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

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ON
UNIFORM BIBLE LESSONS
FOR THE
CHURCHES OF CHRIST

1967

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P R E F A C E

We are now ready to begin another year of Bible study, and it is hoped that we shall use these lessons as a guide to a fuller and more complete use of the Bible itself. If one will use these lessons as they are meant to be used, he is certain to increase his over-all knowledge of the Bible itself; for his attention will be constantly directed to the inspired text. If one desires to ask, Then why not use the Bible itself, rather than the weekly lessons which are contained in the volume now before us? the answer in most cases is simple, namely, not every one who is called on to teach a Bible class is qualified, without some additional help, to direct his own thinking, to say nothing of that of the class as a whole.

There are very few successful teachers of Bible classes, or classes in other fields, who rely upon their own efforts alone. They are continuously searching for suggestions and helps from others; and they are happy to make use of that which they consider relevant and wholesome, as they attempt to direct others to a fuller knowledge of the subject under consideration. It is for this and other reasons that the editor and publisher of this *Annual Lesson Commentary* seek to make available a wide range of helpful suggestions and sound comments for the consideration of those who make use of the lessons contained in it. It often happens that a simple suggestion or a pertinent thought will set the teacher or student to thinking, with the result that a whole field of wholesome ideas is opened before him.

Those who are responsible for making this and other volumes in the series available, never lose sight of the Bible itself; and it is for this reason that many references to the Sacred Volume are cited. And if the teacher and all others who use these lessons will read those scripture references, they will find that they will have a more comprehensive view of the over-all subject in hand. And too, the subjects of the different sections of the lesson text are intended to call attention to the general idea which is contained in them. Therefore, a few moments' reflection on that feature will enable one to have in mind the particular point or idea which is being considered. And too, these section topics can be used as an outline for a sermon on a particular lesson, or a mid-week talk, et cetera.

The first two quarters of this year's lessons are devoted to the church of the New Testament, the third quarter to the period of conquest of Canaan by the Israelites, and the last quarter will take us through the Book of John.

This is the forty-sixth annual volume which the Gospel Advocate Company has published for use by churches of Christ; and it is the twenty-second volume which has borne the title, *Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary on Bible School Lessons*. Both the author and the publishers sincerely trust that this volume will prove to be helpful to the many thousands of teachers and students who make use of it throughout the year.

THE AUTHOR.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LESSONS FOR 1967

FIRST QUARTER

The Church in Purpose.....	Lesson I—January 1	Eph. 3: 8-21
The Church in Promise.....	Lesson II—January 8	Matt. 16: 13-20
The Church, the Kingdom of God.....	Lesson III—January 15	Dan. 7: 13-22; Mark 9: 1; Luke 22: 18
The Church, the Called Out People of God.....	Lesson IV—January 22	Acts 2: 39-42; Rom. 1: 1-7
The Church, a Kingdom, Body, Temple and Bride.....	Lesson V—January 29	Matt. 6: 33; Eph. 1: 19-23; 1 Cor. 3: 16, 17; Eph. 2: 19-22; 5: 22-25
The Church and Salvation.....	Lesson VI—February 5	Acts 4: 8-12; Rom. 6: 1-10
The Importance of the Church.....	Lesson VII—February 12	Rom. 12: 4-8; Eph. 1: 7-10; Col. 2: 8-11
The Unity of the Church.....	Lesson VIII—February 19	1 Cor. 1: 10-17; Eph. 4: 1-6
The Marks of the True Church.....	Lesson IX—February 26	Acts 9: 3 1 ; - 1 Cor. 4: 14-17; Rev. 2: 1-7
The Church Identified.....	Lesson X—March 5	Acts 20: 28; Rom. 16: 16; 1 Thess. 2: 13-16; 2 Thess. 1: 3-6; 1 Tim. 3: 14-16
How to Enter the Church.....	Lesson XI—March 12	Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 37-47
How to Live in the Church.....	Lesson XII—March 19	1 Cor. 3: 1-6; Heb. 5: 11-14; 2 Pet. 1: 5-11
The Church in Heaven.....	Lesson XIII—March 26	John 14: 1-3; 2 Cor. 5: 1-10; Heb. 12: 22-24

SECOND QUARTER

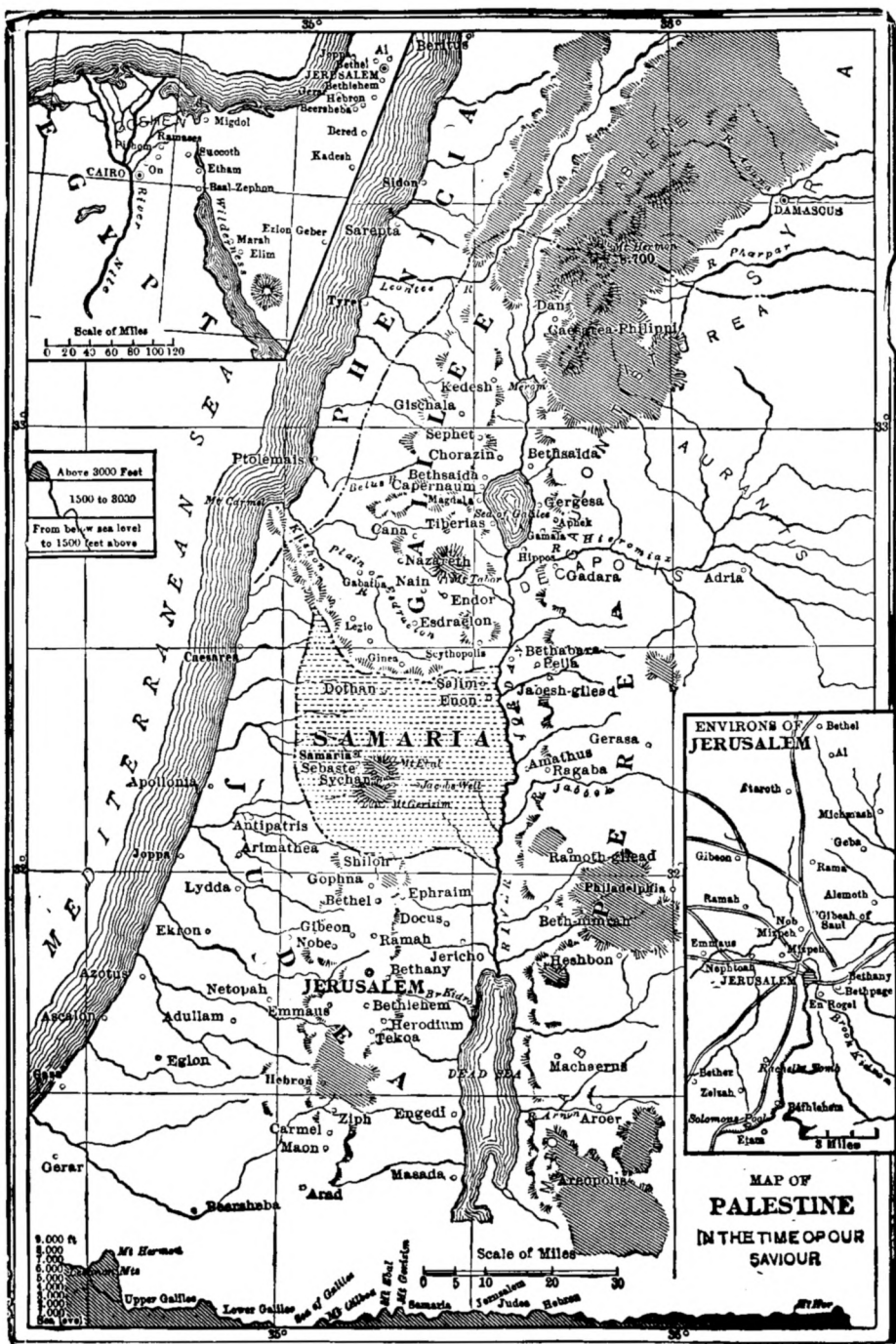
The Establishment of the Church.....	Lesson I—April 2	Luke 24: 48, 49; Acts 1: 12-14; 2: 1-4, 14-16, 37-42
Liberality in the Early Church.....	Lesson II—April 9	Acts 2: 43-47; 4: 32-37
Persecution of the Church.....	Lesson III—April 16	Acts 4: 1-4, 13-22
A Problem in the Early Church.....	Lesson IV—April 23	Acts 6: 1-8
The Early Church Dispersed.....	Lesson V—April 30	Acts 7: 54-60; 8: 1-5
Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch.....	Lesson VI—May 7	Acts 8: 26-40
The Conversion of Saul.....	Lesson VII—May 14	Acts 9: 1-19
First Gentile Converts.....	Lesson VIII—May 21	Acts 10: 1-8, 24-27, 44-48
Paul's First Missionary Journey.....	Lesson IX—May 28	Acts 11: 19-21; 13: 1-12
Paul's Second Missionary Journey.....	Lesson X—June 4	Acts 15: 36-41; 16: 1-10
A Jailor Converted.....	Lesson XI—June 11	Acts 16: 19-34
Paul's Third Missionary Journey.....	Lesson XII—June 18	Acts 18: 23; 19: 8-10; 21: 7-16
Paul, the Prisoner for Christ.....	Lesson XIII—June 25	Acts 20: 17-25; 24: 10-14; 25: 9-12

THIRD QUARTER

	Lesson I—July 2	
The Death of Moses.....		Deut. 34: 1-12
	Lesson II—July 9	
Joshua, Moses' Successor.....		Josh. 1: 1-9
	Lesson III—July 16	
Crossing the Jordan.....		Josh. 3: 5-17
	Lesson IV—July 23	
Sin of Achan.....		Josh. 6: 17-19; 7: 1, 16-21, 25, 26
	Lesson V—July 30	
God's Great Patience with Israel.....		Judg. 2: 7-19
	Lesson VI—August 6	
The Army of Gideon.....		Judg. 7: 1-8
	Lesson VII—August 13	
The Call of Samuel.....		1 Sam. 3: 1-13, 19, 20
	Lesson VIII—August 20	
Samuel, the Judge.....		1 Sam. 7: 3-17
	Lesson IX—August 27	
Israel Demands a King.....		1 Sam. 8: 1-10
	Lesson X—September 3	
Saul Rejected as King.....		1 Sam. 15: 10-23
	Lesson XI—September 10	
David Anointed King.....		1 Sam. 16: 4-13
	Lesson XII—September 17	
Nathan Rebukes David.....		2 Sam. 12: 1-10
	Lesson XIII—September 24	
The Last Words of David.....		2 Sam. 23: 1-7; 1 Kings 2: 1-4

FOURTH QUARTER

	Lesson I—October 1	
The Word Becomes Flesh.....		John 1: 1-14
	Lesson II—October 8	
The New Birth.....		John 3: 1-12
	Lesson III—October 15	
Jesus and the Samaritan Woman.....		John 4: 7-26
	Lesson IV—October 22	
Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand.....		John 6: 1-14
	Lesson V—October 29	
Healing of a Blind Man.....		John 9: 1-9, 24, 25, 35-38
	Lesson VI—November 5	
The Good Shepherd		John 10: 1-16
	Lesson VII—November 12	
The Raising of Lazarus from the Dead.....		John 11: 32-44
	Lesson VIII—November 19	
A Lesson in Humility.....		John 13: 1-14
	Lesson IX—November 26	
Heavenly Mansions.....		John 14: 1-10
	Lesson X—December 3	
The Vine and the Branches.....		John 15: 1-10
	Lesson XI—December 10	
Jesus Prays for His Disciples.....		John 17: 14-26
	Lesson XII—December 17	
Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus.....		John 19: 4-9, 14-18, 25-30
	Lesson XIII—December 24	
The Resurrection of Jesus.....		John 20: 1-10, 19-23
	Lesson XIV—December 31	
Jesus and Peter.....		John 21: 1-17



Scale of Miles
 0 20 40 60 80 100 120

Above 3000 Feet
 1500 to 3000
 From below sea level
 to 1500 feet above



MAP OF
PALESTINE
 IN THE TIME OF OUR
 SAVIOUR

9,000 ft
 8,000
 7,000
 6,000
 5,000
 4,000
 3,000
 2,000
 1,000
 Sea level

Mt Hermon
 Mt S
 Upper Galilee

Lower Galilee Sea of Galilee Mt. Olives Mt. Scopus Samaritan Samaria Jerusalem Judaea Galilee

Scale of Miles
 0 5 10 20 30

FIRST QUARTER

THE CHURCH—IN PROMISE AND FACT

AIM.—To study thoroughly the origin, doctrine and practice of the New Testament church.

Lesson I—January 1, 1967

THE CHURCH IN PURPOSE

Lesson Text

Eph. 3: 8-21

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gen-tiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

9 And to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things;

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly *places* might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God,

11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Je'-sus our Lord:

12 In whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him.

13 Wherefore I ask that ye may not faint at my tribulations for you, which are your glory.

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father,

15 From whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man;

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 May be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

19 And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God.

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

21 Unto him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Je'-sus unto all generations for ever and ever. A-men'.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3: 11.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Isa. 2: 1-4.

Daily Bible Readings

December 26.	M.....	Purpose Established by Counsel (Prov. 20: 16-18)
December 27.	T.....	A Time for Every Purpose (Eccles. 3: 1-6)
December 28.	W.....	Purpose of Heart (Acts 11: 23-26)
December 29.	T.....	Purpose of Jehovah (Isa. 19: 16-19)
December 30.	F.....	Purpose for Everything (Prov. 16: 1-4)
December 31.	S.....	God's Eternal Purpose (Eph. 3: 8-21)
January 1.	S.....	Call According to His Purpose (Rom. 8: 26-30)

TIME.—Ephesians was written in A.D. 62.

PLACE.—The place of writing was Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

Introduction

The last two and one half centuries of the Christian era have been pre-eminently characterized by de-

nominations and denominationalism. This condition has resulted in great confusion with reference to the New

Testament meaning and use of the term "church." It is true, as a matter of fact, that there are but relatively few people today who, always and under all circumstances, employ the term *church* in its strictly Biblical sense; while the great majority of those who do employ the expression constantly use it in senses which are entirely foreign to the Scriptures.

The confusion regarding the meaning and use of the word "church" grows out of the common, and not altogether unnatural, tendency of men to form their conception of Bible terms, not from the Bible itself, but from the circumstances and usages which are current among the people around them. The average person seems to regard his religious environment as the criterion for determining the contents of the Bible; but if one will only stop and familiarize himself with the Scriptures, he will soon see that there is often a wide difference between that which is actually in the Bible, and present-day religious environment.

It is the purpose of the lessons of this quarter, and the next one, as has already been pointed out in the "aim," to make a thorough study of the origin, doctrine, and practice of the church revealed in the New Testament; and if we do this we should begin with a careful consideration of the meaning and use of the term "church" itself. This can best be accomplished by ascertaining the senses in which Christ and the apostles employed the word.

The original term for "church" is *ekklesia*, a word which was well known by the Greek-speaking people of the time of Christ and the apostles; and it should be observed that the word never had any religious significance as it was employed by them. It literally meant the *called-out ones*, or an *assembly*; and it was applied to any body of people who were called out and gathered together for any purpose. Or, to state the same thing in another way, there was nothing about the original word which indicated the character of the assembly. It might have been religious, political, or an unorganized mob. The term was twice applied to the mob in Ephesus, once to the proconsular court, and once to the congregation of the Israelites in the

wilderness. (See Acts 19: 32, 39, 41; 7: 38.) Thus, the *kind* of church which is under consideration must always be determined by the context, that is, whether it was a church of God or a church of men.

The first time the word "church" occurs in the Bible is in Matt. 16: 18, where Jesus said that he would build, that is *found* or *establish* (see Thayer), his *ekklesia* (church). The practical meaning of the Lord's statement is that he would call his people together and constitute them into an assembly, to be known as the people of God, in contrast with the people of the world. (Cf. John 10: 16; 15: 18, 19; 17: 14-16; 1 Pet. 2: 9.) Robertson (*Word pictures in the New Testament*) notes that the term *ekklesia* originally meant "assembly," but that it came to mean an "unassembled assembly," as in Acts 8: 3. The people of God during the age of Moses were God's church (*ekklesia*) for that period (Acts 7: 38), and they had the Old Testament Scriptures as their law; and, in like manner, the people of God during the age of Christ are his church (*ekklesia*) for this period (see 1 Cor. 15: 9; 1 Tim. 3: 14, 15; of Heb. 3: 1-6), and we have the New Testament Scriptures as our law. (Read Gal. 3: 15-4: 7 for the contrast between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ.)

In the light of that which has just been said, the church of Christ is the people who heed his call through the gospel, and thereby become his subjects, his people, or his body. (Cf. Mark 16: 15, 16; 2 Thess. 2: 13, 14; Acts 2: 47; Col. 3: 15.) The people of the Lord are not called together in a literal or physical sense, as was the uproarious assembly in Ephesus, or the Israelites in the wilderness. Those who belong to Christ are a spiritual body; they were called out of the world, and separated from the world, in a spiritual sense. And if any one still wonders why the term "church" was and is applied to the Lord's people in this age, it will be well for him to consider the fact that the word "church" is not the only term which is used to designate God's people in Christ. They are also referred to as a "kingdom," a "flock," a "house," a "temple," a "bocty," et cetera. But inasmuch as

the Lord's people are called *out of* and separated *from* the world in a spiritual sense, the term "church" was and is applied to them because

it accurately describes this *spiritually called-out* feature of the body of Christ. (Cf. 1 Pet. 2: 9; Col. 1: 13; Rom. 6: 16-18.)

The Golden Text

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

The Text Explained

Paul's Commission to Preach the Mystery of the Church to the Gentiles (Eph. 3: 8-13)

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things; to the intent that now unto the principalities and tye powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him. Wherefore I ask that ye may not faint at my tribulations for you, which are your glory.

Those who study these lessons should, by all means, read the seven verses which precede the text just quoted, before beginning this study. No one can give careful consideration to the first three chapters of Ephesians, without realizing that Jesus Christ is the central fact in history. The incarnation was unprecedented, and his virgin birth made him the only absolutely unique person in the annals of time. Prior to the coming of God's Son to the earth, the history of the human race had been almost wholly characterized by sin and alienation from Jehovah. But man was created in the Divine image, and God was not willing to abandon him to an eternal death, without a supreme effort to save him. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18-21.)

The desire to rescue mankind from the power of the evil one is the background against which God's purpose in Christ was formed. This purpose is also called the "purpose of the ages," as may be seen by reading the marginal note. This purpose was gradually unfolded during the

preceding dispensations; but it was not until the coming of Christ that it reached its full fruition. (Cf. Rom. 10: 4.) This is the truth which Paul affirms in the first twelve verses of the third chapter of Ephesians.

It is also clear from the verses just referred to that, in the economy of God, Christ and the church are inseparably bound together. This is to say that God's eternal purpose in Christ, so far as this world is concerned, is accomplished in and through the church. The apostle Paul declares that the manifold, that is, the many-sided or much-variegated, wisdom of God is displayed through or by means of the church; the material universe declares the glory of God (Psalm 19: 1, 2), and, in a similar manner, the church is the "theatre" (of. 1 Cor. 4: 9) where God's multifarious wisdom is unfolded and displayed. The church is also called the "fulness," that is, the complement of Christ, or that which makes him complete. (See Eph. 1: 22, 23.) Any worthwhile study of God's purpose in Christ, therefore, must also include the church.

God's purpose in Christ is clearly stated in the following passage: "Making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth." (See Eph. 1: 9, 10.) This, in a word, is a statement of the revelation of God's plan for bringing all creation back into harmony with his will. The original word for "sum" is found in the New Testament only here and in Rom. 13: 9. The sense in which term is used in the passage just quoted is to bring all the rebellious elements of creation, including angels and men (of. Rom. 8: 18-22; Col. 1: 19, 20), under one head, namely, Christ; and this explains

why he was given such sweeping authority when he began his mediatorial reign. (Cf. Matt. 28: 18; 1 Pet. 3: 22.) God's purpose in Christ is also stated in Colossians 1, along with the results which were seen in those brethren. (See verses 19-23.) The reconciliation which God is seeking to achieve, especially with reference to men, is that which is accomplished through the gospel. (Cf. Rom. 1: 16, 17; Mark 16: 15, 16; 2 Cor. 5: 18-20.)

While God's purpose in Christ includes more than the human race, as we have already seen, our purpose in this study is to consider it only from the standpoint of mankind. God's aim, so far as the human race is concerned, is to gather all men into one body, group, or assembly, or, which is the same thing, the church, with Christ as the head. (Read again Eph. 1: 22, 23; 3: 9-12.) To sum up or gather in Christ therefore is equivalent to bringing all men into the church. And it should be further observed that God's purpose in gathering all things together in Christ, during the present dispensation, is to prepare them for his complete and universal rule in the eternal kingdom, where everything will again be subject to his will only. (Cf. Matt. 6: 10.) When once the work is completed and God's will is again supreme, discord can never again enter the new creation.

We have no means of knowing how long the Lord will continue his work of redemption; but we do know that it is to be accomplished before the end of the present age comes. (See 1 Cor. 15: 24-28.) The change which is mentioned in the passage just cited is in the *administration* of the kingdom, rather than in the kingdom itself: for the kingdom itself is eternal and will therefore never cease to exist. The mediatorial reign of Christ will come to an end, and God will then again become supreme in all things. The wicked and rebellious will be for ever separated from him. (See Rev. 20: 11-15; Matt. 13: 40-43.) The things which are said in this section of the lesson should give us some idea of the meaning of God's purpose and plan for the church which Christ established, and which will continue throughout the present dispensation.

(Cf. Dan. 2: 44; Matt. 16: 18; Heb. 12: 28.)

Jesus declares emphatically that no one can go the Father, except by him (John 14: 6); and this just as certainly implies that one must get into Christ, before he can be saved. (Cf. Gal. 3: 26, 27.) But to be in Christ is to be in his body which is the church; and it is there that the life of faithful service must be lived, if we are to gain the everlasting home. However, just because one is recognized by his fellows as a member of the church, it does not necessarily follow that he is in the favor of the Lord. (Cf. John 15: 1, 2; 2 Thess. 3: 6, 14, 15.) The "gospel net" may catch many kinds of men, and we may not always be able to distinguish between the good and the evil; but the time will come when the proper separation will be made. (See Matt. 13: 47-50.)

Paul's Prayer That His Readers Might Apprehend the Fulness of Their Life in the Church

(Eph. 3: 14-19)

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God.

The passage just quoted is one of the prayers of Paul which are contained in his epistles; and if we read his words carefully, it will be easy for us to see that the great apostle was praying for a definite blessing for those to whom he wrote. We may be inspired by the memory of Christ to think, speak, and do better, and we may, in a measure, succeed and get a great amount of pleasure from our resolution and endeavor; but we will never reach the center of Christian joy and hope and strength, until Christ dwells in our hearts by faith.

