoted the remainder of his days to teaching the truth which the Lord came to reveal,

even amid the most severe persecution. Here are his own words as to how he felt about the matter. "Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them by refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead." (Phil. 3: 7-11.)

There is therefore no mystery regarding either the closing or the opening of Lydia's heart; and what was true of her is also true of any one else who is willing to follow her example. Luke, as we shall see, was very specific as to the process by which the Lord opened Lydia's heart, namely, (1) She "heard us," that is, she listened to that which was spoken to her. (2) "Whose heart the Lord opened." When she learned the truth regarding Jesus, her attitude was changed toward him, that is, she no longer thought of him as being an impostor, worthy of the death upon the cross. (3) Instead, she was willing "to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul," that is, she was willing to do that which Paul taught that she should do. (4) "And when she was baptized, and her household." This is what Paul taught her to do. (Cf. Mark 16: 15, 16; Gal. 1: 6-9; 3: 26, 27; Rom. 6: 16-18; 6: 1-4.)

James Hastings, in commenting on this incident in the life of Lydia, says, "Immediately on hearing the truth from the lips of the apostle, Lydia applied it to her own soul. She gave 'heed unto the things that were spoken by Paul.' She did precisely what everybody who finds his way into the faith and fellowship of the Son of God has to do sooner or later—she called her own will into action, and by deliberate choice set herself over on the side of him who came to announce a Divine love for all and to

be a universal Redeemer. It would have been all in vain for her to be present at this river-side prayer-meeting, and to listen never so intently to the truth brought to her attention, had she formed no opinion and taken no steps for herself. It would have been all in vain, too, to have her heart opened by the Spirit, had she not brought her will with the will of the Spirit and accepted Christ." (Cf. Rom. 8: 16; Acts 17: 10-12.)

There are some religious teachers who try to make it appear that the "household" of Lydia included infants, and that the fact that her household were baptized implies infant baptism. But, as Furneaux notes, "this statement cannot be claimed as any argument for infant baptism, since the Greek word [for 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." There are four of these so-called household conversions in the Book of Acts, namely, Cornelius, Lydia, the Philippian jailor, and Crispus. (See Acts, chapters 10; 16; 18.)

Following her baptism, Lydia constrained, that is, she strongly urged, the missionaries to come into her house, and abide there. This invitation was predicted upon their judging her to be faithful. There is no reason to think that the brethren had to be unduly persuaded to accept her hospitality; her constraint was evidently prompted by her gratitude for what they had done for her.

### **The Missionaries Vindicated and Asked to Leave the City**

(Acts 16: 35-40)

*But when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go. And the jailor reported the words to Paul, saying, The*

*magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore come forth, and go in peace. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men that are Romans, and have cast us into prison; and do they now cast us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and bring us out. And the serjeants reported these words unto the magistrates: and they feared when they heard that they were Romans; and they came and besought them; and when they had brought them out, they asked them to go away from the city. And they went out of the brethren, they comforted them, of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.*

The story of how Paul and Silas were shamefully treated and cast into prison, along with the conversion the jailor and his household, is set forth in the preceding verses of the chapter from which the lesson text is taken. The "magistrates" were the public civil officers (equivalent to the Latin *praetores*) of Philippi, while the "serjeants" were the lictors who attended them, that is, the ones who applied the rod to the victims of punishment. It appears that Paul and Silas suffered unjustly, without complaint: but when it came to leaving the scene of their ill-treatment, and having the report of it follow them, as if they had been justly punished, Paul was determined that the responsibility would be placed where it belonged: and that is exactly what happened. There is no indication that he was seeking revenge; he only wanted the truth to be known. His action here was the same in principle, as his dealing with the evil spirit in verses 16-18; he did not want to be identified with demons, and he also did not want the report of a false arrest, and subsequent punishment as if it had been deserved, to follow him wherever he went to preach the gospel.

Paul and his company, except Luke, did leave the city, according to the request of the magistrates: but not before they went to the house of Lydia, and comforted the brethren.

### **Questions for Discussion**

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

Introduction  
How long after the church was established before the gospel was preached

in Europe? Give reasons for your answer.

Trace the events which led up to the first gospel preaching which was done there. Who made up the company of the missionaries on that occasion? Show that the same principle. Jess the miraculous, works in our day.

#### The Golden Text

What is the nature of the passage which serves as the golden text for today?

What is meant by "grace," why is it deceitful, and why is beauty vain?

What does it mean to fear Jehovah ami why will such a person be praised?

Where should godly women place the emphasis regarding their person?

What do Paul and Peter teach regarding this subject?

#### The Arrival of Paul and His Company in Philippi

Tell something of the journey of the missionaries from Troas to Philippi?

What kind of a city was Philippi and why was it a desirable place to begin their work?

What lesson did Paul later draw from the idea of a "Roman colony"?

#### The Conversion of Lydia and Her Household

When did the brethren begin their work in Philippi and why not immediately?

Why were the women meeting out by the river side?

What do we know regarding Lydia?

What is said regarding her character?

Why is this an important lesson for our day?

Why did Lydia's heart need to be opened?

Show that the same thing is true of people today.

What did Jesus and Paul teach regarding this question?

What were the steps which were taken in opening Lydia's heart?

Why was she willing to give heed to the things which were spoken by Paul?

How do we know that there were no infants baptised that day?

Why did Lydia "constrain" the brethren to go into her house, and abide there?

#### The Missionaries Vindicated and Asked to Leave the City

What was the occasion for their having been in prison?

Why didn't Paul accept the freedom when it was offered them?

What was the principle which motivated his refusal and his demand for vindication?

Under what circumstances did they leave the city?