The life which pleases God is not that which observes outward forms only; but that which is characterized by purity and Christlike holiness in the inward man. This kind of spirituality has, in every age of the world, been in danger of extinction, through the pressure of material influences. In the words of another, "It is always the tendency of ordinary men to turn from the more refined and subtle beauty of the spiritual life and seek refuge in the tangible, the visible, the material, too often adopting, as the outward form, the product of some false extraneous idolatry, borrowed from a world that could no longer retain God in its thoughts." (Cf. the Jews and the nations about them; and the church and the things for worldly show.)

It was pointed out in the preceding section of this lesson that the purpose of God includes more than the human race, and the text of this section seems to confirm that idea. David Lipscomb, in commenting on verse 15, says, "The whole family—servants, angels, the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven, and Christians on earth—are one family named from the head and Father, God, as the human family takes its name from the head and father of the family."

One has only to read the New Testament in order to see that it is the desire and will of Christ that he dwell in the hearts of his people. (See John 14: 23; Rev. 3: 20; of Gal. 2: 20; 2 Cor. 13: 5.) The word "dwell" means "to live, to make one's abode or home, in contrast with a temporary or uncertain visit."

This indwelling is to be regarded as a plain and literal fact, and not simply an influence derived, but separable, from Christ. A dead Socrates may so influence, his followers, but that is not the way in which a living Christ influences his disciples. The same verb which we are now considering is also found in Col. 1: 19; 2: 9; and if one will compare the passage now before us with those references, he can easily learn the meaning and use of the word "dwell." It is the Father's will therefore that Christ should make his abode within us, never again to be compelled to knock at our heart's door, or have his claim disputed.

But how can Christ dwell in a

Christian's heart? The answer is, By faith (of. Rom. 10: 17; Gal. 4: 19), "until a mind and a life in complete harmony with the mind and life of Christ shall have been formed in you." (Thayer.) It should be easy for us to understand how the image of Christ can be formed in a person by teaching him the story of Jesus. We all know how certain people who come into our homes can change the whole atmosphere there, such as our speech and action; and that is exactly what Christ does when he takes up his abode with us. He affects our social intercourse and conversation; and shapes our business transactions, by shutting out the bad and bringing in the good, and by providing new standards and measurements; It is not even necessary for us to seek for these things; for they will come to us in the pathway of duty and loyalty to Christ.

When the Bible says that Christ dwells in the hearts of his people, the idea is not in our emotional nature alone; instead, he is to live in and rule our thoughts, feelings, and will, as well as our actions. Such a mastery of our lives will give us a clear conscience, and bring to us peace beyond our ability to understand. This kind of "indwelling" is not like a man abiding in a house, but not identified with it; it rather signifies that Christ takes possession of our being, and transforms it into his own likeness. This should give us some idea of what it means to be a member of the Lord's church. Those who are members of the church which Christ established and who are in good standing with the Lord, are being molded into his likeness, so that they will be prepared to dwell in that place which may be described as a prepared place for a prepared people. (Cf. John 14: 1-3.)

We should not overlook the prominence of faith in the New Testament Scriptures. (Cf. Heb. 11: 6; John 3: 18; 8: 24; Acts 16: 31.) That which one believes gives rise to his conduct, and his conduct results in his character. (Cf. Prov. 23: 7.) The late Edward Ward Carmack said, "An act often repeated, hardens into a habit; and a habit long continued, petrifies into character." The relation of faith and conduct is not only true in the matter of becoming a Christian; it is equally relevant to one's life as

a follower of Christ. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 7; 1 Pet. 1: 8.) Faith will bring Christ into one's heart; but it also requires faith to keep him there: for, as the apostle says, he dwells in our hearts by faith. But one may ask, What is faith? The practical answer, insofar as the thought of this lesson 19 concerned, is that we believe in Christ, trust him, rely upon him, have confidence in his word of promise, cleave to him, obey him. That is faith, and it is by such faith that he dwells in our hearts.

What are some of the things which we gain by this indwelling? (1) *Constancy*. What thoughtful Christian, who is trying to do his best, has not at some time in his life cried out, "Oh, that I were *always* what I am *sometimes!*" (Cf. Heb. 13: 8; 1 Cor. 15: 58.) (2) A better understanding and a greater vision—"strong to apprehend." Compare Acts 10: 34, where the same original word (perceive) is used. Peter's experience had enabled him to see the truth which he announced in Acts 10: 34, 35. Christianity has been defined as the reproduction of the life of Christ in the human heart; and we should ask ourselves, Is our perspective great enough to enable us to reproduce the life of our Lord on the tables of our hearts? (3) A knowledge of the love of Christ and the fulness of God. (See Eph. 3: 19.)

An Ascription of Praise to God for His Great Goodness toward Us

(Eph. 3: 20, 21)

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen.

Charles Hodge, in commenting on this section of the lesson text, notes that "Paul's prayer in the preceding verses had apparently reached a height beyond which neither faith, nor hope, nor even imagination could go, and yet he is not satisfied. An immensity still lay beyond. God was able to do not only what he had asked, but infinitely more than he knew how to ask or to think." And then, as *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* points out, superlatives are here piled one upon the other to impress us with the truth of God's ability, all of which the child of God so often fails to take advantage of. In the words of James, "Ye have not, because ye ask not." (James 4: 2.) God's great power is being "energized in us;" and his glory will continue to be manifested in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all eternity. May God help us to realize something of our privileges as is children!

Questions for Discussion

Why is it that there is so much confusion today regarding the meaning of the term "church"?

How do many people go about their consideration of the meaning of the word?

What is the principal purpose of the lessons of this and the next quarter?

What is the basic meaning of the term "church," so far as the New Testament is concerned?

Under what circumstances was the word first used in the New Testament?

What do we know about the "church" of the Old Testament?

What, then, is the church of Christ?

Why was the term "church" applied to God's people in Christ?

Paul's Commission to Preach the Mystery of the Church to the Gentiles

Why is it important to read Eph. 3: 1-7 before beginning the study of this lesson?

Why is the first part of Ephesians one of the greatest statements of truth on record?

What are some of the things that we learn there about the person of Christ?

What was the background against which God formed his great purpose in Christ?

When was that purpose fully revealed? Give reasons for your answer.

What do we learn here regarding the relationship of Christ and the church?

In what sense is God's wisdom made known through the church?

In what way does Paul express God's purpose in Christ?

What does that purpose involve?

What is the meaning of summing up all things in Christ?

What will happen with reference to the church when the work of redemption is finished?

Why is church membership so essential to our salvation?

Paul's Prayer That His Readers Might Apprehend the Fulness of Their Life in the Church

What was the principal theme of Paul's prayer for his readers here?

What is the nature of the life which must be lived in order to please God?

What is the usual tendency of people in this respect?

What or whom does the whole family of God include?

What does it mean for Christ to dwell in our hearts?

What lesson should we learn from this regarding church membership?
 What are some of the benefits derived from this indwelling?

An Ascription of Praise to God for His Great Goodness toward Us

In what way does the apostle Paul indi-

cate his feeling regarding the greatness of God?
 What does he say regarding his ability?
 What meaning should this have for the child of God?
 Why do we so often fail to receive his blessings?
 In what way should this affect our attitude toward prayer?

Lesson II—January 8, 1967

THE CHURCH IN PROMISE

Lesson Text

Matt. 16: 13-20

13 Now when Je'-sus came unto the parts of Caes-a-re'-a Phi-llp'-pi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is?

14 And they said, Some *say* John the Bap'-tist; some, E-li'-jah; and others, Jer-e-mi'-ah, or one of the prophets.

15 He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am?

16 And Si'-mon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Je'-sus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Si'-mon Bar-Jo'-nah: for flesh and blood hath

not revealed it unto thee, but my Fa-ther who is in heaven.

18 And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Ha'-des shall not prevail against it.

19 I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

20 Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."* (1 Cor. 3: 11.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Mic. 4: 1-4.

Daily Bible Readings

January 2. M.....	Promise of the Church (Matt. 16: 13-21)
January 3. T.....	Tabernacle of David (Acts 15: 14-18)
January 4. W.....	Except Jehovah Builds (Psalm 127: 1-4)
January 5. T.....	House of Zion (Psalm 69: 32-36)
January 6. F.....	God Fulfils His Promise (Josh. 21: 43-45)
January 7. S.....	Promise of Blessing (Prov. 3: 1-10)
January 8. S.....	Promise of a Kingdom (Dan. 2: 44; Matt. 16: 19)

Time.—Probably A.D. 29.

PLACE.—The parts of Caesarea Philippi.

PERSONS.—Jesus and his disciples.

Introduction

In the study at this time last week, the question of God's purpose regarding the church was considered; and now we have the promise of Christ to build or establish the church. When the events which are contained in the lesson text were taking place, Jesus knew that his earthly ministry, insofar as the people were concerned, was rapidly drawing to a close. He had spent

about three years in his work in a public manner; and he realized that the time had arrived when he should give some special attention to the training of his disciples, and especially the perfecting of their faith. They had been his constant followers during the greater part of the past two years (they were not with him all the time during the first year of his ministry); and they were the

ones whom he intended to send out to preach the gospel wherever men were found. This meant that it was very essential that these men be made to rise above the vague and earthly conceptions regarding his person and purpose, which characterized the people, generally speaking.

The apostles of Christ were to become the "earthen vessels" of the gospel of truth, and it was therefore necessary that a great disclosure be made to them, as soon as they were prepared to receive it, namely, his suffering and death in Jerusalem, and his resurrection from the dead. It was on the occasion of the lesson now in hand that Jesus began the task of clarifying the minds of the disciples, by asking them some direct questions. The first one was with reference to the multitudes, while the second one concerned the disciples themselves. It appears quite evident that the first question was primarily intended to prepare the minds of the apostles for the one which was addressed directly to them. The answer to the first question gave the thinking of the multitudes, while the answer to the sec-

ond was the confession of one who had passed the boundary which separates those who know the Lord from those who do not know him. Peter's reply, as we shall see later, drew from Jesus both a benediction and a great disclosure.

When Jesus made known the fact that he was going to build his church, he was dealing with the "rock" and "key" of Christianity. The church, if it is going to function according to the divine purpose, must have a solid foundation; and it must offer protection to all who enter it and remain faithful to the Lord. And, too, if men are to enjoy the kind of fellowship which is pleasing to the Lord, the door which leads into the church must be opened; and it was to Peter that that authority was given. The establishment of the church required the death of Jesus, a matter which he explained to his disciples in the paragraph which immediately follows the lesson text, and which should be read in connection with this study. The Lord made the further disclosure that only those who follow Christ can be the beneficiaries of his great sacrifice.

The Golden Text

"For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The context in which the words just quoted are found may be described as the proper estimate of God's ministers, or, which is the same thing, the work which God expects of those who preach the gospel of Christ. The immediate context reads as follows: "According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be

saved; yet so as through fire." (1 Cor. 3: 10-15.)

The grace of God which was given to Paul was the special endowment for his apostolic work (of. Eph. 3: 1-9), and which made it possible for him to be a wise masterbuilder. The original word for "masterbuilder" is *architektōn*, from which we have our word *architect*; and it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The term "wise" is used in the sense of being skillful or experienced. Thus, as a fully equipped architect, Paul had laid the foundation for the church in Corinth, when he preached the gospel of Christ there. This foundation, he explains, is Jesus Christ; and the meaning is substantially the same as that found in Matt. 16: 18, where Jesus told Peter that he would build his church upon the "rock" of truth, which the apostle had just confessed. It should be observed, however, that two different figures are used in the two passages, namely, (1) in Matthew, Jesus is represented as the builder, and the

truth regarding his deity is the foundation; (2) in First Corinthians, Paul is the architect, and Jesus Christ, that is, the truth regarding him, is the foundation.

Inasmuch as the work of laying the foundation has been done, and cannot be changed, the important thing to consider is that which is done in building upon it; for it is in this respect that the church can be that which God's purposed and planned for it. If teachers and preachers are careful to teach only that which is written, then God's people will speak the same thing, and will be found doing that which

the Lord has ordained for them. But when men begin to speculate and depart from the original doctrine, division and all kinds of trouble will be the inevitable result. There is no wonder therefore that Paul exhorted, "But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon." Perhaps the most impressive example of this responsibility is found in Matt. 7: 21-23, where Jesus said that he would banish from him, in the day of judgment, all who taught or practiced anything which he himself had not authorized. The term "iniquity," in the passage just referred to, means to act without authority.

The Text Explained

Questions and Answers
(Matt. 16: 13-16)

Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

The town which was known as "Caesarea Philippi" during the time of Christ was before known as *Pan-neas*, so called from the Greek god Pan. It was located at the foot of Mount Hermon, on the main source of the river Jordan. It was the scene of a decisive battle in 200 B.C., when the Seleucid ruler Antiochus III wrested Palestine and some adjoining territory from the Ptolemies (the kings of Egypt). Herod the Great built a marble temple there in honor of Augustus Caesar, who had given him the town; and then later on Herod's son, Philip the tetrarch, further adorned the town and changed its name to Caesarea, in honor of the emperor. There was another "Caesarea" on the seacoast (see map), and in order to distinguish the city which Philip rebuilt from the coastal city of the same name, he added *Philippi*, that is, "of Philip." Agrippa II rebuilt the city during the reign of Nero, and gave it the name of *Neronias*; but that name was soon forgotten. Its present name is *Banias*. It is interesting to observe that the "parts of Caesarea

Philippi" was the most northern point mentioned in the travels of Jesus.

Luke says that as Jesus "was praying apart," the disciples being with him, he asked them about his identity. (See Luke 9: 18ff.) It should be noted that he did not ask them what the Pharisees, scribes, and other Jewish leaders thought about him; but rather, how did the common people regard him. The people of Nazareth and the ruling class of the Jews had frequently registered their opposition to him; but at the time of this lesson he asked his disciples to tell him what the popular views were concerning him. It appears that the principal purpose of this question was to prepare the minds of the disciples for the question which he next addressed to them.

We gather from the record that the disciples knew how the general public felt toward Jesus; and they immediately told him. Some of the people thought that Jesus was John the Baptist, risen from the dead. This was also the view of Herod. (See Matt. 14: 1, 2.) Some, that he was Elijah, and they may have drawn their conclusion from the closing prophecy of the Old Testament. (See Mal. 4: 5, 6.) There were others who thought that Jeremiah or "one of the old prophets" (Luke 9: 19) had been raised from the dead. Moses had predicted the coming of a prophet, who would be like unto him (Acts 3: 22); and it may be *that* there were those who thought that one of the old prophets would ap-

pear to usher in the advent of the Messiah, that is, the Christ. (Cf. John 1: 21.)

It is well to note that, although the multitudes differed as to the exact identity of Jesus, they all agreed that he was no ordinary man or teacher; their unanimous decision was that he had been sent from heaven. It is also clearly implied that none of the people about whom the disciples spoke regarded Jesus as being the promised Messiah; all of their ideas regarding his identity were retrospective.

The disciples themselves had been with Jesus as his constant companions for about two years; and they had had therefore ample time to form a correct judgment regarding him. Jesus had selected these men to be his ambassadors, but they could not function in that capacity, unless they firmly believe that he was the Christ. That was the purpose for which they were being trained; and the time had come when it should be known regarding the progress which had been made.

Peter who was usually the first to speak answered for the others, as well as for himself; and his answer contains two propositions, namely, (1) his Messiahship, as the son of David, the human side; and (2) the Son of God, or his deity. Peter's confession was not made in the terms of the answer to the first question: it is not, we say, or I say, But, Thou art! This is the confession which people must make today, if they are to be pleasing in the sight of God. Jesus must be recognized and acknowledged as the Christ, that is, the promised Messiah, and the Son of the living God.

The Lord's Reply to Peter

(Matt. 16: 17-19)

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed are thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt

loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

The expression "Bar-Jonah" means *son of Jonah*. Peter was greatly favored of God, hence, "Blessed art thou!" This was a beatitude for Simon. He had confessed a truth which no human mind could conceive; only God could reveal it unto him. Jesus accepted Peter's confession as being true, and he thereby, in effect, stated his own claim to be the Messiah whom the Jews were expecting, as well as the Son of God. God had revealed this truth to Peter through the words and works of Jesus, and it is quite possible that the Lord's reference was also to the statement which his Father made at the time of his baptism by John the Baptist, namely, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (See Matt. 3: 17.)

The point of comparison, which is indicated by the expression of Jesus, "I also," is this: Peter had made his declaration with reference to Jesus, and then Jesus, in turn, did the same thing with reference to Peter, that is, he made a declaration with reference to him. The emphasis is not on "thou art Peter," as over against "Thou art the Christ," but on "I also." The Father has revealed to you one truth, and *I also* will reveal to you another truth.

There are three words in the passage now before us which should be carefully defined, before attempting an explanation of it, namely, "Peter," "rock," and "church." Peter is the Greek *Petros* (masculine), and means a detached rock or a single stone; *rock* is feminine, and means an unmovable ledge or bed-rock. The term "church" (*ekklesia*) is compounded from the Greek preposition *ek* (out of) and the verb *kaleo* (to call or summon). Peter was only a single stone, but the confession which he had just made, that is, the truth which he had just confessed, was like a mighty bed-rock upon which a building could be erected; and that was precisely what Jesus proposed to do. The original word for "I will build" is *oikodomēsō*, the future of *oikodomēō*. The Greek word for "house" is *oikos*, and it is easy to see the term "house" in *oikodomēsō*. It is as if Jesus had said, "I will constitute those who respond to my call through the gospel (of 2

Thess. 2: 13, 14) into my house or household (of. 1 Tim. 3: 14, 15)."

Jesus came into the world to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19: 10), and he told Peter, on the occasion now under consideration, just how he was going to accomplish that work. The entire enterprise is based upon the truth of his Messiahship, that is, the truth which Peter had just confessed. Those who are saved are compared to a building which is erected upon a solid foundation (of. Luke 6: 48). Later on Christ authorized his disciples to preach the gospel to every creature; and all who respond to that message are separated *from* the evil one and *unto* Christ, who built them into a spiritual house. (Cf. 1 Pet. 2: 5; Eph. 2: 19-22.) Luke tells us that those who were being saved daily were "added" to the number (that is, the church) who had already been saved. (See Acts 2: 47.) Thus, the church and the saved are one and the same.

The first time that the word "church" occurs in the New Testament is in the passage now before us. The term was not coined by Christ or the apostles, but was in general use by the Greek-speaking people at that time. The word *ek-klesia* never had any religious significance among the Greeks; it literally meant *the called out ones* or *an assembly*; and it was applied to any body of people who were called out and gathered together for any purpose. There was nothing about the original word which indicated the character of the assembly. It might have been religious, political, or an unorganized mob. The term was applied twice to the mob in Ephesus, once to the proconsular court, and once to the people of God in the wilderness. (See Acts 19: 32, 39, 41; 7: 38.) Thus, the *kind* of church which is referred to must always be determined by the context; other terms and circumstances will reveal whether the reference is to a church of the Lord, or a church of men.

The people of God, during the age of Moses, were God's church (*ek-klesia*) for that period (Acts 7: 38); and they had the Old Testament as their law. And in a similar manner, the people of God, during the age of Christ, are his church (*ekklesia*) for this period (1 Cor. 15: 9; 1 Tim. 3:

15; of. Heb. 3: 1-6); and they have the New Testament for their law.

In the expression "and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it," the pronoun "it" is in the feminine gender; and if the word had been translated "her" instead of "it," there would have been no difficulty in understanding what Jesus meant by the expression, that is, what *Hades* would not be able to do. In the words of Thayer, "Not even the gates of Hades—than which nothing was supposed to be stronger—shall surpass the church in strength." "The powers of Hades shall not succeed against it." (Moffatt.) "And the powers of the underworld shall never overthrow it." (Williams.) "And the might of Hades shall not triumph over it." (Weymouth.) Other references to the same idea are Dan. 2: 44 and Heb. 12: 28.

In the imagery which Christ presents, Hades is pictured as a walled city waging war against the church. The gates of the walled cities of those days symbolized their power, inasmuch as it was through the gates that the military forces issued forth. Hades is the place of the dead between death and the resurrection; and the practical meaning of the passage now under consideration is that death would never be able to destroy the church. Thus, the perpetuity of the church during the Christian dispensation is guaranteed by the divine will.

Meyer, in commenting on this statement by Jesus, says, "So securely will I build my church upon this rock, *that the gates of Hades will not be able to resist it*, will not prove stronger than it; indicating by means of a comparison, the great strength and stability of the edifice of the church, even when confronted with so powerful a structure as that of Hades, the gates of which, strong as they are, will yet not prove to be stronger than the building of the church."

In speaking of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, Jesus was continuing the figure of a building. It has already been pointed out that the church or kingdom is spoken of as a house, and the Lord promised Peter the keys, or the authority and the privilege, to open its doors. That which Jesus called the "church" in verse 18, he referred to as the "king-

dom" in verse 19. The two terms are used interchangeably, the church signifying the "called out" feature of the Lord's people; while the kingdom has reference to the idea of their "government."

The authority to bind and loose on earth, with the promise that such action would be recognized in heaven, was not limited to Peter; the same language was also addressed to the other apostles. (See John 20: 21-23; of. Matt. 18: 18.) But there is this difference to be noted, namely, Peter was given the added responsibility of opening the door of faith, or, which is the same thing, of preaching the first gospel sermon to both Jews and Gentiles; and thereby laying down the conditions whereby they could become members of the church which Jesus builded, or the kingdom which he established. (See Acts, chapters 2 and 10.) To bind means to pronounce a man as being unworthy of a place in the kingdom; while to *loose* signifies that he has been freed from all things which would prevent his becoming a member of the church. Peter, and all of the apostles, of course, were guided by the Holy Spirit in their work in this respect. (Cf. Acts 2: 1-4.)

The truth which is contained in the promise which the Lord made to Peter, the other apostles, and the church (congregation) should be carefully considered by all of God's

people today; for there is only one way for people to enter the church, and only one rule by which Christians can please the Lord, and that is by following the teaching which is contained in the New Testament. It is both deceptive and wrong to lead people into thinking that they do not have to follow, rigidly, that which the Lord has authorized as his rule for becoming Christians and living the Christian life.

A Caution Against a Premature Disclosure

(Matt. 16: 20)

Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.

There were two principal reasons for not telling the truth about Christ at the time of this lesson, namely, (1) the people themselves were not ready for it; and (2) the apostles were not prepared for it, that is, they were not yet inspired for revealing that tremendous truth. Christ himself had not died, and his resurrection, the crowning proof of his Messiahship had not, of course, become a reality. The great work of proclaiming the full truth regarding Christ began on the following Pentecost, when everything regarding his mediatorial reign could be disclosed. (Cf. Luke 24: 48, 49; Acts 2: 14-36.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Discuss the difference between the church *in purpose* and the church *in promise*.

Why did Jesus evidently feel it essential to give special attention to his disciples at the time of this lesson?

In what sense were the apostles to become "earthen vessels" of the gospel of truth?

How did Jesus go about clarifying the minds of the disciples at the time of this lesson?

With what was Jesus dealing when he made known the fact that he was going to build his church?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of the golden text spoken?

In what way was the apostle Paul prepared to be a "masterbuilder"?

How did he go about laying the foundation for the church in Corinth?

What is the important lesson for us to learn from the golden text for today?

Why cannot another foundation be laid?

Questions and Answers

Where was Caesarea Philippi located and what are some known facts regarding the city?

Under what circumstances did Jesus address the questions of this lesson to the disciples?

How did the multitudes feel about him and why?

In what did all the people unite regarding Jesus?

Why would the disciples have a better idea regarding Jesus than the people?

What was the answer which came from the disciples and why, apparently, did Peter give it?

What two propositions did Peter's answer contain and why are they both essential to a complete answer?

The Lord's Reply to Peter

Why did Jesus address Simon as "Bar-Jonah" and why was he described as "blessed"?

Why was it essential that the truth which Peter confessed come to him from the Father?

What is the force of the Lord's expression "I also" in his reply to Peter?

What great truth did Jesus reveal to Peter at this time?
 Discuss the meanings of the terms "Peter," "rock," and "church."
 What great idea was behind the Lord's promise to build his church?
 What are some of the uses of the term "church" in the New Testament?
 In what sense would the "gates of Hades" not prevail against the church?
 What is the meaning of giving the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" to Peter?
 What is the meaning of "bind" and

"loose" on earth with heaven's approval?
 What important lesson does this have for people today?

A Caution Against a Premature Disclosure

Why did Jesus prohibit his disciples from telling others that he was the Christ?
 When did the full truth regarding the mediatorial reign of Christ become known?

Lesson III—January 15, 1967

THE CHURCH, THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Lesson Text

Dan 7: 13-22; Mark 9: 1; Luke 22: 18

13 I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

15 As for me, Dan'iel, my spirit was grieved in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me.

16 I came near unto one of them that stood by and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.

17 These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, that shall arise out of the earth.

18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

19 Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was diverse from all of them,

exceeding terrible, whose teeth were of iron, and its nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet;

20 And concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, and before which three fell, even that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake great things, whose look was more stout than its fellows.

21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;

22 Until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power.

18 For I say unto you, I shall not drink from henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

Golden Text.—"But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." (1 Pet. 2: 9.)

Devotional Reading.—Dan. 2: 31-45.

Daily Bible Readings

- January 9. M.....Kingdom Appointed (Luke 22: 24-3(1)
- January 10. T.....Prophecy of Kingdom (Dan. 7: 13, 14)
- January 11. W.....Kingdom at Hand (Mark 9: 1; Matt. 3: 1-6)
- January 12. T.....Entrance into the Kingdom (John 3: 1-8)
- January 13. F.....Worthy of the Kingdom (2 Thess. 1: 1-5)
- January 14. S.....Gospel of the Kingdom (Acts 28: 23-31)
- January 15. S.....Church, Kingdom the Same (Matt. 16: 18, 19)

TIME.—Daniel, 555 B.C.; Mark and Luke, A.D. 29.

PLACES.—Daniel, Babylon; Mark, near Caesarea Philippi; Luke, Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Daniel, Jesus, and the disciples.

Introduction

It has frequently been pointed out in these studies that the church and the kingdom of Christ are two names or designations for the same thing. The people of God are referred to both as the church and the kingdom. This was clearly stated in the lesson for last week, namely, "And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 16: 18, 19.) That which is called the church in verse 18, is referred to as the kingdom in verse 19. The "church" emphasizes the called out feature, while the *kingdom* has reference to government.

In commenting on the idea just stated, Nichol and Whiteside make this observation: "Those who try to make a distinction between church and kingdom, because the words have different meanings, are illogical. The idea of government does not reside in the Greek word *ekklesia*, "church." It is applied to the people of God, because they are a body of people called out of sin into holiness of life. This body of people must have government. Being ruled by Christ the King, they are a kingdom. (Col. 1: 13; Rev. 1: 9.) As a body of people called out of sin it is an ek-

klēsia, or church; as an organism, it is the body of Christ; as a government, it is a kingdom." (Sound Doctrine, Vol. 3, p. 18.) The essential elements of a kingdom are (1) a king, (2) subjects, (3) law, and (4) territory. In the case now before us, Christ is the King, his people whom he has redeemed from sin are his subjects, the new covenant is his law, and the territory is wherever Christians are found. (Cf. John 17: 14-16.)

It was the original purpose of God that he be the sole Ruler of all the people of the earth; but when Satan succeeded in alienating the head of the race from the Creator, a separation from God was inevitable. Any one who is familiar with the history of the Bible is aware of the fact that the longer men lived upon the earth, the further they departed from the way of righteousness. God is a God of love, and he is not willing that the people who owe their life to him should be eternally lost. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 9.) This was the reason behind his plan for saving the race. This plan is comprehensive enough to include all men; but only those who are willing to accept the divine offer will be permitted to enjoy the salvation. (Cf. Heb. 2: 9; 5: 8, 9.) God sent his Son to make possible the salvation in question; and all who are willing to accept it become members of the church, his body, or, which is the same thing, his kingdom.

The Golden Text

"But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession " This is one of the many examples in the New Testament where the Lord's people are referred to from different points of view. All Christians are God's people (of. Tit. 2: 14), and they are a race or nation of people, who have been made into a kingdom; and because they are priests in a kingdom, they are called a royal priesthood. (Cf. Rev. 1: 6.) The entire verse from which the golden text for today's lesson is taken is

rendered by Phillips in these words: "But you are God's 'chosen generation,' his 'royal priesthood,' his 'holy nation,' his 'peculiar people'—all the old titles of God's people now belong to you. It is for you now to demonstrate the goodness of him who has called you out of darkness into his amazing light."

That which is contained in the passage just quoted has been described as a fourfold calling, or a representation of four different aspects of the Lord's people. (1) An elect race, that is, a body of people

with a new and common life and descent; (2) *a royal priesthood*, that is, a new kind of service; (3) *a holy nation*, that is, a new relationship with the world (of. Num. 23: 9); and (4) *a people for God's own possession*, that is, a new relationship with God (of. Isa. 43: 21). The last passage cited says, "The people which I formed for myself, that they might set forth my praise." This is enough to show that God expects more of his people than nominal membership in the church; or, to express the same thing in another way, "Ye are . . . that ye may."

The Interpreter's Bible (*in loco*) points out that the church of the New Testament is a spiritual reality, with a spiritual purpose. All of the terms which are used to designate the Lord's people, in the passage now under consideration, apply to all of the members alike; there is no distinction between the so-called clergy and laity. All members of

the church, or citizens of the kingdom, are associated together by reason of the common calling and common life; they are destined to reveal and fulfil God's purpose for the entire human race. (Cf. Eph. 1: 22, 23, where the church is spoken of as the fulness, that is, the complement of Christ.) The Lord's people are under commission to be a kingly community of persons who mediate, as it were, between God and man; and who worshipfully make God central in their life, while using their gifts for the service of mankind. Although they come from many tongues, nations, and lands, their conversion to Christ has made them one; and they are set apart in this unity to become, as the Speaker's Bible notes, "the world-unifying, world-comprehending and world-glorifying society in which humanity will realize its true ideals and know the plenitude of life."

The Text Explained

A Vision of the Ancient of Days,
the Son of Man, and the Kingdom
(Dan. 7: 13, 14)

I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

The seventh chapter of Daniel has been referred to as one of the great prophetic statements of the Bible; and we may add that its importance is as significant as its greatness. Any one who understands the seventh chapter of Daniel, will also be able to see many other great truths of the Sacred Volume. It is always important for those who study the Bible to be familiar with the context of any Passage which may be under consideration; and it is for this reason that the entire seventh chapter of the book now before us should be read.

The "ancient of days" is referred to and, to some extent, described in the paragraph immediately preceding the portion of the lesson text

now before us. "I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit: his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and the wheels thereof burning fire. And a fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousands of thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld at that time because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake; I beheld even till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed, and it was given to be burned with fire. And for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time." (Dan. 7: 9-12; of. Rev. 4: 1-11; 20: 11-15.)

The "ancient of days," in the passage now before us, is clearly Jehovah; the "one like unto a son of man" is Christ; and the "clouds of heaven" are those which the apostles saw, when Jesus ascended to heaven. (Acts 1: 9-11.) The passage just referred to reads as follows: "And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of

their sight. And while they were looking steadfastly into heaven as he went, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven."

The kingdom which the Son received from the Ancient of Days, that is, the One who inhabits eternity (Isa. 57: 15), is referred to in Luke 19: 11ff., namely, "And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." (Read Luke 19: 11-27.) When all the facts of the passage now under consideration are taken together, the picture is as follows: After Christ had finished his work here upon the earth, he ascended to the Father for the expressed purpose of receiving the kingdom over which he was to reign as king; and we know from the New Testament record that those things actually did take place. (Cf. Acts 2: 36; Col. 1: 13; Rev. 1: 6.) This King is yet to return in his glory and majesty. (See 1 Cor. 11: 26; 15: 24-28; 2 Thess. 1: 7-9; Matt. 25: 31ff.)

There is, of course, strictly speaking, a difference between a dream and a vision. A dream takes place while one is asleep; but a vision may occur while one is awake or asleep. (Cf. Acts 10: 9-16; 2 Cor. 12: 1-4; Acts 12: 5-9; 16: 9, 10; 26: 12-19.) In the case of Daniel, that which came to him is spoken of both as a dream and a vision. "In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream and told the sum of the matters. Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of heaven brake forth upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another." (See Dan. 7: 1-8.) Daniel described that which he saw as "night-visions" (verse 13).

The Interpretation of Daniel's Visions

(Dan. 7: 15-22)

As for me, Daniel, my spirit was grieved in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, that shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was diverse from all of them, exceeding terrible, whose teeth were of iron, and its nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet; and concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, and before which three fell, even that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake great things, whose look was more stout than its fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

Daniel had seen the visions of the four beasts, the court of heaven, and the Son's receiving the kingdom from the Father; and because he did not understand them, especially that of the four beasts, he was troubled and sought an interpretation from a celestial being who stood near him. "I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth concerning all this." Daniel had previously been able to interpret the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar; but now he is himself the dreamer, and he is the one who must have divine help. Daniel was told by one of those who stood by that the four beasts represented four kings or kingdoms; but that there was another kingdom which the saints of the Most High, or, which is the same thing, the people of God would receive, and which they would possess for ever.

It was approximately fifty years before the time of this lesson, when

Daniel was still a relatively young man, that he was called upon, not only to interpret the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, but also to tell him that which he had dreamed; for the king had completely forgotten it. If any one is curious to know how Daniel could interpret the dream of the mighty king of his earlier days, and then was unable to interpret his own dream regarding the same great events, the answer appears to be this: Daniel was inspired when he stood before Nebuchadnezzar, but was not inspired to the extent that he could interpret his own vision. (Cf. John 1: 29; Matt. 11: 2, 3.)

The dream which Nebuchadnezzar had was stated by Daniel in these words: "Thou, O king, sawest, and, behold, a great image. This image, which was mighty, and whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee: and the aspect thereof was terrible. As for the image, its head was of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of brass, its legs of iron, its feet part of iron, and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon its feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them in pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken in pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, so that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." (Dan. 2: 31-35.)

And then, after telling the king what he had dreamed, Daniel went on and interpreted the dream for him. The mighty image which he had seen represented four world empires, of which he, Nebuchadnezzar, was the head of the first; he was the head of gold. This was the Babylonian kingdom; and it was to be followed, in turn, by three other world powers, namely, the Medo-Persian, the Greek, and the Roman. (Cf. Ezek. 21: 24-27.) The destruction of the colossal image which Nebuchadnezzar had seen was the result of its being struck on the feet by a little stone which had been cut out without hands, or, which is the same thing, the kingdom of Christ which was divinely established. It was

small to begin with (of. Matt. 13: 31, 32), but its growth will continue until it fills the whole earth (of. Rev. 11: 15). This great truth was expressed by Daniel in these words: "And in the days of those kings [that is, the Roman 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.)

After being told that the four beasts which came up from the sea represented four kings or kingdoms, each different from the others, Daniel said that he desired further information regarding (1) the fourth beast, (2) the ten horns that were upon its head, and (3) the other horn which came up, and before which three fell. His request for an interpretation of these things was made to one of them that stood by, who may have been the angel Gabriel. (See Dan. 8: 15, 16; 9: 20-23; of. Luke 1: 19, 26.) If one will go back and reread verse 2-8, of the chapter from which this portion of the lesson text is taken, he will see that more, and not only more, but also more terrible things were said about the fourth beast, than were said about the other three; and that is evidently the reason why Daniel requested further information regarding the last one.

It is not the purpose of this lesson to go into great detail regarding the vision of the fourth beast which Daniel saw, and the related issues which were connected with it; but rather to give a broad outline of that which these visions foretold. We have already learned from chapter 2 that the fourth world-power which was to arise was that of Rome. This is made certain by the fact that the God of heaven set up his kingdom in the days of the fourth kingdom; and that was, as we have already seen, during the days of the Roman rulers. The terrible traits of the fourth beast were meant to give some idea of the character of that empire, that is, the manner in which the rulers would deal with the people under their jurisdiction.

The angelic explanation or interpretation which Daniel sought is

found in the last paragraph of the chapter, which should be read at this time. The "ten horns" were ten kings of the Roman empire; and the "little horn" which came up among them, was the papacy, otherwise known as the Roman Catholic Church. The power of that hierarchy, so far as the Lord's people were concerned, was apparently felt most during the Dark Ages, a period of approximately twelve hundred and sixty years, when it "prevailed" against the saints. It was during the long period just referred to that the apostate church, to a very great extent, dominated the state. The prevailing against the saints, referred to by Daniel, continued "until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom."

The "judgment" referred to in the passage just quoted was not the general judgment at the last day (2 Cor. 5: 10; Rev. 20: 11-15); but rather to a special judgment against the apostate church, which broke the domination of that institution, and made it possible for the church of the Lord to emerge from the obscurity of the Dark Ages. This judgment took place during the periods which are known in history as the *Protestant Reformation* and the *Restoration Movement*. (Cf. Dan. 7: 25-27.) Some commentators endeavor to make the events of prevailing against the saints apply to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, who died in 163 B.C.; but the Book of Daniel makes it plain that it was during the time of the fourth beast, that is, the Roman Empire; and it did not move in on the Jewish people, where the kingdom was established about A.D. 30, until a hundred years later, that is, in 63 B.C.

Some Predictions Regarding the Kingdom

(Mark 9: 1; Luke 22: 18)

And he said unto them, I say unto you, There are some here of them

that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power.

The passage just quoted is rhetorical, and it says, in effect, that *some* of them who stood by would die before the kingdom came; but not *all* of them. Judas, who betrayed Christ, did die before that event took place; but the other eleven apostles did not. Jesus, just prior to the statement which we are now considering, had spoken of his approaching death (Mark 8: 31-38), and it was natural for his disciples to think that if he should die at the hands of his enemies, he would not be able to set up the kingdom which he had promised; and it was evidently because of this feeling on their part that he told them that some of them would live to see him enter formally upon his reign as king. This literally took place on the following Pentecost, which was then only a few days away.

For I say unto you, I shall not drink from henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

The statement just quoted was, according to Luke, made by Jesus during the eating of the passover supper, while substantially the same thing was said by him while instituting the Lord's supper. (See Matt. 26: 29; Mark 14: 25.) Matthew's account reads as follows: "But I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." If the two passages of this section of the lesson text are read together, it will be seen that Jesus was expecting to triumph over death, and to establish his kingdom within the near future. Or, to state the same thing in another way, he was, with calm and unruffled confidence, looking beyond the dark tomorrow, when he would be nailed to the cross, to a brighter day when the kingdom which he came to establish would become a reality.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is the relationship of the church and the kingdom? Give reasons for

your answer.

Why do some people try to make a distinction between them?

What are the essential elements of a kingdom?

What was God's original purpose regarding the people of the earth?

Why is a plan of salvation essential and who only will be saved?

The Golden Text

Why are the Lord's people often referred to from different points of view?

What is signified by the titles which are found in the golden text?

What does the Lord expect of his people as members of the church and citizens of the kingdom?

A Vision of the Ancient of Days, the Son of Man, and the Kingdom

What place does the seventh chapter of Daniel occupy in the prophetic portion of the Bible?

What is the value of the "context" in studying the Scriptures?

Who is the "Ancient of Days" and what is said regarding him?

Who went to him with the clouds and when did it take place?

For what purpose did the Son go to the Father and what did Jesus himself say about it?

When will the king return in his glory? Give reasons for your answer.

In what way did the information regarding the kingdom come to Daniel?

What effect did the "night-visions" have on Daniel and what did he do about it?

What experience had Daniel had about fifty years earlier?

What relation did Nebuchadnezzar's dream have to Daniel's vision?

Why, then, is it important to understand the king's dream before trying to grasp the meaning of Daniel's vision?

What was the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2?

What request did Daniel make of one of them who stood by?

What did each of the four beasts stand for?

What was signified by the "ten horns"?

What was the meaning of the "little horn"?

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

In what sense did the little horn prevail against the saints and for how long?

What "judgment" was referred to in the lesson text?

At what time did the judgment take place and in what manner?

Some Predictions Regarding the Kingdom

What is the nature of the passage found in Mark 9:1?

What was the Lord's purpose in making it?

In what way is the statement found in Luke 22:18 related to the one contained in Mark 9:1?

Why was Jesus so confident that the kingdom of God would be established?

Lesson IV—January 22, 1967

THE CHURCH, THE CALLED OUT PEOPLE OF GOD

Lesson Text

Acts 2: 39-42; Rom. 1: 1-7

39 For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him.

40 And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation.

41 They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added *unto them* in that day about three thousand souls.

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

1 Paul, a servant of Je'-sus Christ, called to *be* an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

2 Which he promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures,

3 Concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,

4 Who was declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; *even* Je'-sus Christ our Lord,

5 Through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake;

6 Among whom are ye also, called *to be* Je'-sus Christ's:

7 To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Je'-sus Christ.

Golden Text.—"Whereunto he called you through our gospel (2 Thess. 2: 14.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 1: 1-10.

Daily Bible Readings

January 16. M.....	The Gospel Call (2 Thess. 2: 13-17)
January 17. T.....	Call in Peace (1 Cor. 7: 15-24)
January 18. W.....	Call of God (Heb. 5: 1-4)
January 19. T.....	The Call of Moses (Ex. 3: 1-4)
January 20. F.....	Call and Be Saved (Rom. 10: 13, 14)
January 21. S.....	Paul's Call (Acts 26: 15-18)
January 22. S.....	All Are Called (Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15, 16)

TIME.—Acts, A.D. 30; Romans, A.D. 58.

PLACES.—Acts, Jerusalem; Romans was written from Corinth.

PERSONS.—Acts, Peter and the Multitude; Romans, Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

That which is involved in the subject of the lesson for today is sorely needed by the people of this age of the world. It is doubtful if the average member of the church today is aware of the significance of the "called out" feature of the Lord's people. There are too many professed followers of Christ who regard the church as something which they can "join" or become identified with. The church is the body of people whom Christ has redeemed from the world of bondage and called together to be his own. They were called out of the world, and into fellowship with him. In the language of the apostle Paul, "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful." (Col. 3: 15.)

It has frequently been pointed out in previous lessons that the primary meaning of the term "church" literally means the *called out*. The Greek word from which we have church is *ekklesia*, and that is what the people who spoke the original language of the New Testament understood it to mean. The original word we are now considering never had a peculiar religious significance; it literally meant the *called out ones* or an *assembly*; and it was applied to any body of people, who were called out and gathered together for any purpose. There is therefore nothing in the original word itself which indicated the character of the assembly. It might have been religious, political, or any unorganized

mob. The term was twice applied to the mob in Ephesus, once to the pro-consular court, and once to God's people in the wilderness. (See Acts 19: 32, 39, 41; 7: 38.) Thus, the *kind* of church would always be determined by the circumstance in the case, or, which is the same thing, other terms and circumstances would have to be relied upon, in order for one to know whether the assembly in question was a called out body of the Lord, or whether it was of men.

The original word for "church" (*ekklesia*) is found only in Matthew, so far as the gospel records are concerned. It is used in Matt. 16: 18 to include all of the people who would be redeemed by Christ; and in Matt. 18: 17 in the sense of a local group, that is, a single congregation. (See marginal note.) Jesus came into the world to save the lost (and all men were lost in sin when he began his work of redemption, Gal. 3: 22; Rom. 3: 9-20; 11: 32); and since he was interested in the salvation of every lost person (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9), he sent out his call to the entire world (Mark 16: 15, 16). And when people began to respond to the gospel call (Acts 2: 36-41), he constituted those who obeyed the gospel into a body to be known as the people of God or of Christ, in contrast with the disobedient were and are still the people of Satan or of the world. And as fast as people accepted Christ as their leader, he added them to the body of the saved who are the church. (Acts 2: 47.)

The Golden Text

"Whereunto he called you through our gospel." The full meaning of the statement just quoted can best

be understood by considering it in the light of its context. The preceding portion of the chapter from

which it is taken gives, with a mighty sweep of the pen, a panoramic view of the apostasy of the church ("the falling away") and the close of the Christian dispensation, with a contrast between the lost and the saved. The "man of sin," also called the "son of perdition," is described in these words: "He that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God." And the apostle goes on to say, "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way." (See 2 Thess. 2: 3-7.)

Those who read and study the New Testament are made aware of the fact that there will always be unfaithfulness and iniquity (*anomia*, the same word as in Matt. 7: 23, that is, lawlessness) will continue throughout the dispensation. But the time will come when the last great battle will be fought, as the apostle next points out: "And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his

coming; even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess. 2: 8-12.)

The preceding paragraph gives the picture of the terrible end of those who follow the way of the wicked one, while the next paragraph of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians sets forth the state of the righteous, or those who had accepted the gospel which he had so recently preached to them. The contrast between the wicked and the righteous is indicated by the opening word, namely, "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, stand fast, hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours." (2 Thess. 2: 13-15.)

The Text Explained

God's Promise Is to All Who Are Called

(Acts 2: 39)

For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are a far off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him.

Any thoughtful person who reads the passage just quoted will naturally ask himself, What promise was the apostle Peter referring to when he made the statement comprising this section of the lesson text?

It seems clear, from the passage itself, that "the promise" is that which God made to Abraham when he informed him that through his seed all the families of the earth were to be blessed. (Gen. 12: 3; Gal. 3: 8, 16, 29.) At the conclusion of his second sermon Peter said, "Ye are the sons of the prophets, and of

the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Acts 3: 25.) The phrase, "all the families of the earth, embraced Jews and Gentiles. "The promise" is to you (Jews); to your children (children of the Jews); to all that are afar off (Gentiles Eph. 2: 17). The passage simply asserts that the promise of salvation is to all people. The Lord calls all men to be saved. (Matt. 11: 21; 28: 18-20.) Both Jews and Gentiles, through Christ, are entitled to "the promise."

Something of the impact which that first gospel sermon had on the hearers of that memorable day, along with Peter's reply to the inquiry of the stricken auditors, may be learned from the next three verses,

namely, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your children [that is, the Jews], and to all that are afar off [that is, the Gentiles, of. Eph. 2: 11-13], even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him." (Acts 2: 37-39.)

In commenting on the "gift of the Holy Spirit," in the passage now under consideration, David Lipscomb says, "The gift of the Spirit promised in Acts 2: 38 was the Spirit itself. The gift of the Spirit itself was in two forms. First, it was bestowed in its miraculous manifestation as the apostles themselves received it on the day of Pentecost, fully inspiring them and enduing them with miraculous powers. The Spirit was so given in the first establishment of the church to guide and teach the infant church. I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. . . . And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth," etc. This pertained to called-and-sent apostles to proclaim and confirm the gospel to the world, and was peculiar to that age. When the inspired men had been led into all truth—that is, when the perfect will of God was revealed to them—this miraculous manifestation of the Spirit ceased, and the Spirit in his regular manifestations through the laws remained. Secondly, there is a presence of the Spirit with and in all Christians. They are said to 'drink into this Spirit.' They receive it gradually as they receive the word of God into the heart as the seed of the kingdom, and as it permeates, guides, and directs the thoughts, feelings, and desires of the person. By receiving and cherishing the word in the heart, the Spirit enters and abounds more and more in the person, making him like Jesus in his thoughts, feelings, works. I feel sure this is the manifestation of the Spirit promised to those who would repent and be baptized. If they would repent and be baptized, receiving and cherishing the word of God in their

hearts, this Holy Spirit as the indwelling guest of the church and the Christian would be their portion. This Spirit enters the heart with and through the word of God, and spreads and strengthens as the word of God, the seed of the kingdom, more and more is understood and cherished in the heart. The presence of the Spirit is manifest in causing us to walk by the Spirit that was in Christ, to do the will of God as he did it, and to be willing to deny ourselves and save others, as Jesus died to save us." (Queries and Answers—by David Lipscomb, p. 206, 207.)

The First Ingathering of Souls and What They Did

(Acts 2: 40-42)

And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation. They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

It is natural to infer from verse 40 that Luke recorded only an epitome of Peter's sermon, on the occasion now before us; but he evidently did give all the essential facts which the apostle set before the multitudes. We also have in the record the two necessary ingredients of successful gospel preaching, namely, the presentation of the truth, and the encouragement to get the hearers to accept the truth. "Testified" refers to the *argumentative* part of the sermon; while "exhorted" has reference to the *hortatory* part. The discourse which Peter delivered at the time of this lesson may be further divided into the four basic aims of preaching, namely, (1) enlighten the mind; (2) disturb the conscience; (3) energize the will; and (4) stir the heart. When the gospel has been fully proclaimed, man then becomes responsible for his attitude toward it. (See Mark 16: 15, 16.)

In the statement, "They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added *unto them* in that day about three thousand souls," the phrase "unto them" is in italics, which indicates that it is not in the original. Leaving out the ital-

icized phrase, the passage reads, "They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added in that day about three thousand souls." We have no way of knowing therefore just how many people were baptized on the day the first gospel sermon was preached; for Luke simply says that those who received Peter's word were baptized.

It appears that it was not Luke's purpose merely to tell how many were baptized, but rather to give the total number of the Lord's people, who were in Jerusalem on the day the church came into being as a living organism. It is inconceivable that, in computing the number, the inspired historian would omit the apostles and others who were baptized under John's commission while his baptism was still in force, such as the one hundred and twenty (Acts 1: 15), and the five hundred brethren (1 Cor. 15: 6). No violence is done to the Scriptures, therefore, when it is suggested that those who were baptized on Pentecost, and those who had previously been baptized under John's commission, made a total of about three thousand.

Some people have objected to the possibility that three thousand were baptized on the beginning day of the church, on the ground that it would not have been possible to baptize that number in one day. That contention, however, is so groundless, as to make it wholly unnecessary to reply to it. All that we know for certain is that those who received Peter's teaching regarding the manner in which they could receive the remission of their sins were baptized: and that there were added in that day about three thousand souls.

Verse 42 of the section of the lesson text now under consideration may be described as setting forth the basic ingredients of apostolic Christianity. Or, to state the same thing in another way, the words of that verse make known the characteristic marks of the Christian life, to which the converts of Pentecost and other members of the Lord's body were pledged by their acceptance of the gospel of Christ. God himself set the apostles in the church (1 Cor. 12: 28), and they constituted the visible center of the unity of the newly established institution. The new disciples were gathered around them,

and from them the doctrine and discipline of the infant church proceeded.

The teaching of the apostles was the necessary instrumentality for bringing the new converts into full and complete discipleship. Their rudimentary faith needed careful and continuous instruction. The fellowship, according to Vincent, was "a relation between individuals which involves a common interest and a mutual, active participation in that interest and in each other." (Cf. Phil. 1: 5, where the same original word signifies *cooperation* in the widest sense. The breaking of bread doubtless referred to the Lord's supper, around the table of which the Lord's people met on first day of the week, in memory of him who made it possible for them to enjoy the salvation which was theirs. (Cf. Acts 20: 7; 1 Cor. 16: 1, 2.) The prayers were probably the public prayers of the church, although it is possible that they also included their private devotions.

God Calls His People to Be

Saints

(Rom. 1: 1-7)

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, which he promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake; among whom are ye also, called to be Jesus Christ's; to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be the saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father .and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The verses which comprise this section of the lesson text make up the longest salutation, found in any of the New Testament epistles; and, as one may see by reading it, it is expressed in a single sentence. The salutations of Titus and Galatians are the nearest in point of length, to that of Romans. In the salutation now before us, we have (1) a de-

scription of the writer, (2) a word about his gospel and apostleship, (3) something concerning the readers; and (4) the greeting. The expansion of the salutation was natural; inasmuch as Paul was addressing a most important document to an outstanding church, in the capital of the empire, with which he was not personally acquainted.

The three things which Paul said about himself, in the opening words of the epistle now before us, were (1) that he was a servant of Jesus Christ, (2) that he was called to be an apostle, and (3) that he was separated unto the gospel of God. The marginal reading for "servant" is *bondservant*, which ordinarily signifies a slave; but James Macknight points out that "here it is a name of honor; for in the East the chief ministers of kings were called *douloi* (slaves). . . . This honorable name, therefore, denotes the high authority which Paul possessed in the kingdom of Christ, as one of his chief ministers."

In further describing his relation to Christ, Paul informed the Roman brethren that he was "a called apostle," a *klētos* apostle, which, insofar as the New Testament meaning of the term is concerned, always denotes that God did the calling. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28; Jude 1.) Paul's "separation," that is, his being set apart or appointed as a gospel preacher, was also an act of God, as may be learned by reading Gal. 1: 15-17. All of this meant that Paul was speaking for God, when he addressed his message to the Roman brethren.

The apostle then went on to show that the gospel which he preached was the result of the promise which God had made through the Old Testament prophets (of. Luke 24: 44-46; 1 Cor. 15: 1-4), and that the subject of this gospel is God's own Son, who was both human and divine. His genealogy showed Jesus to be the son of David, while his resurrection

from the dead declared him to be God's Son; for if he had not been God's Son, as he claimed to be, God would not have raised him from the dead. And it was from this Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, that Paul received his commission—grace and apostleship—to preach the gospel to the Gentiles; and it was for that reason that his work in that field was not of his own choosing, the Judaizers to the contrary, notwithstanding. (Cf. Gal. 2: 7-9; 1 Cor. 15: 10; Eph. 3: 7, 8.)

The apostle Paul is the most exhaustive writer of the New Testament on the subject of justification by faith; and his most elaborate treatise on that question is found in the letter from which the section of the lesson text now before us is taken. In view of the emphasis which he placed on the subject, and the clarity with which he dealt with the issue, it is interesting to observe that he opened and closed the epistle with the expression "obedience of faith." (See Rom. 1: 5; 16: 26.) The marginal reading in both of the instances just cited is obedience "to the faith." The rendering in the revised Standard Version is "to bring about obedience to the faith," while The New English Bible has "to lead to faith and obedience." This teaching, of course, makes impossible the idea of salvation by faith only. "Faith" and "obedience of faith" are not the same. (Cf. James 2: 14-26.) The *obedience of faith* is the obedience which results from faith, or which faith produces. The gospel, according to Paul, was made known for this very purpose. (Cf. 1 Thess. 1: 8; 1 Pet. 4: 17.) The apostle made it plain to the Roman brethren that they were among the number of Gentiles who were the "called" (*klētoi*) of Jesus Christ. When Christians act in harmony with the idea of having been called by God, harmony prevails.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is the truth of this lesson so sorely needed by professed Christians today?
What is the literal meaning of the term "church"?

Why is this an appropriate designation for the Lord's people?

The Golden Text

What is the best way to get the significance of the golden text for this lesson?
What is suggested by the word "but" with which the setting of the text begins?

Give a brief resume of the context in which the golden text is found.

God's Promise Is to All Who Are Called

What was the "promise" to which Peter made reference in the passage now before us?

What did Paul say about the promise in Galatians 3?

How was this promise fulfilled?

In what way did Peter relate the "promise" as he concluded his sermon in Acts 32?

To whom, then, was the promise intended?

What is the "gift of the Holy Spirit"?

The First Ingathering of Souls and What They Did

How do we know that Luke did not record all of that which Peter said at Pentecost?

What are the necessary ingredients of gospel preaching and how did Luke list them?

What are the four basic aims of preaching?

Discuss these aims and show why they are fundamental.

Do we know how many were baptized at the time of this lesson? Give reason for your answer.

What apparently was Luke's purpose in giving the number who were added and in what sense were they added?

What is suggested by the forty-second verse of this section of the lesson text?

What is meant by continuing in the apostles' teaching and why was this essential?

What is the "fellowship" mentioned here and why is it important?

What was the breaking of bread and the prayers?

God Calls His People to Be Saints

What is peculiar about the salutation given in this section of the lesson text?

Discuss its contents.

What three things did Paul say about himself and what is their significance?

In what sense was Paul a "called" apostle?

What is the general background of the gospel?

What two special things are said about Jesus?

Discuss the difference between "faith" and the "obedience of faith."

Lesson V—January 29, 1967

THE CHURCH, A KINGDOM, BODY, TEMPLE AND BRIDE

Lesson Text

Matt. 6: 33; Eph. 1: 19-23; 1 Cor. 3: 16, 17; Eph. 2: 19-22; 5: 22-25

33 But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

19 And what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places,

21 Far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

22 And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church,

23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

16 Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

17 If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are ye.

19 So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,

20 Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Je-sus himself being the chief corner stone;

21 In whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;

22 In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.

22 Wives, *be in subjection* unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, *being* himself the saviour of the body.

24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so *let* the wives also *be* to their husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Know ye not that ye are a temple of God?*” (1 Cor 3: 16.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—1 Cor. 6: 15-20.

Daily Bible Readings

January 23. M.....	Churches of Christ (Matt. 16: 18; Rom. 16: 16)
January 24. T.	Church, the Kingdom of God (Col. 1: 9-17)
January 25. W.....	Church, the Body of Christ (Eph. 1: 19-23)
January 26. T.....	Church, the Temple of God (1 Cor. 3: 16, 17)
January 27. F.....	Church, the Bride of Christ (Eph. 5: 22-33)
January 28. S.....	Christ, Saviour of the Church (Col. 1: 18-23)
January 29. S.....	Christians, Members of the Body (1 Cor. 12: 12-27)

TIME.—Matthew, A.D. 27; First Corinthians, A.D. 57; Ephesians, A.D. 62.

PLACES.—Matthew, probably Mount Hattin; First Corinthians was written in Ephesus; Ephesians was written in Home.

PERSONS.—Matthew, Jesus, his disciples; First Corinthians and Ephesians, Paul and those to whom he wrote.

Introduction

The Bible is God's revelation to the peoples of the earth—for all men in whatever condition they may be; and if one will read the Scriptures carefully and thoughtfully, he will soon see that it is written with an appeal to every person who is interested in its message. Not all men are constituted alike; and it is for that reason that not everything appeals to all people in the same way. But God knows all men, and their needs; and he has accordingly presented his testimony, with a view to meeting the needs of every interested person. This accounts, in a measure, at least, for the facts that many things in the Bible are viewed from different points of view; and this is particularly true of the lesson for today. The people who have been redeemed by Christ are his church, also called his kingdom, his body, his temple, and his bride. Many people have difficulty in understanding just what the church is, and this lesson should help them.

David Lipscomb, in answering the question, What constitutes acceptable obedience? sets forth the same fundamental principle regarding the need for different approaches to a scriptural subject. His words are: "Men's minds are differently constituted. The same evidence will not strike all alike. That which will convince one will not strike another with so great force. God has provided testimonies so varied in character as to meet the demands of the differing minds, and sufficient in strength to convince every honest

heart anxious to know and do the will of God. It is not needful that each one shall know all the testimonies that God has presented in his word to render that faith acceptable. The one whose heart most readily accepts the witness of God and acts on the fewest signs or testimonies is the most acceptable to God.

"While complete knowledge of all the testimonies would add strength to the faith of all and be pleasing to the Father, no mortal can have this, especially none can have it before he begins obedience. Yet one who believes and honors God on the testimonies he sees is accepted. Faith must rest on divine testimony. Fear taught by the precepts of men is not pleasing to God. (See Isa. 29: 13, 14.) While the full knowledge of all the testimonies of God is desirable, a man cannot understand and know all these; so God is pleased with the man who accepts and acts on the few he understands and knows. He is much better pleased with this man than with him who stands off and refuses to believe until he sees all the signs and knows all the testimonies, or than with him who, knowing more of the testimonies, despises and discourages him who more trustfully believes and acts on a part of the testimonies." (Cf. the attitude of Thomas and the Lord's remarks addressed to him, John 20: 24-29.)

It would, by the same token, be good if every professed follower of Christ, or any one who wants to obey him, understood everything about the church; but since that is

not possible, generally speaking, every one should act as rapidly as he comes into the knowledge of any facet of the truth. It is doubtful if the average person fully understood, at the time of his initial obedience of the gospel what it means to be a citizen of the kingdom of Christ, and to be a member of the body of Christ,

or his temple, or his bride. But as time goes on and he continues to learn more about his relation to Christ, he will come to realize what it really means for one to be a member of the church for which Christ died to establish. This is where the emphasis of the lesson for today should be placed.

The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is in the principal text, and it will be considered in its proper place.

The Text Explained

The Church As a Kingdom

(Matt. 6: 33)

But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

The most common, and the best understood, term which is used in the New Testament to designate the Lord's people is the church, which, as has frequently been pointed out, means the called out ones, or the people who have been separated from the world and unto Christ. But when people repudiate their former relationship and change their allegiance from one authority to another (of. Col. 1: 13), they must come under another form of government. This is the idea which is suggested by the term "kingdom." Christ himself is King, his people are his subjects, his revealed will is the law by which they are to be governed, and wherever they live and serve him may be thought of as the territory. It should be kept in mind, however, that the kingdom is a spiritual institution, and is not of this world. (Cf. John 18: 36.)

Jesus himself made it plain to his disciples that the church and the kingdom are one and the same thing: the same "institution" considered from two points of view. His words are: "And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 16: 18, 19.) That which Jesus called his "church" in verse 18, he called the "kingdom of

heaven" in verse 19. When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the church in Colossae, he reminded them that they had been delivered out of the power of darkness, and had been translated into the kingdom of God's beloved Son. (See Col. 1: 13.) The Book of Revelation was addressed to the seven churches in Asia (see Rev. 1: 4, 10, 11), and John says that Christ "made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (Rev. 1: 6.)

Before the establishment of any government, such as a kingdom, there must first be the work of teaching, agitation, and arousing of the people, in an effort to promote an interest in the principle of the institution which is contemplated. This was eminently true of the kingdom which Christ established. Long before his coming, the prophets spoke of it, even to the details which would characterize it. (Cf. Isa. 9: 6, 7; Dan. 2: 44.) John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, or the one who came to prepare the way for him, preached that the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 3: 1-3); and both Jesus and his disciples proclaimed the same message (Matt. 4: 17; 10: 5-7). It appears that this type of teaching and awakening continued almost to the time of the Lord's crucifixion. (See Mark 11: 7-10; Luke 19: 37, 38.)

If we keep in mind the fact that the "church" is made up of those who are called out of the world by the gospel of Christ, and the kind of life which the Lord expects of them, we can easily see from the portion of the lesson text now under consideration that the same thing is ex-

pected of those in the kingdom of Christ. The quest for the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, requires detachment, as well as concentration. Practically every responsible person is deeply influenced by the material surroundings, and the character of the society into which his life has been cast. But the citizen of the kingdom must not become so involved in the existing material order, that all is lost if it is destroyed.

The Lord's purpose in calling people into his kingdom is their eternal salvation, and they must therefore long for and cultivate those spiritual values which will survive social change and economic ruin. This is what Jesus urges his people to do; and if they seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, they will have that which is both indestructible and eternal. Therefore, if all that is worldly is destroyed, the Lord's people will still have that which can never be taken away from them. (Cf. Luke 12: 13-21.) When Jesus says that the material needs will be added to those who put the kingdom of God first in their lives, he does not mean that it will be the result of the miraculous; rather, they will come as the result of our giving attention to the true laws of our being. Some one has said, "Let religion be the first thing in our affections and in our labors, and Providence will be our mighty Partner and Helper in business." (Cf. Psalm 37: 25; Heb. 13: 5, 6.)

The Church As the Body of Christ (Eph. 1: 19-23)

And what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

This section of the lesson text is taken from Paul's prayer that his

readers might grow into a fuller understanding of the work of Christ. (See Eph. 1: 15-23.) It has frequently been noted that the first three chapters of the letter which we know as *Ephesians* contains the profoundest truth which has ever been revealed to man; and it has further been referred to as the grandest of all the Pauline epistles. This letter has deeply impressed the greatest minds among men, and the peculiar and sustained loftiness which characterizes its teaching has earned for it the title of the "Epistle of the Ascension." It carries, as it were, among "the heavenlies," and lifts us into the eternities. Some one has observed that Romans, addressed from East to West, is Paul's greatest statement regarding the way of salvation; while *Ephesians*, addressed from West to East, is his greatest statement with reference to the whole purpose of God in human history.

No one can read *Colossians* and *Ephesians* together, without being impressed with the similarity which exists between them; and if the two epistles are carefully studied, it will be seen that *Ephesians* bears just about the same relation to *Colossians*, that *Romans* does to *Galatians*, namely, a fuller treatment of the same general theme in a more detached and impersonal manner. The "Colossian heresy" was evidently fresh in the apostle's mind when he wrote *Ephesians*; but it is obvious that his purpose in writing the epistle now under consideration was not primarily to attack that heresy: his aim was much broader than that. His teaching in *Ephesians*, of course, would destroy the heresy, or would enable his readers to refute it, if it had not already reached them; but it would do so by unfolding to them the eternal purpose of God, rather than by direct reference to the heresy itself.

In *Colossians*, Paul placed the emphasis upon the pre-eminence of Christ as the head of all things, especially the church (Col. 1: 18, 24); and in doing so he set forth the grandest and fullest conception of the person and work of Christ which is known to us. But in *Ephesians* the apostle shifted the emphasis somewhat, and centered the attention of his readers upon the place and purpose of the church, the body

of Christ, as the medium through which the eternal purpose of God is made known, and his "much variegated" wisdom is made to shine forth (Eph. 3: 10); and through which the Father is to receive glory from his redeemed creatures (Eph. 3: 20, 21).

As Paul views the matter in Ephesians, God's eternal purpose is to gather into one body the whole created universe, and thereby restore harmony, both between the creatures themselves (of. Rom. 8: 18-25), and between them and himself as their Creator. The apostle's prayers were for that glorious consummation; and in order that they might achieve that goal, his whole endeavor is that they might have a full and clear knowledge of the eternal purpose of God, which he was working out through Christ Jesus, whom he gave "to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

Everything, argued Paul, as he reached the climax of this matchless document, centers in the purpose of God. All discord between the elements in the church—all distinction between Jew and Gentile—must yield to the grand purpose, if God's will is to be done; and what is true in that respect is also true with reference to all other discords and factions in the church: they must all be resolved, if the body of Christ is to function as God ordained that it should. (Cf. 1 Cor. 12: 12-27.) In the words of another, "The vision is one of a great oneness in Christ and through him in God, a oneness of birth and faith and life and love, as men, touched with the fire of that Divine purpose, seek to fulfill, each in himself, the part that God has given him to play in the world, and, fighting against the foes of God, to overcome at last."

When Paul speaks of the church as the body of Christ, the "fulness" of him that filleth all in all, he was, according to some eminent Greek scholars, referring to the fact that the church supplements, that is, complements, or, which is the same thing, makes Christ complete, in pretty much the same sense that a wife supplements, complements, or makes her husband complete. The practical meaning of this is that the church has substantially the same

mission today that Christ had while he was here upon the earth, that is, so far as his ministry among people was concerned. This, of course, has no reference to the perfection of the plan of salvation, which was completed when Christ arose from the dead, and took his seat at the right hand of God; but rather to the task of making known to the lost that salvation, and ministering to the needs of the race, as the opportunity presents itself.

The Church As a Temple of God and the Bride of Christ

(1 Cor. 3: 16, 17; Eph. 2: 19-22; 5: 22-25)

Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are ye.

Earlier in the chapter from which this portion of the lesson text is taken (see verse 9, of. verses 10-15), Paul referred to the Corinthian Christians as God's building; and now in the passage which is before us he told them what kind of a building they were. And what was said of the Corinthians is, of course, just as true of any group of the Lord's people in any community. (Cf. 1 Pet. 2: 9.) A temple, in the sense employed here, means a building which has been constructed for the purpose of worship, in this case, the worship of God; and in which the presence of the object worshipped dwells. The Shekinah (that is, the divine manifestation, through which God's presence was seen and felt by man) honored the Old Testament temple; but the spiritual temple of the New Testament is honored by the Spirit of God.

If every congregation of the Lord's people realized this, the church would have a vastly different experience. It is hard to understand why professed Christians will do things which are calculated to destroy the spirituality of the church; but it is a fact, as any careful observer readily knows, that such is done. The factions of the Corinthian brethren had this effect on the church in their city, and the same thing is true of many congregations today. Anything which tends to weaken the church, and cause it to fail to measure up to

the divine purpose, will have the effect of destroying the temple of God; and when that is done, then the offenders will be held responsible for their conduct, and will have to suffer for their sins.

So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.

This is perhaps the highest ideal and figure of the relationship which the Lord's people sustain to him, which is to be found in the entire Bible. Each redeemed person is to become a dwelling-place for God himself; and what is said of each individual is also true of each group of Christians, that is, of each congregation, as we have already seen. (See 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20; of. 3: 16, 17.) Thus, into the weakest life or congregation the strength of the Almighty is pleased to dwell; and that is the reason why Paul so often spoke of his ability to endure and to accomplish the will of the Lord. (Cf. 2 Cor. 12: 7-10; Phil. 4: 13.) But there is a responsibility here which we must not overlook, namely, we must do our best to make this dwelling-place worthy of the Divine Occupant. In the words of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, "Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. 7: 1.)

Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it.

The idea of the church's being the

bride of Christ is referred to in several places in the New Testament. For example, Paul in writing to the Corinthians said, "Tor I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ." (2 Cor. 11: 2; of. Hos. 2: 19, 20.) And to the Romans, "Or are ye ignorant, brethren (for I speak to men who know the law), that the law hath dominion over a man for so long time as he liveth? For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to the husband while he liveth; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband. So then if, while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if the husband die, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God." (Rom. 7: 1-4; of. Rev. 19: 6-8.) The whole idea of the church's being the bride of Christ is graphically illustrated by the human marriage relationship. (Read Eph. 5: 22-33.)

In summing up that which we have in this lesson, the church, which is made up of the people who have been redeemed by Christ (of. Tit. 2: 14; Eph. 2: 10; 1 Pet. 2: 9), is presented under four figures, namely, (1) as a kingdom, which involves the *government* of his people; (2) as a body, emphasizing and illustrating the *unity* of his people and their relation to Christ; (3) as a temple, setting forth the *reverence* and *devotion* of his people; and (4) as the bride of Christ, that is, the unique and intimate relationship of the church to Christ, as the *agent* or *means* by which the cause for which Christ died is continued and accomplished—"that we might bring forth fruit unto God." (Cf. Eph. 1: 23, where "fulness" is used in the sense of that which complements Christ, or, which is the same thing, that which makes him complete.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction
According to what peculiar principle has the Bible been written?

What important truth is set forth by this arrangement?
 What application does this system have for our lesson for today?
 Show how the principle referred to above applies to other areas of religious thinking.
 What is the peculiar advantage of viewing the church from several points of view?

The Church As a Kingdom

Discuss and emphasize the basic meaning of the term "church."
 What is the principal point in referring to the church as a kingdom?
 What is the nature of the kingdom of Christ?
 Can you show from the New Testament that the church and the kingdom are one and the same thing?
 What must always be done before a kingdom is established and its application here?
 What is the Lord's purpose in calling people into the kingdom of heaven?
 What are some of the lessons we should learn there?
 What does it mean to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness?

The Church As the Body of Christ

Under what circumstances were the words of this section of the lesson text spoken?
 In what way is the first part of the Epistle letter regarded by thoughtful Bible students?

How are the Epistles of Colossians and Ephesians related?
 What particular difference is noted between them?
 What is God's purpose regarding the church?
 Why is the church referred to as a body?
 What does Paul mean by saying that the church is the "fulness" of Christ?

The Church As a Temple of God and the Bride of Christ

In what sense is the church a temple of God?
 What is the essential place and purpose of a temple?
 What effect should the idea of the church as a temple of God have on his people?
 Does God dwell in his temple today?
 Why should this idea be continuously emphasized?
 What application did Paul make of it in his own life?
 What is the New Testament teaching with reference to the church as the bride of Christ?
 How are Christians married to Christ?
 In what way does Paul illustrate the church as being the bride of Christ?
 What is the basic thought in the church as a kingdom?
 What is illustrated by the church as being the body of Christ?
 What are we to understand regarding the church as a temple?
 What is the purpose of the church in the sense of its being the bride of Christ?

Lesson VI—February 5, 1967

THE CHURCH AND SALVATION

Lesson Text

Acts 4: 8-12; Rom. 6: 1-10

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders,

9 If we this day are examined concerning a good deed done to an impotent man, by what means this man is made whole;

10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Is'-ra-el, that in the name of Je'-sus Christ of Naz'-areth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* in him doth this man stand here before you whole.

11 He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner.

12 And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

2 God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?

3 Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Je'-sus were baptized into his death?

4 We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have become united with *him* in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection;

6 Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin;

7 For he that hath died is justified from sin.

8 But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him;

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him.

10 For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

Golden Text.—*"In whom we have our redemption through his blood."* (Eph. 1: 7.)

Devotional Reading.—Eph. 1: 1-3.

Daily Bible Readings

January 30. M.....	Salvation Only through Christ (Acts 4: 1-12)
January 31. T.....	All Spiritual Blessings in Christ (Eph. 1: 1-3)
February 1. W.....	Body of Christ, the Church (1 Cor. 12: 12; Eph. 1: 22)
February 2. T.....	Remission in Christ (Eph. 1: 3-7)
February 3. F.....	One Body (Eph. 4: 1-4)
February 4. S.....	A Glorious Church (Eph. 5: 22-29)
February 5. S.....	Newness of Life in Christ (Rom. 6: 1-6)

Time.—Acts, A.D. 30; Romans, A.D. 58.

Places.—Acts, Jerusalem; Romans was written from Corinth.

Persons.—Acts, Peter, John, and the Jewish leaders; Romans, Paul and the Roman brethren.

Introduction

The question of the relation of the church and the saved has long been in dispute. It appears that most people think that it is one thing to be saved; but something entirely different to be a member of the church. This, of course, is due to the fact that the average person looks upon the question from the standpoint of denominationalism. The popular idea in the world regarding the church is that one church (that is, denomination), is as good as another; and that if any one wants to be a member of any one of them, he will have to join it. This, again, is the result of thinking in terms of denominationalism. The church described in the New Testament is never referred to as a denomination; and there is no record of any one's having joined it, as that expression is commonly understood. Protestant denominationalism had its beginning in the sixteenth century of the present age of the world, some fifteen hundred years after Christ established his church. (Cf. Matt. 16: 18; Acts 20: 28.)

Another popular notion, and one closely related to the idea mentioned above, is that one can be saved out of the church, as well as he can be saved in it. This view can be traced to a misunderstanding of the nature of the church, or, which is the same thing, of just what the church is. All that one needs to do in order to see the fallacy of this allegation, is to read that which the New Testament

says about the church which is described upon its pages. Much of that which is about to be said has already been referred to in the lessons which precede this one; but, as the late Hall L. Calhoun expressed the matter, the three laws of learning are Repetition! Repetition! Repetition! In commenting on the methods of Jesus, as set forth in the Sermon on the Mount, Martyn Lloyd-Jones notes that "there was never a teacher in this world like the Lord Jesus Christ! The great art of teaching is the art of repetition; the true teacher always knows that it is not enough to say a thing once, but that it needs to be repeated. So he says it three times, but each time in a slightly different form. His method is particularly interesting and fascinating, and as we proceed to consider it we shall see exactly what it is."

The New Testament institution or organism known as the church, is also known by other designations; and a correct conception of their significance is necessary to an understanding of the subject now before us. In addition to the word "church," we shall, in this study, consider two other well known terms which are applied to the same institution or organism which is known as the church, namely, "body" and "kingdom." Compare, for example, a man who is a brother, husband, and father—*one* man considered from three different relationships. Thus, if the Lord's people are considered from

the standpoint of their *organization*, they are called the *body* of Christ, the figure being based upon the likeness of the human body in which we dwell. (Cf. 1 Cor. 12: 12-27.) The body, of course, must have a head from which all the members get their authority to act, and to which every faithful member must be in strict obedience and accord. The spiritual body of Christ is made up of the members over whom he rules as head. (Cf. Eph. 1: 22, 23.) These people are also known as the house of God, or, which is the same thing, his household or family. (See 1 Tim. 3: 14, 15.)

If the institution or organism we are now considering is viewed from the standpoint of its *government*, it is very properly spoken of as a *kingdom*; and when one considers that

which the New Testament says about this kingdom, he will learn that Jesus is the absolute King, with all the departments of government—legislative, executive, and judicial—vested in him. (See Matt. 28: 18; of. Dan. 7: 13, 14; Phil. 2: 9, 10; 1 Pet. 3: 22. Read again Eph. 1: 22, 23.) If the institution or organism now before us is considered from the standpoint of its *relation to the world*, it is referred to as a *church*, which means the *called out*, the *separated*, or, which is the same thing, those who are *distinct* from the world, having been called out of it by the gospel. (Cf. John 15: 19; 1? 15, 16; 2 Thess. 2: 13, 14.) The church, then, is that body of people who have been called out of the world by the gospel of Christ, and over which he rules as king.

The Golden Text

In whom we have our redemption through his blood." The full context in which the passage just quoted is found is as follows: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ: even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved: in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him, I say, in whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will; to the end that we should be unto the praise of his glory, we who had before hoped in Christ: in whom ye also, having heard the word of truth,

the gospel of your salvation,—in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Eph. 1: 3-14.)

The passage just quoted, which is composed of a single sentence, makes it abundantly clear that all the marvelous blessings which are recounted therein are ours in Christ Jesus; and it has already been pointed out that to be in Christ is to be in his body, which is the church. (Eph. 1: 22, 23; of. 5: 23.) Those who are saved by the blood of Christ are added to the body of the saved (Acts 2: 36-38, 47), and it is certain that the Lord does not save any one outside of his own family or household (Eph. 3: 14, 15). Salvation by the blood of Christ is a subject in which most people who believe in the vicarious death of God's Son are interested; it is, nevertheless, a subject about which there is much confusion.

The confusion just referred to grows out of the fact that many people do not understand how fit is that Christ died for all men (of. Heb. 2: 9), but that the salvation which any person enjoys is a conditional salvation. But if those who are confused about the two propositions just stated will read all that the New Testament says regarding God's plan for

saving the race, he will learn that God wants all men to be saved, and has graciously provided for or made possible the escape from sin for any and every one; but it still remains true that he saves only those who want to be saved and who are willing to obey him. (Cf. Matt. 7: 21-23; Heb. 5: 8, 9.) Every spiritual bless-

ing is in Christ, which certainly includes salvation (Eph. 1: 3), but we can get into Christ only by believing and obeying the gospel (Mark 16: 15, 16; Eph. 1: 13; Gal. 3: 26, 27); and when that is done we pass, as it were, through the blood of Christ, and are thereby made free from all sin.

The Text Explained

Peter's Defense before the Jewish Sanhedrin
(Acts 4: 8-12)

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders, if we this day are examined concerning a good deed done to an impotent man, by what means this man is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in him doth this man stand here before you whole. He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner. 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.

If one will read the entire third chapter of Acts, and the verses of the fourth chapter which precede this section of the lesson text, he will see that the rulers of the Jewish people were disturbed because of the sermon which Peter preached, following the healing of the lame beggar at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. The apostles Peter and John were arrested on the spot, but the response to the gospel message did not appear to be greatly affected; for "many of them that heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand." On the next day, the Jewish leaders brought the apostles to trial; "and when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, By what power, or in what name, have ye done this?"

The vagueness of the question which was put to Peter and John could not have been by accident. The men who asked the question were trained specialists in the art of interrogating witnesses; and if it had

been the disposition of the apostles to quibble regarding it, they could have replied, "Done what? this preaching, this miracle? or what?" Their would-be judges *knew* that nothing contrary to the law had been done; but they evidently framed the question as they did, in the hope that the "bewildered" followers of Jesus would be frightened into saying something which would give the Jewish authorities the basis for a charge against them. That, of course, was a contemptible attitude, and one which was totally lacking in courage; and it is extremely unfortunate that such a spirit did not die with those hypocritical guardians of their profession.

But the cunningly devised question which was directed to the apostles served them well; for it provided them with the opportunity to select the type of answer which was best suited to their purpose in witnessing for Christ: and it is certain that no answer which could have been selected would have been more unwelcome to the men before whom they stood. But the answer which Peter gave was not one which he and John, through their own ingenuity, had framed. Jesus had previously warned his disciples, while they were still in training, that such things would happen to them; and he explained then that help would be given to them for such emergencies. (Cf. Matt. 10: 16-20.) The Holy Spirit guided Peter when he answered the rulers of the Jews.

That which has just been referred to is another example of the manner in which the Holy Spirit manifested his power through the apostles. Peter was filled with the Spirit, and the Spirit spoke through him. (Cf. Acts 2: 1-4.) This is what the New Testament means by direct inspiration. (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 19-21.) The particular answer which was given at the time

now under consideration was one which even the Sanhedrin, that is, the Supreme Court of the Jews, would not dare deny, namely, regarding the manner in which the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple had been made whole. The man himself was there in their presence, and all the people knew about that which had been done. (See Acts 4: 13, 14.) The wonderful power which brought about the cure of the crippled man was attributed to the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom the Sanhedrin had crucified, but whom God had raised from the dead. Thus, not only was the answer which was given through Peter both clear and specific: it also served to put the rulers and elders in direct opposition to the God whom they professed to serve.

The quotation regarding the rejected stone, which Peter applied to the judges before whom he stood, was from Psalm 118: 22; and it served to put them in the ridiculous position of trying to build a house, while at the same time rejecting the very stone which was cut out for the corner, and without which the building could never be completed. (Cf. Matt. 21: 42; Luke 20: 7.) If one will consider all that which is said in the Bible regarding the "corner-stone," or the stone which was made the "head of the corner," he will find that there are probably two senses in which the expression is used, namely, (1) a foundation stone, Isa. 28: 16; of Job 38: 6; and (2) a stone which crowns the building, Zech. 4: 7. It appears therefore that it is correct to assume that the term "corner-stone" is equally applicable to the chief stone in the foundation of the building, and the one at the top. (See Acts 4: 11; of Eph. 2: 20; 1

Pet. 2: 4-8.) And so, whether the reference was to the foundation stone, or to the coping stone which crowns the building, the scribes and the priests who were, so to speak, the builders of God's house, were guilty of rejecting the very stone which he had chosen for the most important place in the building.

The Jewish leaders before whom Peter spoke must have remembered the words which Jesus himself used in this connection, as he spoke to them in the temple; and that would serve only to intensify the

charge which Peter had made against them. Although the reference in the text now before us was to the rejection of Christ by the Jewish leaders of that day, the principle of rejection is still applicable to our day, either in the matter of rejecting Christ outright, or the rejection of that (that is, anything) which he commands men to do. (Cf. John 12: 48-50; Gal. 1: 6-9; 2 John 9-11; James 2: 10.) People can never be too careful about taking seriously that which is contained in the New Testament regarding that which the Lord expects of them today. (Cf. Matt. 7: 21-23; 25: 1-13.)

There is no clearer statement of fact regarding the relation of Christ to the salvation of the human race, nor a more emphatic one, than that which is contained in the lesson text now before us, namely, "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." There was no doubt about the question, as Peter's words rang out in the solemn assembly. (Cf. John 14: 6.) The lesson found in the passage we are now considering must be learned and accepted, before salvation can be enjoyed. To trust in the name of Jesus, as the New Testament teaches, is to have access into the family of God here and now; and then after a life of faithful service in the kingdom of Christ here below, the Christian is assured of a home of eternal bliss in the world which is to come. (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 10, 11.)

The Manner in Which the Believer Is Made Alive in Christ

(Rom. 6: 1-4)

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.

It should be kept in mind that when Paul stated the theme of his epistle to the Romans (Rom. 1: 16,

17), he made it plain that the gospel contains God's plan of righteousness, which makes it possible for him to look upon the sinner, as if he had never sinned. And then, after showing the need for such a plan in Horn. 1: 18-3: 20, the apostle next discusses the divine side of the plan in the remaining verses of the third chapter, all of chapters four and five, and concludes with these words: "And the law came in besides, that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly: that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 5: 20, 21.)

It was against the background just referred to that Paul asked the question at the beginning of chapter 6, which is a kind of debater's phrase in a transitional expression, aimed at turning the discussion from God's justification to the sinner's sanctification. Or, to state the same thing in another way, Paul now proposes to show the manner in which the righteousness of the gospel is to be realized. This is done in great detail in chapters 6-8. If the *justification* which is provided by God is not complemented by the sinner's sanctification, that is, his being redeemed from the world and set apart unto God, the grace of the Divine side would be in vain. (Cf. Gal. 2: 21; Eph. 2: 8-10.) People who die to sin cannot, at the same time, continue to live in it. (Cf. 1 John 3: 9; Phil. 2: 12, 13.)

The baptism which is authorized by the gospel is both "into" (*eis*) Christ and "into" (*eis*) his death, which means that it is transitional, that is, by it one passes from without to within Christ and his death. To be baptized into Christ is to become one with him, and to be baptized into his death is to become identified with its purpose. (Cf. Gal. 2: 20.) This is another way of saying that the old self has passed away, and that Christ has taken its place (of. Matt. 16: 24); all of which means that the Christian stands within the same relationship to sin that Christ does.

Practically all Bible students recognize Romans 6: 4 as being an allusion to the custom of "baptizing by immersion." (Wesley, Barnes,

Clarke, Conybeare and Howson, et al.) William Sanday points out that New Testament baptism has a double function, namely, (1) to bring the redeemed individual into personal contact with Christ, so close that it may be correctly described as union with him; and (2) to express symbolically a series of acts which correspond to those things that took place in the experience of Jesus, in making our salvation possible, namely, his death, burial, and resurrection. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 1-4.) This is another way of saying that the history of redemption is reproduced in the redeemed; and only immersion will answer the demands of these requirements.

Burial is the natural sequence of death, and a kind of seal of its reality; for only the dead are buried. Baptism therefore, which is both "immersion" and "emersion," is a symbol of burying a dead body and of raising it up to a new life; and it is for this reason that baptism is directly related to the three fundamental facts of the gospel. The sinner must die, just as Jesus did, before he is buried; and after his burial he must be raised up to a new life, in keeping with the experience of Jesus. Referring again to Dr. Sanday, those who become Christians must "undergo in a moral and spiritual sense," the things which Jesus did; and "as Christ by his death on the cross ceased from all contact with sin, so the Christian, united with Christ in his baptism, has done once for all with sin and lives henceforth a reformed life dedicated to God." The "newness of life" is a new *kind* or new *quality* of life. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 17; Eph. 2: 10; Tit. 3: 5; Rom. 7: 6; Col. 3: 1-4.)

Union with Christ Brings Victory over Sin (Rom. 6: 5-10)

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 we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for he that hath died is justified from sin. But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being

raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him. For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

The term "for," with which this section of the lesson text begins, connects that which is said in the preceding section with that which is said in this section, especially with regard to the newness of life. The purpose of this section is to show the absolute necessity for such a life. Our baptism is not connected with the death and burial of Jesus only; but also with his resurrection. It was sin which caused the death of Jesus.

and it is sin which also makes it essential that we die this moral and spiritual death; for without our death to sin we could not be united with Christ in either of the three experiences we are now considering.

Furthermore, the need for this new type of living is further confirmed by the reference to the crucifixion of the "old man," which is our old self while dominated by sin. (Cf. Col. 3: 5-11.) The crucifixion of the old self resulted in the death of the body which was ruled by sin; and that implies that the domination by sin has come to an end. (Cf. Rom. 6: 11.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Why do many people think that there is a difference in being saved and in church membership?

Where did the idea of "joining the church" originate?

What does the Bible teach with reference to these questions?

What is wrong with the idea that one can be saved out of the church as well as he can in it?

What are the three basic laws of learning? Give reasons for your answer.

What are some of the other terms used to designate that which is called the church?

What is the purpose and value of considering them together?

Give the fundamental meaning of the "church," the "body," and the "kingdom."

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of this text?

Where are all of God's spiritual blessings, including salvation?

What relationship does the blood of Christ have to our salvation?

Why is this salvation conditional?

Peter's Defense before the Jewish Sanhedrin

What were the circumstances which led up to this defense?

What was the nature of the complaint which the rulers had against the apostles?

In what way did Peter reply to it and who gave him the answer?

What evidently was behind the vagueness of the Sanhedrin with reference to their question?

What advantage did that give to Peter?

What lesson do we learn from these cir-

cumstances regarding the work of the Holy Spirit?

What effect did the reply which Peter gave have on the Sanhedrin?

What charge did the apostle make against the rulers?

What is the lesson regarding the rejected stone and what application does it have today?

What did Peter tell his judges regarding the relation of Christ and salvation?

The Manner in Which the Believer Is Made Alive in Christ

Discuss the circumstances, set forth by Paul in Romans, which led to his question in this section of the lesson text.

In what way does Paul show that the righteousness of the gospel is realized in this age?

Why is the sinner's part so essential to that which the Lord has done?

Where is the "sanctification" of the sinner discussed by the apostle Paul?

What is his affirmation regarding the place and purpose of baptism?

What does it mean to be baptized into Christ, and into his death, burial, and resurrection?

How do we know that the apostle has reference to "immersion" as baptism?

Why, then, is baptism essential to our salvation?

Union with Christ Brings Victory over Sin

What is the force of "for" in the opening statement of this section of the lesson text?

What is the purpose of this portion of Paul's words to the Romans?

Why should the connection of our baptism with the resurrection be emphasized?

What is the nature of this "newness of life"?

Who is the "old man" who is crucified with Christ and what is the implication suggested?

Lesson VII—February 12, 1967

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH

Lesson Text

Rom. 12: 4-8; Eph. 1: 7-10; Col. 2: 8-11

4 For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office:

5 So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another.

6 And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let *us prophesy* according to the proportion of our faith;

7 Or ministry, let *us give ourselves* to our ministry; or he that teacheth, to his teaching;

8 Or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting: he that giveth, let *him do it* with liberality; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

7 In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,

8 Which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,

Golden Text.—“For *it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell*” (Col. 1: 19.)

Devotional Reading.—Eph. 2: 19-22.

9 Making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him

10 Unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him, *I say*.

8 Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ:

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,

10 And in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power:

11 In whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ.

Daily Bible Readings

February 6. M.....	All Fulness in Christ (Col. 1: 1-19)
February 7. T.....	Perfect in Christ (Matt. 5: 43-48)
February 8. W.....	Sufficiency in Christ (Phil. 4: 10-13)
February 9. T.....	Christ's Church, His Body (Eph. 1: 19-23)
February 10. F.....	Christ Loved the Church (Eph. 5: 23-28)
February 11. S.....	Complete in Christ (Col. 2: 8-11)
February 12. S.....	God's Purpose (Eph. 3: 1-21)

Time.—Romans was written in A.D. 58; Ephesians and Colossians, in A.D. 62.

Places.—Romans was written in Corinth; Ephesians and Colossians, in Rome.

Persons.—Paul and those to whom he wrote.

Introduction

It is probably safe to say that the majority of religious people today, that is, those who take their religion seriously, do attach some importance to the church; but it is practically certain that even among those who claim membership in the Lord's church, apart from the popular idea of denominationalism, the failure to

recognize and stress the importance which the New Testament places upon the church is far too great. This, of course, is due to the fact that many do not themselves understand the inspired teaching regarding the church; and that, in turn, is one of the reasons why so much time and effort are being given to

the various aspects of the church in the lessons of this quarter.

According to the teaching of the New Testament, the church and the saved are one and the same; and that means that the church is as important as the saved. This, of course, makes the idea that one can be saved out of the church ridiculous; for it is equivalent to saying that one can be saved without being saved. The church, as has been repeated over and over again in previous lessons, is the body of Christ; and the apostle Paul says that he is "himself the saviour of the body." It would be interesting to hear some of the advocates of salvation "outside" the church give the New Testament teaching, as to the identity of those who are saved outside the "body of the saved," which the inspired writers declare to be the church. Furthermore, Peter says, as we saw in last week's lesson, that there is no salvation outside Christ. "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. John 14: 6; 2

Tim. 2: 10.)

The apostle Paul further says that "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (See Eph. 5: 25-27.) The church is also spoken of as the family of God; and what father is there who does not attach importance to his own household? "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." (1 Tim. 3: 14, 15.) That which has just been said regarding the conduct of the Lord's people can only mean that they are under direct obligation to order their lives in keeping with their relationship to God. (Cf. Eph. 5: 1, 2.) No one can feel toward the church as he should, or be a faithful member of it, without daily efforts to follow the Lord.

The Golden Text

"For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell" Comments of human origin could easily be made on the words just quoted, but it is doubtful if any of them would throw the light on them which is done by the context itself. If one will read these inspired words of Paul, he not only will appreciate more the divine importance of the church, but will also see more clearly his own responsibility as a member of the body. And as we read Paul's words, we should keep in mind that the term "fulness" means, according to Vincent and other Greek scholars, the sum-total of the divine powers and attributes. The passage now before us, along with Paul's further statement in Col. 2: 9, makes it abundantly clear that Christ partook of the very nature of God. Vincent continues: "Thus the phrase in him *should all the fulness dwell* gathers into a grand climax the previous statements—*image of God, first-born of all creation, creator, the eternally preexistent, the head of the church,*

the victor over death, first in all things. On this summit we pause, looking, like John, from Christ in his fulness of deity to the exhibition of that divine fulness in redemption consummated in heaven (verses 20-22)." But the context, already referred to, follows:

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins: who is the image of the invisible

God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of the cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens." (Col. 1: 9-20.)

It would be difficult, if not indeed impossible, to find a greater statement on the meaning of church membership, than that which is found in the passage just quoted. Christ, the head of the church, partakes of the fulness or nature of the Father (Col. 2: 9), and is in a sense the extension of his, that is, the Father's, ministry; and just so, the church, as the fulness of Christ, par-

takes of his nature and is the extension of his ministry here upon the earth. (Cf. Eph. 1: 22, 23.) The church, of course, is made up of people, that is, of human beings, who have been redeemed from sin by Christ; and it is a recorded fact that no higher relationship can be enjoyed by those of flesh and blood, than that which is theirs in Christ Jesus. It was pointed out in a previous lesson that in Colossians Paul placed the emphasis upon the preeminence of Christ as the head of all things, especially the church; and in doing so he set forth the grandest and fullest conception of the person and work of Christ which is known to us. But when he came to write Ephesians he shifted the emphasis somewhat, and centered the attention of his readers upon the place and purpose of the church, the body of Christ, as the medium through which the eternal purpose of God is made known, and through which he is to receive glory from his redeemed creatures. With this view of the matter therefore, what could be more important than the church of the Lord Jesus Christ?

The Text Explained

The Proper Attitude toward and
Use of God's Gifts
(Rom. 12: 4-8)

For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same offices: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another. And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry; or he that teacheth, to his teaching; or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting: he that giveth, let him do it with liberality; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

The verses just quoted should be studied in the light of the preceding verse, and of the twelfth and fourteenth chapters of First Corinthians. The full paragraph, containing the section of the lesson text now before us, is rendered by Phillips in these words: "As your spiritual teacher I

give this piece of advice to each one of you. Don't cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance, but try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities by the light of the faith that God has given to you all. For just as you have many members in one physical body and those members differ in their functions, so we, though many in number, compose one body in Christ and are all members of one another. Through the grace of God we have different gifts. If our gift is preaching, let us preach to the limit of our vision. If it is serving others let us concentrate on our service; if it is teaching let us give all we have to our teaching; and if our gift be the stimulating of the faith of others let us set ourselves to it. Let the man who is called to give, give freely; let the man who wields authority think of his responsibility; and let the man who feels sympathy for his fellows act cheerfully."

Any one who reads Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, and especially

chapters 12 and 14, will easily see that some of those brethren coveted and exercised the gifts which they considered spectacular for their own exaltation. The same situation was probably a temptation to some of the Homan Christians, hence the exhortation which the apostle gave. In referring to both the Corinthians and the Romans, Hodge says, "He [that is, Paul] showed his readers that these gifts were all gratuitous, and were, therefore, occasions of gratitude, but not grounds of boasting. He reminds his readers that the design for which these gifts were bestowed, was the edification of the church, and not the exaltation of the receiver; that, however diversified in their nature, they were all manifestations of one and the same Spirit, and were as necessary to a perfect whole as the several members of the body, with their various offices, to a perfect man. Having one Spirit, and constituting one body, any exaltation of one over the other was as unnatural as the eye or ear disregarding and despising the hand or the foot. As this tendency to abuse their official and spiritual distinctions was not confined to the Corinthian Christians, we find the apostle, in this passage, giving substantially the same instructions to the Romans."

Any careful student of the Scriptures and of human nature knows that the same principle is just as applicable today, as it was in New Testament times. Christians now, as in all ages of the dispensation, have various and sundry gifts and talents, and they are expected to use whatever ability or opportunity they have in the service of Christ, and not for selfish purposes. Just because one is an outstanding preacher, song leader, Bible teacher, or whatever his capability may be, he is not to try to let it be known that he is better than some less gifted brother. (Cf. 2 Cor. 10: 12.) "For who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? but if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. 4: 7.) Some are gifted business men, and they can therefore, as a rule, contribute more money to the cause of the Lord. Others are qualified for the eldership, and they should be willing to discharge that responsibility cheerfully.

No human body can measure up to its full strength, unless each several member performs its part; and that it precisely what the apostle Paul teaches regarding the members of the church. (See Eph. 4: 11-16.)

Universal Redemption Is Only in
Christ
(Eph. 1: 7-10)

In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him, I say.

Those who are familiar with the text of the *American Standard Version* of the New Testament, are aware of the fact that the passage just quoted is from the middle of a long sentence, beginning with verse 3 and ending with verse 14. This can be both complicated and confusing, unless one reads the entire statement, that is, all of Ephesians 1: 3-14. Several other versions, however, arrange the section of the lesson text now before us in two shorter complete sentences. One example of this is *The New Testament in Plain English*, namely, "In him we have deliverance through his blood, the forgiveness of our offenses, according to the wealth of his grace, which he has poured out upon us in every kind of wisdom and understanding. He has made known to us the secret of his will, according to the purpose which he planned for us in Christ that, when the fulness of the times was worked out, he might unite everything in him, everything both in heaven and on earth." (Cf. Weymouth's *The New Testament in Modern Speech*; the *Revised Standard Version*; *The Amplified Bible*; and others.)

The section of the lesson text now under consideration is taken from that part of Ephesians, which is regarded as being perhaps one of the greatest pieces of intelligent information which ever passed through the mind of man and for the benefit of the human race. When Jehovah

created the universe in the beginning it was perfect. (Isa. 45: 18; Job 38: 4-7). The earth became the home of the human race which God created, and the earth was described as being pleasing to him. "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."

We do not know how long the first human pair continued in their Edenic bliss before they were led into sin; but we do know that following that event the earth was cursed, to the extent that it could no longer be regarded as the paradise which Adam and Eve had known. "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee: and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Gen. 3: 17-19.)

The apostle Paul evidently referred to the cursing of the earth in Rom. 8: 19-21; and when all the facts are carefully considered, it appears the reference in Eph. 1: 10 is to that redemption, as well as to the reclaiming of the lost in sin from the dominion of Satan. Or, to state the same thing in another way, it is God's eternal purpose to gather the whole created universe—"to sum up all things"—in Christ, and thereby restore harmony, both between the creatures themselves, and between them and God as their Creator. (Read Rom. 8: 18-25; 1 Cor. 15: 24-28; 2 Pet. 3: 10-13.) Paul's continuous prayer was for that glorious consummation; and in order that the brethren to whom he wrote might achieve that goal (of. Phil. 3: 13-16), the apostle's whole endeavor was that they might have a full and clear knowledge of the eternal purpose of God which he was working out through Christ Jesus.

In the expression "according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ," the word "dispensation" carries with it the idea of *ad-*

ministration with reference to the things with which the administrator is charged: in this case Jesus who was given the task of redeeming the human race, and restoring order in the created universe. (Cf. Matt. 28: 18; Acts 3: 20, 21. For further use of the term "dispensation" or *stewardship* see Luke 16: 2-4; Eph. 3: 2, 9; Col. 1: 25; 1 Tim. 1: 4.) Thus, it can be plainly seen that the work which Christ came to do involves the saving of men from sin (of. 1 John 3: 8); all of his other work is subordinate to the grand work of redeeming the lost (of. Matt. 1: 21; Luke 19: 10). That body of people who are rescued from the bondage of Satan are called the Lord's church. (Cf. Eph. 1: 22, 23.)

Everything, argues Paul as he reaches the climax of the matchless epistle from which the section of the lesson text now under consideration is taken centers in the purpose of God. All discord, not only in the natural creation, but also between the elements in the church—all distinction between Jew and Gentile—must yield to that grand purpose (of. 1 Cor. 1: 10; 1 Pet. 2: 1, 2), if God's will is to be done. In the words of another, "The vision is one of a great oneness in Christ and through him in God, a oneness of birth and faith and life and love, as men, touched with the fire of that Divine purpose, seek to fulfil, each in himself, the part that God has given him to play in the world, and, fighting against the foes of God, to overcome at last." (Cf. Rev. 7: 9-17.)

The Sufficiency of Christ (Col. 2:8-11)

Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power: in whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ.

The occasion for writing the epistle to the Colossians, or so it seems, was to combat some erroneous teaching which was being done in

that city, and which threatened the very foundation of the faith of the gospel, as may be seen by the vigorous manner in which Paul sought to protect the brethren against it. It appears that the false teachers did not regard themselves as enemies of Christianity, but only felt that they were enriching and enlarging its teaching. Or, to state the same things in another way, they accepted the truth of Christianity, but tried to add to it that which they regarded as being deeper knowledge, to which they claimed to have access. Their theory is now known as "the Colossian heresy"; and it was the initial phase of that subtle philosophy, which in later years came to be known as Gnosticism.

The system just referred to was not merely a fantastic theory, or a frivolous speculation. It was, on the contrary, a serious effort on the part of its proponents to solve an ancient and an abiding problem, that of the origin of evil. But notwithstanding that motive, it was a pernicious heresy; and, had it prevailed, the truth of the gospel would have perished. It was against the later developments of this false teaching that John

wrote his epistles. The apostle Paul, in the chapter from which this section of the lesson for today is taken, warned his readers against four errors, which probably were the constituent parts of the one system which was being urged upon the Colossian Christians, namely, (1) a self-styled philosophy or *gnosis*—2: 4, 8; (2) Jewish ritualism—2: 11, 14, 16, 17; (3) angel worship—2: 18; and (4) ascetic practices—2: 20-23.

And so Paul, using the vocabulary of the heretics, told the Colossian brethren that in Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." With reference to circumcision, he declared that in Christ they "were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands." In speaking of the attractive symbols of the "mystery religions," Paul explained that in baptism they were buried with Christ, and raised with him through faith. He further told them that the perfect "mystery" is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1: 27.) That in Christ "are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden" (2: 3), and in him all things and all peoples find completion and unity (1: 18-23).

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why do so many people feel toward the church as they do?
What do you find regarding this situation among your acquaintances?
What is the relationship between the church and the saved? Give reasons for your answer.
Why is it impossible for one to be saved outside the church?
How does Christ feel toward the church and what did he do about it?
What does the family relationship of the church suggest regarding it?
What responsibility does this relationship impose upon the individual members?

The Golden Text

Why is it important to read the setting of the golden text?
What is meant by all the "fulness" dwelling in Christ?
What do we learn regarding the meaning of "church membership" in the context now before us?
Why is our relationship to Christ so great?
What does this suggest regarding the importance of the church?

The Proper Attitude toward) the Use of God's Gifts

What may be considered an inspired com-

mentary on this section of the lesson text? Give reasons for your answer.

What improper attitude did some of the early Christians manifest toward spiritual gifts?

How should the Lord's people feel toward any of God's gifts?

What is the value of having different gifts or abilities in the congregation?

What does the full use of all such gifts imply?

Why is mere show or display improper with reference to any of one's abilities?

Universal Redemption Is Only in Christ

In what setting are the words of this section of the lesson text found?

What help in studying them may be had from various translations?

What was behind the need for the restoration of all things?

Why was the earth placed under a curse?

What does the apostle Paul say regarding the curse of the natural world?

What is the meaning and use of the word "dispensation" in the lesson text?

What, then, is involved in the redemptive work of Christ?

How is all of this related to the "purpose" of God?

The Sufficiency of Christ

Against what kind of a background did Paul write the Colossian letter?

Tell something of "the Colossian heresy" and discuss some of its dangers. Of what pernicious system was it apparently the forerunner? What four basic errors of the Colossian heresy did Paul refer to?

What was his purpose in writing as he did in this section of the lesson text? In what way did he deal with the heretical teaching? What, then, is the answer to all such false teaching?

Lesson VIII—February 19, 1967

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 1: 10-17; Eph. 4: 1-6

10 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.

11 For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them *that are of the household* of Chlo'-ē, that there are contentions among you.

12 Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of A-pol'-los; and I of Ce'-phas; and I of Christ.

13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?

14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, save Cris'-pus and Gaius;

15 Lest any man should say that ye were baptized in my name.

16 And I baptized also the house-

hold of Steph'-a-nas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void.

1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called,

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

3 Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4 *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling;

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.

Golden Text.—"*That they may all be one . . . that the world may believe that thou didst send me.*" (John 17: 21.)

Devotional Reading.—1 Cor. 12: 12-19.

Daily Bible Readings

February 13. M.	One Body (Eph. 4: 1-6)
February 14. T.	One Flock, One Shepherd (John 10: 12-18)
February 15. W.	Many Members, but One Body (Rom. 12: 3-8)
February 16. T.	Baptized into One Body (1 Cor. 12: 12-20)
February 17. F.	God and Christ One (John 10: 27-37)
February 18. S.	Christ's Prayer (John 17: 20-26)
February 19. S.	Division Sinful (1 Cor. 1: 1-10)

Time.—First Corinthians was written in A.D. 57; Ephesians, in A.D. 62.

Places.—First Corinthians was written in Ephesus; Ephesians, in Rome.

Persons.—Paul and the ones to whom he wrote.

Introduction

One of the cardinal doctrines of the New Testament is the unity of the Lord's people; or, which is the same thing, the unity of the church. The apostle Paul and other inspired writers of the New Testament dis-

uss this subject frequently and at length in their various epistles. This is especially true of the passage which serves as the devotional reading for today. Paul's immediate aim in that portion of his letter to the

Corinthians is to set forth the organic unity of the body of Christ, which he elsewhere (Eph. 1: 22, 23) declares to be the church; and he accomplishes his purpose, and illustrates his point, by comparing the church to the human body. If one will keep in mind the fact that the human body, although having many parts, is still only one body, and that it cannot function properly without the normal use of each of its several parts, it will be much easier for him to understand the nature and purpose of the church. No thoughtful person would contend that the various members of the human body are "separate bodies," all of which are integral parts of the whole; but that is the ridiculous position in which one places himself, when he tries to justify the idea that all the denominational bodies in Christendom are in reality parts of the church of the Lord.

In spite of the organic union of the Roman Empire of Paul's day, there were many divisions among the people who made up the empire, such as those which existed between Jews and Gentiles, masters and slaves, the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, et cetera. The attitudes which grew out of these relationships produced barriers among the various peoples which were almost insurmountable. The entire world was seamed and scarred by divisions, which separated men from men and individuals from each other. It was into this kind of a situation that the gospel came, with its appeal to the people of the earth. This message was not limited to a favored few, but was for all men, regardless of their station or relation-

ship in life. (Cf. John 12: 32; Mark 16: 15, 16.) But the gospel did not call men to continue in their divisions; all who responded to its message were to be one in Christ. (Col. 3: 9b-15.) All of their former enmities and unholy attitudes toward one another were to be left behind when they came into Christ. (Cf. Isa. 11: 6-9.)

It was to people with a background similar to that which we have been discussing that Paul addressed the exhortation found in the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians; and when we consider the fact that the unity which is here alluded to is the unity which the Spirit himself brought about, as we shall see later on in this study, the importance of the lesson will at once become apparent. The first thing which the apostle does in the passage now before us is to show the unity of the human body, with its various members; and he then affirms that the same principle is also true of Christ and the members of his body, that is, the church. This is the kind of unity which the Spirit brings about, when people obey the gospel; and they are under direct obligation to make every effort to maintain it. Paul makes it clear in 1 Cor. 12: 13 that it is through the agency of the Spirit that we were "all baptized into one body," regardless of our former relationships in life. This baptism, of course, is water baptism, the baptism of the great commission; and it is administered by the Lord's people as the Spirit directs. All classes of people therefore who obey the gospel reach a spiritual equality before God in this body, which is the church. (See Gal. 3: 26-28.)

The Golden Text

"That they may all be one . . . that the world may believe that thou didst send me" It has already been pointed out that one of the fundamental ideas set forth in the New Testament with reference to the church, is its organic unity. When Jesus offered his intercessory prayer, from which the words of the golden text are taken, he made a principal feature of it the oneness of his followers. After having prayed for the disciples who were with him at that time, he offered this petition, from which the words of the text now un-

der consideration are taken: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me." (John 17: 20, 21.) Jesus had made it plain in verse 18 that he was sending the disciples into the world, just as the Father had sent him; and the whole context shows that their work was to be an extension of his.

The underlying purpose of the

mission of Christ and his disciples into the world was and is to make believers, and Jesus in the prayer now before us, looked forward to the results which are in keeping with the Father's will, namely, a united and dedicated brotherhood. For Jesus there was and is no problem in the continued existence of an earthly society of believers after his resurrection from the dead; for he himself willed it and prayed for those who would be members of it, through the word of his disciples. It should be noted, however, that the unity of the Lord's people throughout the present dispensation is not merely a matter of unanimity, nor does it mean that the members of this spiritual body lose their identity. This unity, on the contrary, is strictly analogous to the unity of the Father and the Son. The Father is active in the Son (of. John 14: 10; 2 Cor. 5: 18, 19), and the deeds of the Son are meaningless apart from the Father (John 12: 48-50), and indeed would be impossible (John 5: 19). Furthermore, the Son is in the Father, is eternally with him in the Holy Trinity, active alike in creation and redemption. The Father and the Son are one, and yet remain distinct.

It is the unity of the Father and

the Son, enlarged and extended so as to include all faithful disciples, thus making it a triple instead of a dual unity, which must characterize all believers in Christ. These believers are one: they are also in the Father and in the Son, and yet distinct from both; and are themselves the sphere of divine activity. (See Phil. 2: 13.) This is indeed the highest conception of unity which is possible for human beings; and it is an indisputable fact that the unity of all the followers of Christ is a basic doctrine of the New Testament. Jesus does not teach conflicting doctrines; and no one can be pleasing to him who either teaches or adheres to such. The Lord makes it plain in the passage now before us that one of the expected results of the unity of believers is the conversion of the world; but it is next to useless to call upon others to accept the New Testament plan of salvation, while those who claim to stand upon the Bible alone ignore its teaching regarding this question. Many of the passages which are commonly used to condemn sectarian division, as that expression is generally understood, were written primarily for the purpose of correcting internal conditions in local congregations.

The Text Explained

An Appeal for Unity

(1 Cor. 1: 10-17)

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. For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them that are of the household of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, save Crispus and Gaius; lest any man should say that ye were baptized into my name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel:

not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void.

One has only to read the Book of First Corinthians in order to see the wide range of subjects over which the Corinthian brethren were divided. It would be utterly impossible for any one to study the New Testament, either from the standpoint of its letter or its spirit, without reaching the conclusion that God intends for all of his children in this age to be one in Christ. And so, in the section of the lesson text now before us, Paul pleads with his brethren in Corinth "through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" to speak the same thing. This is the tenth time, in so many verses, that the apostle has mentioned the name of Christ; and, as some one has suggested, he literally tied them to Christ, as he endeavored to get them to change their thinking, and, consequently, their action.

It has already been pointed out in this lesson that one of the funda-

mental doctrines of the New Testament is the unity of all believers in Christ. This is made abundantly clear, as has also been called to our attention, by the fact that Jesus does not teach conflicting doctrines; and that no one can be pleasing to him who either teaches or adheres to such. Division among the followers of Christ is condemned by inspired writers in no uncertain terms; and every one who is responsible for such a state of affairs is nowhere left in doubt as to what his eternal portion shall be. (Cf. Rom. 16: 17, 18; Tit. 3: 10, 11; Gal. 5: 19-21.) The responsibility of maintaining unity among the brethren falls directly upon each individual who has the opportunity of doing something about it; and it goes without saying that if professed Christians really want to bring about the unity of all the peoples of the earth, they should first make an honest effort to set their own house in order.

Those who are familiar with the teaching of the New Testament, however, are aware of the fact that not all division among those who profess to follow Christ is undesirable. The apostle Paul makes this clear in 1 Cor. 11: 17-19, namely, "But in giving you this charge, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you." The New English Bible renders verse 19, parenthetically, in these words: "For dissensions are necessary if only to show which of your members are sound." This does not mean, of course, that it is right to create division, but rather that it sometimes becomes necessary, in order to show the difference between right and wrong. The apostle John says substantially the same thing in his first epistle (1 John 2: 19); and it should be observed that not every one who professed to be a member of the Lord's church is recognized by him as being loyal and faithful to him. And then, on the other hand, there are divisions which result from doing the right thing, as may be seen by reading Matthew 10: 34-37. No follower

of Christ is justified in rejecting the truth, or in compromising any part of it, for the sake of having peace with those who are not in sympathy with the Lord's teaching, either because of their outright rejection of it, or because they fail to understand it.

The reference to Chloe and her household, in the text now before us, is all the information which we have regarding them; and we do not know for certain just how the report concerning the divided condition of the Corinthian church was transmitted to Paul. It is possible, and even probably, that the report was brought to him by the brethren who are referred to in 1 Cor. 16: 17, 18. But regardless of the manner in which Paul received the information about the Corinthian brethren, he considered it as being authentic, and he wanted them to know from whom he received it and how he felt about it. The apostle's concern was not simply to have the disturbing information, but he wanted to take advantage of the opportunity which it afforded him to try to correct the offenders. It is unfortunate that some brethren appear merely to want to use that which they hear about others as a subject of gossip or condemnation; for they seemingly never make an effort, in the spirit of Christ, to try to get those who may be guilty of wrongdoing to change their way for the better.

It is quite possible that the Greek love for faction was showing itself, at the time Paul wrote First Corinthians, in the church in Corinth. The followers of Apollos were probably those who preferred his philosophical and rhetorical preaching, to the simpler and more direct manner in which Paul presented his message. (Cf. Acts 18: 24-28; 1 Cor. 2: 1-5.) Cephas was the Aramaic word for Peter, and his name was probably used as the rallying-point for the Judaizing Christians, who claimed him as the apostle of the circumcision. (Cf. Gal. 2: 7-9.) There is, of course, no evidence that Apollos and Peter approved the attitude of those who claimed to be their followers, any more than Paul did those who claimed to be his disciples. The manner in which Paul mentions Christ in the passage now before us apparently indicates that those who

claimed to follow him were doing so in a partisan spirit. (Cf. 2 Cor. 10: 7.) The context of the passage just cited clearly implies that the ones referred to were not in sympathy with Paul; and since there is no question about his being approved of Christ, it logically follows that his opponents were not, that is, not in the true sense of the term. (Cf. Luke 10: 16.)

Instead of the interrogatory form — "Is Christ divided?" — Vincent points out that some of the best expositors render the expression as an assertion, namely, "*Christ has been divided by your controversies.*" Dr. Vincent then goes on to say that this gives a perfectly good and forcible sense, and is favored by the absence of the interrogative particle *me*, which introduces the next clause. The interrogative form does not occur in the Greek text of Westcott and Hort, which is one of the best. The clause regarding Paul's being crucified for 'the Corinthians, and their having been baptized into his name, is a part of a separate sentence in Westcott and Hort's text, and is in the form of a question, being preceded by the particle *me*, which demands an emphatic "No." But whatever may be the truth regarding all this, the whole idea on the part of Paul was to make the Corinthian brethren see how absurd and wicked their party spirit and practices were. This should be an impressive lesson to us today; for it is very obvious that many are following in the footsteps of the brethren to whom Paul addressed the letter from which this section of the lesson text is taken.

It should be carefully observed that the apostle Paul did not say that he thanked God that the Corinthian brethren had not been baptized, but, as Moffatt renders the statement, "I am thankful now that I baptized none of you, except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say you were baptized in my name."

This is a situation which can easily be duplicated now, that is, members of the church can manifest an unwholesome attitude toward preachers whom they greatly admire. Both preachers and thoughtful brethren should discourage such a practice. It appears that as Paul was dictating the letter to his amanuensis (we

would call him a secretary or letter-writer), he recalled the fact that he had also baptized the household of Stephanas; and he conscientiously recorded that fact. The apostle then went on to explain why he did not do more baptizing. (See verse 17.) The Interpreter's Bible points out the fact that some commentators have drawn the false conclusion that Paul was depreciating baptism, a thing which was the farthest from his intention. Faith *and* baptism bring the believer into union with Christ (of. 1 Cor. 12: 12, 13), and since baptism is the necessary sequel of preaching, the latter was the higher ministry; and the baptizing of converts could be, and apparently often was, performed by the preacher's assistants. That probably was the reason why Paul took such men as John Mark (Acts 13: 5) and Timothy (Acts 16: 1-3) with him on his missionary journeys.

The Unity of the Spirit Involves Consecrated Activity

(Eph. 4: 1-3)

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The immediate context of this and the next section of the lesson text for today's lesson, is Eph. 4: 1-16; and it should be carefully read at this time. The term "therefore," at the beginning of the statement now before us, shows that there is a connection between that which Paul is about to say, and that which has already been said in the preceding chapters of the epistle. Thus, before attempting to determine that which Eph. 4: 1-16 teaches, one should consider the passage in the light of its place in the epistle as a whole.

The entire Ephesian letter falls naturally into two major divisions, each containing three chapters. In the first three chapters, Paul deals mainly with the church as the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose in Christ; while in the last three chapters, the apostle carefully points out that the privileges which God has made possible for his people can be enjoyed only by practical Chris-

tian living. As Paul views the matter in the Ephesian letter, God's eternal purpose is to gather together in one body the whole created universe and thereby restore harmony, both among the various elements, and between them and himself as their Creator. The apostle's prayers were for that glorious consummation, and his aim was to see that his readers might have a full and clear knowledge of the eternal purpose of God, which he was working out through his Son.

Paul's statement in Eph. 4: 1-16, which is the beginning of the hortatory or practical part of the epistle, may be regarded as an earnest plea for a life in conformity with the Christian's vocation; and the passage may be further divided into the following parts, namely, (1) a general appeal for unity, 1-3; (2) the nature of the unity of the Spirit, 4-6; (3) unity in diversity and the Lord's method of preserving it, 7-12; and (4) the perfection of unity or its ultimate full realization, 13-16. We are concerned in this lesson with the first two of the parts just mentioned; and it should be kept in mind that the Lord's people are not required to *bring about* Christian unity, but *to maintain* the unity which the Spirit creates.

It appears that some people have the idea that the unity of the Spirit consists primarily in a fraternal feeling toward each other, even though widely different viewpoints regarding teaching and practice may be held by them. But the only way in

which faithful Christians can keep the unity of the Spirit, is for them to do their best to follow the course which the writers of the New Testament prescribe for them.

The Nature of the Unity of the

Spirit

(Eph. 4: 4-6)

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.

When one considers the great purpose of God, as discussed by Paul in the Ephesian letter, he can easily think of the church as a great spiritual melting-pot, in which all people who become members of it are made one in Christ Jesus. And in summing up this great unity, the apostle points out, first of all, that there is one body, namely, the church; and that it is animated by one Spirit. (Read again 1 Cor. 12: 12, 13.) Paul then goes on to show that all the members of the church have a common hope, are ruled over by one Lord, believe the same thing, were separated from the world and brought together by one baptism (see Gal. 3: 26, 27), with the result that we all have a common Father, "who is over all, through all, and in all." No one can consider these stirring words about the meaning and nature of the church, without having his interest quickened with respect to its unity.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Why is the unity of the church such an important subject?

In what way does Paul illustrate and enforce his teaching about the organic unity of the body of Christ?

What effect does the use of the human body as an illustration have on the idea of denominationalism?

Into what kind of a situation did the gospel first go and with what result?

Who is responsible for the unity of those who obey the gospel?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of the golden text spoken?

What great work did Jesus give his disciples to do with reference to the world?

What great result did Jesus envision from the labors of his people?

Discuss the kind of unity of his people for which Jesus prayed.

What great responsibility does this place upon those who are members of the Lord's church?

An Appeal for Unity

Why was the question of unity so applicable to the Corinthian brethren?

How did Paul endeavor to enforce his teaching with reference to the question of unity?

Discuss the New Testament teaching with reference to unity and divisions.

Are all the divisions undesirable? Give reasons for your answer.

How did Paul learn about the divisions in the church in Corinth?

What use did he make of this information?

What was probably responsible for the divisions among the Corinthian brethren?

In what way did Paul speak of them?

For what did he give thanks to God and why?

Is preaching the gospel more important than baptizing people?

The Unity of the Spirit Involves Consecrated Activity

In what setting is this section of the lesson text found and how should it be considered?

What are the main divisions of the Book of Ephesians and with what does each deal?

Analyze that part of Ephesians in which this portion of the lesson text is found. Who is responsible for the unity of the church and what Christian duty grows out of it?

What appears to be the idea of some people with reference to the unity of the Spirit?

How alone can faithful Christians keep the unity of the Spirit?

The Nature of the Unity of the Spirit

To what may the church be compared, when one thinks of it in the light of God's great purpose regarding it?

What are the basic "planks" in the platform of Christian unity?

Discuss the place of each one of these with reference to the whole.

What great fact should quicken our interest in the unity of the church?

Lesson IX—February 26, 1967

THE MARKS OF THE TRUE CHURCH

Lesson Text

Acts 9: 31; 1 Cor. 4: 14-17; Rev. 2: 1-7

13 So the church throughout all Ju-dae'-a and Gal'-i-lee and Sa-ma'-ri-a had peace, being edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, was multiplied.

14 I write not these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

15 For though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Je'-sus I begat you through the gospel.

16 I beseech you therefore, be ye imitators of me.

17 For this cause have I sent unto you Tim'-o-thy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church.

1 To the angel of the church in Eph'-e-sus write:

These things saith he that holdeth

the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks:

2 I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false;

3 And thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary.

4 But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love.

5 Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nic-o-la'-i-tans, which I also hate.

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk." (Gal. 5: 25.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—1 Cor. 11: 16.

Daily Bible Readings

- February 20. M.....Founded by Christ (Matt. 16: 13-21)
- February 21. T.....Established in Jerusalem (Acts 2: 37-47)
- February 22. W.....Christ the Foundation (Eph. 2: 14-22)
- February 23. T.....Containing the Saved (Acts 2: 47; Eph. 5: 23)
- February 24. F.....Members Called Christians (Acts 11: 26; 1 Pet. 4: 16)
- February 25. S.....Lord's Day Meetings (1 Cor. 16: 1, 2; Acts 20: 7)
- February 26. S.....House of God (1 Tim. 3: 14-16)

TIME.—Acts, about A.D. 36; First Corinthians was written in A.D. 57; Revelation, about A.D. 96.

PLACES.—Acts, throughout Palestine; First Corinthians was written in Rome; Revelation on Patmos.

PERSONS.—The church in Palestine; Paul and the Corinthians; John and the Ephesians.

Introduction

The lesson for today and the one for next Lord's day, as we shall see, are very closely related. In the one we shall consider some of the characteristics of a faithful church, while in the other the effort will be to present marks of identification; so that those who are seeking for the church of the New Testament will be able to recognize it. But notwithstanding the fact that these two features are divided into two separate lessons, there will be of necessity an overlapping, to some extent, of the subject matter to be considered. This, however, is entirely in order, and is in keeping with the basic laws of learning, referred to earlier in this quarter. There are too many people who do not appreciate the value of repetition.

The commission which the Lord gave to his disciples, during the approximately forty days between his resurrection and ascension, is in two principal parts, namely, that which is to be done in an effort to bring men to Christ, and that which is essential to the training and development of those in Christ, so that they can live lives of faithfulness and thereby prepare themselves for eternal service in the world to come. God's original plan was for his will to be supreme, but after the fall of Adam and Eve a rival will claimed

the attention of the human race. This is why it became necessary that an effort be made to rescue man from sin, and make it possible for him to have perfect fellowship with his Maker again. (Cf. Eccl. 7: 29; Matt. 6: 10b; Rev. 22: 3.)

The distinction between the two parts of the great commission is clearly stated by Matthew in these words: "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 first gospel sermon under this commission was preached on the following Pentecost; and it was reported by Luke, along with the results which followed, in the second chapter of Acts. (See Acts 2: 1-41.) And then the very next verse, which is the first statement of church history, gives some idea of the manner in which the early church put into practice the second part of the Lord's commission to his people. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2: 42.)

The Golden Text

"If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk" The words of this text are taken from that portion of Galatians in which Paul shows that the only way to please God is for men to regulate their lives by the Spirit; for if that is done, it will then be impossible for them to carry out the desires of the flesh. The full context of the passage is as follows: "But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would.

But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revellings and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 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 the lusts thereof. If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk. Let us not become vain-glorious, provoking one another, envying one another." (Gal. 5: 16-26.)

Any one who reads the passage just quoted can easily see what it means to live a life which is dedicated to the flesh; and he can also see the only possible way by which he can overcome such sinful practices. The Christian is expected to live a life in harmony with the will of God which has been made known through the gospel by the Spirit. This is what is meant by living by the Spirit, or, which is the same thing, by walking by the Spirit. The Lord's people have a threefold relationship which they must do something about, namely, toward God, their fellow men, and themselves; and it can easily be seen that the teaching of the Spirit covers all three of them. The fruits of the Spirit are the results of that life, and the first three which Paul mentions cover our relation to God, the second three, our relation to our fellow

men, and the last three, our relation to ourselves.

The words of the golden text are a reminder that we must order our lives according to the direction of the Spirit; and if that is done, we will have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts thereof. It is practically impossible to over-estimate the value of self-control in the life of a child of God. If the denial of self is the first condition of discipleship (see Matt. 16: 24), then the lack of self-control is the beginning of sin; and it also makes progress in the right direction impossible. This is true because the lack of self-control means dissipation of energy and the waste of God-given power. The attainment of self-control, on the other hand, gives to life the very things which the lack of it deprives one of. The greatest asset which any one has in this life is his character, and it is only by living as the Spirit directs that the proper kind of character can be developed. All of this is made clear in 2 Pet. 1: 5-11, which should be carefully read at this time.

The Text Explained

The Marks of a Spiritually Prosperous Church

(Acts 9: 31)

So the church throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, was multiplied.

The term "church," as used in this section of the lesson text, has reference, not to a single congregation, but rather to the Lord's people throughout the regions of Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria, which is Palestine or Canaan. But since the church throughout the areas designated in the text consisted, for the most part at least, of individual congregations, the principle of prosperity regarding the church is the same, whether the reference is to one congregation or to many. And with this idea in mind, it is probably better to think of individual congregations, while endeavoring to point out the marks of a church which is acceptable to God.

Thoughtful people who are inter-

ested in the growth of the cause of Christ here upon the earth, are always glad to see churches enjoy periods of prosperity; but they are usually quick to point out that they have in mind spiritual prosperity. But there are many people who get their values confused, and regard physical and material prosperity as indicating favor with the Lord. The principle which we are now discussing is forcefully illustrated in the record of the seven churches in Asia. The two congregations which gained the highest commendation from the Lord were apparently among the poorest, so far as material possessions were concerned. They were the churches in Smyrna and in Philadelphia. In sending the message to Smyrna, Jesus directed John to say for him, "I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich.)" It requires much more than material possessions in order for a church of the Lord to be prosperous.

It is also apparently true that the church among the seven in Asia which enjoyed the greatest material prosperity, was the one which was

the lowest in the estimation of the Lord. That was the church in Laodicea. It will probably do us all good to read, just here, the entire letter which was addressed to the angel of that congregation. "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." (Rev. 3: 14-22.)

That which has been said above is sufficient to show that neither material prosperity nor the lack of it, in and of itself, will commend a church to the Lord. It takes more than material prosperity nor the lack of it, in them, to bring a congregation into the Lord's favor. This therefore should cause us to realize the importance of the marks of favor which are set forth by Luke in the section of the lesson text now before us. The "peace" which the church throughout the region of Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed came as the direct result of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. He had been relentless in his efforts to destroy the church wherever he found it; but when he himself bowed to the Lordship of Christ, his terrible persecution came to an end.

The church in the regions we are now considering has some marks of

an acceptable body of believers, namely, (1) *being edified*, that is, being builded up; or, which is the same thing, growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 18.) This is in marked contrast with some congregations where more attention is given to the mechanics of the physical operation of the work, than is given to spiritual development. (2) *Walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit*. "Walking" indicates progress, while the "fear of the Lord" tells something of their attitude toward the Lord—their reverence for him. The "comfort of the Holy Spirit" has reference to the encouragement or consolation which came to the brethren. (3) *Was multiplied*. The grammatical construction here indicates, as Robertson points out, that "the multiplication of the disciples kept pace with the peace, the edification, the walking in the fear of the Lord, the comfort of the Holy Spirit. The blood of the martyrs was already becoming the seed of the church. Stephen had not borne his witness in vain."

Paul's Fatherly Appeal to Some Mistaken Brethren

(1 Cor. 4: 14-17)

I write riot these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel. I beseech you therefore, be ye imitators of me. For this cause I have sent unto you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church.

It will be helpful for those who are studying these lessons to read the preceding part of Paul's letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1: 1-4: 13), before beginning this study. If that is done, it will be seen that the Corinthian brethren had practically turned their backs upon Paul, in their efforts to heap to themselves other teachers, and to follow their ways. It apparently had never occurred to them that in turning their backs on the apostle who had taught them the truth, that they were by that very act all but repudiating

their original faith. It is not wrong, of course, for the Lord's people to seek the help of any faithful teachers who can increase their knowledge of the Scriptures; but it is never right for them to look to others merely for the purpose of satisfying their own desires, which was evidently true of the Corinthians. There are people today who seek the help of others, not primarily for the purpose of learning more about the truth, but rather to confirm them in that which they already think. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 3, 4.)

We can get some idea of Paul's feelings toward the Corinthians when he wrote "these things" of the text now before us, if we are familiar with the general context in which it is found, and especially verses 8-13 of the preceding paragraph. Those verses read as follows: "Already ye are filled, already ye are become rich, ye have come to reign without us: yea and I would that ye did reign, that we also might reign with you. For, I think, God hath set forth us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, both to angels and men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye have glory, but we have dishonor. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and we toil, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things, even until now."

It is difficult to understand how people who have been taught the truth, and have been made partakers of the blessings which are in Christ, can turn their backs upon their benefactors, and treat them as if they were unworthy of their fellowship; but that is what the Corinthians did to Paul. The fact that the apostle had "planted" (1 Cor. 3: 6), had "laid a foundation" (1 Cor. 3: 10), and had begotten them through the gospel (1 Cor. 4: 15), indicates how much they owed to him; but that apparently meant nothing to them at the time Paul wrote this appeal. But it is worthy of notice that he was one of the few gospel preachers who

could honestly and consistently say, "I beseech you therefore, be ye imitators of me." (1 Cor. 4: 16.) We know that the New Testament church was in no sense characterized by denominationalism, as that term is commonly understood; for if it had been, Paul could not have taught the same thing "everywhere in every church."

A Model Church—Almost

(Rev. 2: 1-7)

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; and that thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary. But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love. Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

The church in Ephesus was probably started by Paul, with the help of Aquila and Priscilla, as may be gathered from Acts 18: 18-21. And if one will read on through the nineteenth and twentieth chapters of Acts, and the first chapter of 1 Timothy, he will learn something of the history of that church. Jesus makes it plain in the letter which he authorized John to write to the Ephesian church, that he was thoroughly familiar with all aspects of its activity. This should be enough to show us that there is no reason for our trying to be that which we are not. If we have the marks which are pleasing to him, he knows it; and if we do not have them, that fact cannot be hidden from him.

In reading the letter now before us, we learn that Jesus found three

things about the leadership of the church in Ephesus, and, consequently, the church itself, which were pleasing to him, namely, (1) their conduct; (2) their doctrine, and (3) their discipline. Their **conduct** was indicated by their **works**, life in general; **toil**, intense labor under difficulties and hardships; and **patience**, steadfastness under all kinds of trying circumstances—"and thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary." The soundness of their doctrine is seen in the fact that they would not tolerate false teaching and sinful practices; while their discipline was made evident by the manner in which they dealt with false teachers and perpetrators of the deeds of unrighteousness.

The fact that the leaders of the Ephesian church could not tolerate or endure evil men clearly shows that the "patience" which the Lord commends does not calmly put up with false teaching and sinful practices, in order to have so-called peace, or to keep from hurting some one's feelings. They knew that it is much better to be at peace with God, than with false teaching and unrighteous living. Or, to state the same thing in another way, there are some things which "true patience" cannot bear; and it was for that reason that the Ephesian brethren did not give up the fight when false brethren tried to get a foot-hold in the church there. Their aim was to keep the church pure, both from the standpoint of sound teaching and godly living. While Bible students are not agreed with reference to the identity of the *Nicolaitans*, it is alto-

gether probable that they taught that Christian liberty meant license to commit sensual sin⁹. It is very likely that the sins which Paul condemns in 1 Cor. 6: 12-20 were "the works of the Nicolaitans."

But notwithstanding the commendable things which characterized the brethren in Ephesus, there was one thing wrong with them, and it was serious enough to counteract all the good about which the Lord spoke; and that one thing was "heart trouble," a condition which would result in their destruction, if it was not corrected immediately. The Bible plainly sets forth the fatality of "one thing." "And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions." (Mark 10: 21, 22.) "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point [that is, reject or set aside one thing], he is become guilty of all [that is, he has become a law-breaker]. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou dost not commit adultery, but killest, thou art become a transgressor of the law." (James 2: 10, 11; of Num. 27: 12-14.) The "first love" of the Ephesians was evidently their initial enthusiasm and devotion to Christ. (Cf. Jer. 2: 2; 2 Cor. 11: 2.) One is made to wonder if this waning devotion paved the way to the defection of some of the Ephesian leaders. (Cf. Acts 20: 28-30; 1 Tim. 1: 3, 4.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is signified by the "marks" of a true church?

What is the difference between this and the "identity" of the church?

What is the value of repetition in Bible study?

What are the two principal parts of the Lord's final commission to his disciples?

What application does this fact have in the lesson for today?

In what way does Matthew make known the two parts of the Lord's last commission?

What does the second chapter of Acts reveal concerning the application of this commission?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of the golden text written?

Why is it essential that the lives of those who please God be regulated by the teaching of the Spirit?

What does it mean to live a life dedicated to the flesh?

How alone can such a life be overcome?

What does it mean to walk by the Spirit?

How may one know that he is living as the Spirit directs?

Into what three categories is the fruit of the Spirit mentioned by Paul divided?

What final product will a life directed by the Spirit produce?

The Marks of a Spiritually Prosperous Church

In what sense is the term "church" used in this section of the lesson text?

Where were the churches before us at this time located?

What two types of "prosperity" do many churches fall into?

Discuss the relative merits of each class.

Cite and discuss some New Testament instances of each.

What are the relative effects of material prosperity on a church?

What were the distinguishing marks of the churches now under consideration?

Paul's Fatherly Appeal to Some Mistaken Brethren

What is the general context in which this section of the lesson text is found?

Why had the Corinthian brethren turned their backs upon the man who had converted them?

What motive should characterize the Lord's people in seeking help in the way of teaching from others?

What were the "things" about which Paul was writing?

What three figures did Paul use to indicate his relationship to the Corinthian brethren?

A Model Church—Almost

What are some of the known facts regarding the origin and progress of the church in Ephesus?

Why was the letter now before us written to those brethren?

What effect should the fact that the Lord knows all about them have on churches?

What did the Lord say that he knew about the church in Ephesus?

What is meant by (1) works, (2) toil, and (3) patience?

What is the true significance of "true patience"?

Who, probably, were the Nicolaitans?

What was the one thing which the Lord had against the Ephesian brethren and its relative importance?

What was their "first love"?

Lesson X—March 5, 1967

THE CHURCH IDENTIFIED

Lesson Text

Acts 20: 28; Rom. 16: 16; 1 Thess. 2: 13-16; 2 Thess 1: 3-6; 1 Tim. 3: 14-16

28 Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood.

16 Salute one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ salute you.

13 And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, *even the word* of God, ye accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe.

14 For ye, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Ju-dae'-a in Christ Je'-sus: for ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews;

15 Who both killed the Lord Je'-sus and the prophets, and drove out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men;

16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gen'-tiles that they may be saved; to fill up their sins always: but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

3 We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, even

as it is meet, for that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth;

4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure;

5 *Which* is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

6 If so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you.

14 These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly;

15 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.

16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness;

He who was manifested in the flesh,

Justified in the spirit,

Seen of angels,

Preached among the nations,

Believed on in the world,

Received up in glory.

Golden Text.—*And upon this rock I will build my church.*" (Matt. 16: 18.)

Devotional Reading.—Rev. 1: 4-7.

Daily Bible Readings

February 27. M.....	Churches of Christ (Rom. 16: 16; Matt. 16: 18)
February 28. T.....	Bride of Christ (Rev. 21: 9-15; Eph. 5: 22-28)
March 1. W.....	Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 7: 21)
March 2. T.....	Kingdom of Christ (Col. 1: 1-13)
March 3. F.....	Church of the Firstborn (Heb. 12: 18-29)
March 4. S.....	Israel of God (Gal. 6: 11-16)
March 5. S.....	Church of the Lord (Acts 20: 17-35)

Time.—Acts A.D. 57; Romans, A.D. 58; First and Second Thessalonians, A.D. 50-52; First Timothy, A.D. 65-67.

Places.—Acts, Miletus; Romans, First and Second Thessalonians were written in Corinth; First Timothy, probably in Philippi.

Persons.—Paul, the Ephesian elders, and the ones to whom he wrote.

Introduction

The purpose of the study last week was to call attention to some of the marks of the true church, as they are set forth in the New Testament; while the aim today is to consider some of the means of identifying the church which is acceptable to the Lord. This, of course, is a vital lesson; for we are living more than nineteen hundred years this side of the origin of the church of the New Testament. When Christ announced his plans for building his church (Matt. 16: 18), there was no such organism in existence; but it was only a matter of weeks (Acts 2: 1-41) before that promise was fully realized. And if one is willing to read through the remainder of the inspired history, that is, the New Testament, he will be able to learn all that he needs to know about the church which Jesus brought into existence; and it goes without saying that any person of that age could easily recognize and be able to identify the church over which Christ rules as head. This was true because all the Lord's people were talking about it.

The New Testament Scriptures, as we have them today, were in the process of being written, at the time of this lesson, but inspired men were preaching that which was later reduced to writing; and while the people of that age could not take up the New Testament, as we can, and search for the identifying characteristics of the church which Christ established, they could hear about them from the lips of others: for the disciples of Christ went everywhere

preaching the word. (Cf. Mark 16: 15; Acts 8: 4; Col. 1: 23.) Those desiring to learn the truth about the church had "this treasure in earthen vessels," that is, they had to learn about it from inspired men, or from those who had themselves learned it from inspired men; but now we have in book form that which they had in earthen vessels, or, which is the same thing, inspired men.

But there is another important difference between the first age of the church and our time, namely, instead of having one church as was true in the beginning, we today have the system of denominationalism which, for all practical purposes, has so completely blinded the minds of the many, as to make it almost impossible to get them to see, or even want to see, that which may be described as the undenominational body of Christ. Such conditions are confusing to the average person, and makes the task of identifying the church of the New Testament very difficult indeed. The conditions just referred to are not only confusing to people who would like to know the truth regarding the identity of the church; but they have placed them in a situation which actually keeps them from thinking of the church in its strictly Biblical sense. If they read the New Testament itself, the veil of denominationalism is so thick, as to keep them from seeing the glory of the church which Christ brought into being, in keeping with the purpose of God. But now, as then, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching,"

that is, if he is in sympathy with the will of God, he will be able to recog-

nize the truth which has been made available to all. (See John 7: 17.)

The Golden Text

"And upon this rock I will build my church" This is the first time that the term "church" occurs in the New Testament; and if one reads all four of the gospel records, he will find the word in only one other instance, namely, Matt. 18: 17, where the obvious meaning is that of a local congregation. (See marginal reading.) The Greek word for "church" was not coined by Christ and the apostles, but was in general use by the Greek-speaking people when it was first used by the Lord. The original term *ekklesia* (church) never had any religious significance among the Greeks; it literally meant the *called out ones* or an *assembly*, and was applied to any body of people who had been called out, and, consequently, called together, for any purpose. There is therefore nothing about the original word itself which indicated the character of the assembly. It might have been political, religious, or even an unorganized mob. The term, in fact, was applied twice to such a mob in Ephesus, and once to the proconsular court. (See Acts 19: 32, 39, 41.) It was also used to describe the people of God during the wilderness wandering, as they were being led by Moses. (See Acts 7: 38.) Thus, the *kind* of church which was indicated by the original term found in the text would have to be determined by the context; that is, other terms and circumstances would indicate whether the reference was to a church of the Lord, or a church of men.

When Jesus therefore said that he

would build his church, he meant that he would call his people together, and constitute them into an assembly, to be known as the people of God, in contrast with the people of the world. (Cf. John 10: 16; 15: 18, 19; 17: 14-16; 1 Pet. 2: 9.) Robertson (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*) observes that the word *ekklesia* originally meant an "assembly"; but that it came to mean an "unassembled assembly," as in Acts 8: 3. The people of God during the days of Moses were God's church for that period (Acts 7: 38), and they had the Old Testament as their law; and in like manner, the people of God during the age of Christ are his church for this period (see 1 Cor. 15: 9; 1 Tim. 3: 15; cf. Heb. 3: 1-6), and we have the New Testament for our law. (Read Gal. 3: 15-4: 7 for the contrast between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ.)

In the light of that which has just been said, it is easy to see that the church of Christ, that is, the church which he built and over which he presides as head (Eph. 1: 22, 23), is composed of his people (cf. Acts 18: 9, 10) who heed his call through the gospel, and thereby become his subjects, his people, or his body. (Cf. Mark 16: 15, 16; 2 Thess. 2: 13, 14; Col. 3: 15.) These people are not called together in a literal or physical sense, as were the uproarious assembly in Ephesus and the Israelites in the wilderness. Those who belong to Christ are a spiritual body; and they are called out of, and separated from, the world in a spiritual sense.

The Text Explained

A Purchased Possession and Divinely Related

(Acts 20: 28; Rom. 16: 16)

Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood.

The two marks of identification contained in the passage just quoted are (1) that the Lord has provided for the care and leadership of the church, and (2) that the church it-

self was purchased at a great price. (1 Pet. 1: 18, 19.) In saying that the elders were made by the Holy Spirit, the idea appears to be that the Holy Spirit gave the qualifications for elders; and if that is true, the same thing in principle is done today; for the revealed will of the Lord, which was inspired by the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor. 2: 13; cf. 2 Pet. 1: 19-21), is sufficient for all things pertaining to the church (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17; 2 Pet. 1: 3). The New Testament clearly teaches that no church of the Lord is

fully set in order, until a plurality of qualified elders and deacons have been selected and installed. The importance of this characteristic becomes more apparent when we take into consideration the fact that one of the earliest departures which resulted in the great apostasy, was the change made in the government of the church.

In saying that the church was purchased by the blood of Christ, Paul was speaking of the same thing which he mentioned in Eph. 5: 25, namely, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it." The marginal reading for "purchased" in the passage now before us is acquired; and the idea is that he obtained or gained the church for himself by means of his sacrificial death. The original word for "purchased" is also found in 1 Tim. 3: 13, where Paul in speaking of deacons, says, "For they that have served well as deacons *gain* to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." The only other time this original term occurs in the New Testament, according to Moulton and Geden's *Concordance to the Greek Testament*, is in Luke 17: 33, where Jesus says, "Whosoever shall seek to *gain* his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." (Cf. Westcott and Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek, in loco*.) It can therefore be seen from these references that the practical meaning of the Lord's purchasing the church with his own blood is that he, by that means, acquired the church which is elsewhere described as being his body, and over which he rules as head. (Cf. Eph. 1: 22, 23; 1 Pet. 2: 9; Tit. 2: 14.)

Salute one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ salute you.

The first part of the passage just quoted is not in reality an identifying mark of the church, but it does present a question about which there is interest; and it is for that reason that it is probably in order that a few words be said regarding it. In addition to the reference to the "holy kiss" in the passage now before us, it is also mentioned in 1 Cor. 16: 20; 2 Cor. 13: 12; 1 Thess. 5: 26; and as a "kiss of love" in 1 Pet. 5:

14. After reading all that which the New Testament says upon the subject, it is worthy of notice that no Christian was ever commanded to greet any one with merely a kiss. The emphasis in all the passages which have been cited is not upon the "kiss," but upon the *kind* of kiss. It was the custom of people in those days to greet each other with a kiss (men greeting men and women greeting women).

With the kind of practice just mentioned in vogue, it was in keeping with the high principles of Christianity for the apostles of Christ, in writing to the brethren, to instruct them to make the kiss a holy one, or, as Peter has it, a kiss of love. The apostolic aim was to encourage Christian people to see to it that their greetings were characterized by sincerity. The Lord does not require his people to perpetuate, or even to adhere to, any purely human custom; but he does require sincerity in whatever they do. If handshaking had been the custom of that day, the apostles doubtless would have said, "Salute the brethren with a *holy* handshake, or a handshake of love." (Cf. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament, in loco*.)

In the expression "All the churches of Christ salute you," the term "churches" is evidently used in the sense of congregations, in various sections of the country. A similar use of the term is found in 1 Cor. 11: 16, namely, "the churches of God." There were churches (congregations) in Galatia (Gal. 1: 2); in Asia (Rev. 1: 4; of. Col. 4: 13, 16); and in many other parts of the Roman world at that time. When Jesus promised to build the church (Matt. 16: 18), he referred to it as "my church"; and Paul told the Ephesian elders (Acts 20: 28) that the Lord purchased the church "with his own blood." And inasmuch as Christ built the church, and paid for it with his own blood, it certainly belongs to him; and when the apostle Paul used the expression now under consideration, he was emphasizing the relation which the churches sustain to Christ. The same principle is also applicable, when the Lord's people are considered as a whole, that is, the "church of Christ" is equivalent to the "body of Christ." It is possible, of course, to employ the expression

in a sectarian sense, as some of the Corinthians evidently did.

Some Bible students have objected to the term "all" at the beginning of the expression now before us, on the ground that Paul could not have extended his authority to the point that he could actually speak for every congregation. But as The Expositor's Greek Testament, Alford, and others, point out, the church in Rome was widely and favorably known (of. Rom. 1: 8), and it could be expected that churches everywhere would have sufficient interest in those brethren to ratify the courtesy which Paul was here expressing. In commenting on this passage, J. W. Shepherd says, "Paul was in communication with most of the churches; all such would feel interested in the believers in Rome; and if, as is probable, his intention of going there was known, how natural that these churches should ask to be remembered to the brethren there! As he knew so well the believers at Rome, which he had not visited, how well qualified he was to speak for the many churches of Christ which he himself had planted." (Cf. Matt. 3: 5, 6; Luke 7: 29, 30 for the use of the term "all.")

As Exemplified by the Thessalonians

(1 Thess. 2: 13-16; 2 Thess. 1: 3-6)

And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe. For ye, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judaea in Christ Jesus: for ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews; who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved; to fill up their sins always: but the wrath of God is come upon them to the uttermost.

One of the foremost distinguishing marks of true believers is their attitude toward the word of the Lord; and it was in this way that the apostle Paul pointed out to the Thessalo-

nian brethren that they were among the people of Christ, that is, members of his church. In commenting on verse 13 of the passage now before us, *The Speaker's Bible* notes that this is a verse which touches upon a very fundamental point, namely, the question of why the Bible is to us that which it is; or, why we think of it as being different from all other books, and why we go to it as the ultimate and supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

This passage is also a text of great value, because it not only tells us why the Bible is such an authority, but it also reveals to us something of the process by which it comes to be this authority. (Cf. Luke 8: 11; Heb. 4: 12, 13; Phil. 2: 12, 13.) It is true that the passage now before us contains no reference to the book which we know as the Bible; it does not, in fact, even refer to a written book but is, rather, about the preaching of Paul and his company in Thessalonica. The words of Paul are confined to that occasion, with no reference to the preaching of any other inspired man, either among the prophets of the Old Testament or the apostles of the New; but we are certainly justified in taking the passage to express the principle which underlies the entire revelation contained in the Bible.

While the Lord's people are not the only ones who suffer persecution, but it is a fact worthy of notice that those who live the closest to him are the ones who have to suffer most for it. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 12; Matt. 5: 10-12; 2 Thess. 3: 1, 2; Rev. 2: 10.) It must have been discouraging to the young Christians in Thessalonica, not only to have to suffer themselves; but also to have to witness the persecution which was meted out to the men who taught them the truth. (See Acts 17: 1-9.) But Paul explained to them that they were only being treated, among Gentiles who did not know God, just as their brethren in Judaea had been called upon to suffer in a similar way, at the hands of their own people who claimed to be servants of God. The apostle, however, was quick to assure the suffering Thessalonians that God is the avenger.

We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, even

as it is meet, for that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth; so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure; which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you.

The apostle Paul, in his first letter to the Thessalonians, had offered a prayer (1 Thess. 3: 11-13) for them, to the end that they might be fully established before God; and now he felt obligated to give thanks to God for them, because they had fully demonstrated, through their steadfastness and faith in all of their persecutions and afflictions, that his prayers for them had been answered. The apostle then again reassured the Thessalonian brethren that suffering was essential, because of wicked opposition, to entrance into the kingdom of heaven. He had previously made known to the Galatian brethren, as Luke later recorded (Acts 14: 22), something of the Place of suffering in the Christian life. Luke's words are, "Confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God."

But there is another side to the story: It is true that the Lord's people will have to suffer in this life, and usually in proportion to their faithfulness to him; but even at that, they are forbidden by divine injunction to retaliate. The wise man Solomon offered this advice in one of his proverbs, "Say not thou, I will recompense evil: wait for Jehovah, and he will save thee." (Prov. 20: 22; of. Revised Standard Version reading.) The well known words of Paul are, "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; of. Matt. 5: 38-42.)

The Church and the Mystery of Godliness

(1 Tim. 3: 14-16)

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. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness;

*He who was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the spirit,
Seen of angels,
Preached among the nations,
Believed on in the world,
Received up in glory.*

The two principal ideas which are presented in this section of the lesson text are (1) the exalted position of the church as the upholder of the truth of the gospel, and (2) the truth of the gospel presented in poetic form. The term "truth," as used in the passage now under consideration, is the same as the word of God, or that which the word of God teaches. (Cf. John 17: 17; Eph. 1:

13.) The words "pillar" and "ground" are in apposition with the term "church," and the idea is that the church is that which supports, as it were, a mighty platform upon which the truth performs its work. (Cf. 1 Pet. 1: 22; John 8: 31, 32; 17: 17.)

The word "mystery" means something which has not been revealed; and inasmuch as the purposes and plans of God were not revealed until Christ came (of. Eph. 3: 11), the whole system of Christianity, beginning with the incarnation and ending with the ascension, is presented in that which may very well have been a Christian hymn. The claims of Christianity are tremendous.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is the principle purpose of the lesson now before us?
Why is it such an important lesson?
How were people during the days of the apostles able to identify the church?
What complication has arisen which results in confusion regarding the church in our day?
In what way may people be assured of learning the truth concerning the church's identity?

The Golden Text

Where and under what circumstance does the term "church" occur in the gospel records?
What is the literal meaning of the word church?
How did Jesus go about building the church and when did it become a reality?
What, then, is the church of Christ?

A Purchased Possession and Divinely Related

What two marks of the identification of the church are presented in this section of the lesson text?
In what sense were elders made by the Holy Spirit?
Why is this characteristic so important in our day?
How did Jesus purchase the church with his own blood?
What is the literal meaning of the term "purchase" here?

Why were the early Christians exhorted to greet each other with a holy kiss?
What is the principle which underlies this exhortation?
In what sense were the churches "churches of Christ"?
Why did Paul presume to speak for all the churches?

As Exemplified by the Thessalonians

What is one of the foremost distinguishing marks of present-day believers?
Why do many people feel as they do about the Bible?
Why is 1 Thess. 3: 13 such an important text?
Why do the Lord's people so often suffer persecution?
Why did Paul feel obligated to thank God for the Thessalonian brethren?
What are some of the values of suffering for Christ's sake?
What must be the attitude of Christians toward persecutions and afflictions?

The Church and the Mystery of Godliness

What two principal ideas are presented in this section of the lesson text?
What is the meaning of the term "truth," as used in this passage?
In what sense is the church the "pillar" and "ground" of the truth?
What are some of the things which the truth does?
What is the meaning of the word "mystery"?
In what sense did Paul use the term here?
When and under what circumstances was the mystery revealed?
What are the things which Paul said belonged to this mystery?

Lesson XI—March 12, 1967

HOW TO ENTER THE CHURCH

Lesson Text

Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 37-47

18 And Je-sus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation.

16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?

38 And Peter *said* unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Je-sus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him.

40 And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation.

41 They then that received his

word were baptized: and there were added *unto them* in that day about three thousand souls.

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.”* (Acts 5: 14.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Luke 24: 46, 47.

45 And they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need.

46 And day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart,

47 Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved.

the more added to the Lord, multi-

Daily Bible Readings

- March 6. M.....Must Believe (Heb. 11: 1-6; John 8: 24)
- March 7. T.....Must Repent (Luke 13: 1-3; Acts 17: 30)
- March 8. W.....Must Confess Christ (Rom. 10: 9, 10)
- March 9. T.....Must Be Baptized (Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 38)
- March 10. F.....Faith Comes by Hearing the Word (Rom. 10: 16-21)
- March 11. S.....Baptized into Christ (Rom. 6: 1-7)
- March 12. S.....New Creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5: 11-19)

TIME.—A.D. 30.

PLACES.—A mountain in Galilee and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jesus and his disciples; Peter, the multitudes, and the disciples.

Introduction

Notwithstanding the plainness of the truth regarding the church, as revealed in the New Testament, and the many efforts which have been made to call attention to that truth, it is still exceedingly difficult to get the average person outside of Christ to understand the meaning of church membership. The majority of such people, or so it seems, continue to think of the church as something which those desiring membership to it must "join," in pretty much the same manner in which one may join a club or fraternal organization. Such people insist that salvation and church membership are unrelated, and that one must be saved *before* he is eligible to become a member of the church. They further contend that membership in the church is not essential to ultimate salvation, and that one may live the Christian life, die, and go to heaven without ever having been a member of *any* church. Such a view, of course, is due to the influence of denominational thinking.

Attention has repeatedly been called during this quarter to the meaning of the term "church"; and if that truth is understood and ac-

cepted, it will be relatively easy for one to see that salvation and church membership are one and the same thing. Or, to state the same thing in another way, the same process which saves a person, also makes him a member of the church. The "church" are those who have been called out of the world unto Christ; and those who respond to that call become the beneficiaries of the gospel promises. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." (Mark 16: 15, 16.) "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation is sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 2: 13, 14.) "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body." (Eph. 5: 23; of. 1: 22, 23; 2 Tim. 2: 10; Acts 4: 12.)

Thus, the body which Christ saves

is the church, or, which is the same thing, the church is the "body of the saved" who have been redeemed by Christ. These are the people who are declared to be the Lord's body; and, as we have already seen, they are the church. If the further truth that the church and the kingdom are one and the same thing, simply considered from two different points of view (the *church* emphasizing the "called out" feature, while the *kingdom* stressing the "governmental" aspect, of the Lord's people); it

would be relatively easy to see that one must leave one thing (the world or the kingdom of Satan, in this case), before becoming a member of something else (that is, the kingdom or church of Christ). "Giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins." (Col. 1: 12-14.)

The Golden Text

"And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women"

The words of the golden text can best be understood in the light of their general context. "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. And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any had need." (Acts 4: 32-35.) While that which was described in the paragraph just quoted was an "emergency measure"; there is a fundamental principle beneath it, namely, the early disciples made the church of the Lord *attractive* to those on the outside.

After describing the situation just referred to, Luke then cited two examples of conduct on the part of members of the church, namely, (1) the generous-hearted Barnabas, who manifested the spirit of a true disciple of Christ, and (2) the hypocritical action of the selfish and grasping Ananias and Sapphira, whose example could very well have brought the church into great disfavor with the people, if it had not been for the prompt and decisive discipline which was administered by the Lord

through the agency of Peter; and which was evidently approved by the entire church, and by those on the outside who heard and saw that which was done. "And great fear came upon their whole church, and upon all that heard these things." (See Acts 4: 36-5: 11.) Irreparable damage to the church's opportunities for growth in numbers is often caused by the failure of the leaders to take swift and decisive action against scandalous conduct which often characterizes members of the church.

Not only did the disciplinary measures which were administered by Peter completely destroy the sinful influence of Ananias and Sapphira; it also prevented similar characters from attaching themselves to the church of the Lord. "But of the rest durst no man join himself to them," that is, the rest of the hypocritical people like Ananias and Sapphira. But that which kept the hypocrites out was the signal for believers to come it. The full statement by Luke follows: "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people: and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. But of the rest durst no man join himself to them: howbeit the people magnified them; and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." (Acts 5: 12-14.) When the church of the Lord shows a determination to keep itself pure, and to live as the Lord directs; thoughtful people of the world will magnify it. (Cf. 1 Pet. 3: 13.)

The Text Explained

The Authority of Christ and His Commission (Matt. 28: 18-20)

And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. 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.

In John's version of the Lord's commission, we read: "Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace be unto you: as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." (John 20-21.) This shows that Jesus himself had been commissioned by the Father to accomplish the work which had been assigned to him. Satan had been successful in alienating the human race from God; and the time had come when the divine effort would be made to regain their allegiance; and Jesus had been commissioned to take the lead in that work. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 24-28.) And it was for this reason that all the authority in heaven and on earth was given to Jesus. (Cf. 1 Pet. 3: 22; Eph. 1: 22, 23.)

A. T. Robertson observes that Jesus spoke as if he was already in heaven, with a world-wide outlook and the resources of the universe at his command. Dr. Robertson further notes that this is the sublimest of all spectacles, to see the risen Christ without money, army, or kingdom, charging this band of five hundred men and women with world conquest, and bringing them to believe that it was possible for them to undertake the mission with serious passion and power. Pentecost was yet to come, but dynamic faith was then in evidence on that mountain in Galilee! Continuing with the words of Dr. Robertson, "But here is the world program of the Risen Christ and it should not be forgotten by those who seek to foreshorten it all by saying that Jesus expected his second coming to be very soon, even within the lifetime of those who heard. He did promise to come, but he has never named the date. Meanwhile we are to be ready for his

coming at any time and to look for it joyfully. But we are to leave that to the Father and push on the campaign for world conquest. The program includes making disciples or learners (*mathēteusate*) such as they were themselves. That means evangelism in the fullest sense and not merely revival meetings."

When Jesus says to baptise *them*, the reference is to the disciples who are made, and not to the nations as such. This is rendered certain by the grammatical construction which is used in the passage, namely, the pronoun "them" is masculine, while the noun "nations" is neuter. The people who are taught regarding Jesus, and who want to enjoy the blessings which he offers, are the subjects of baptism; and it is through that act that they are brought into the fullest fellowship with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are revealed to us in the Scriptures as one eternal and immutable *Eloheem Jehovah*; the Creator, Preserver, and Upholder of all things.

Those who use the King James Version of the Bible will note that the term "teach" occurs twice in Matthew's record of the commission, namely, "teach all nations" and "teaching them to observe," etc. The American Standard Version, however, has *make disciples* in the place of teach, in the first instance; but *teaching* in the second. This distinction is also made in the Greek, where we have *mathēteusate* (make learners) and *didaskontes* (instructing, or, which is the same thing, religious education; of. Acts 2: 42; 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17). A statement of one's faith which is not reduced to action is worthless (of. James 2: 14-26); and conduct which is not informed and regulated by scriptural authority is unworthy of a child of God.

The adverb *always*, in the closing words of the Lord's commission to his disciples, separates him from every other teacher the world has ever known. He is, indeed, not here in person, as he was when he spoke the words of the text; but he is as truly with his people now, as he was when he stood before them on the occasion of the rendezvous now under consideration. The promise to be with his disciples should be re-

garded as a source of great encouragement to every child of God. The marginal reading for "always" is *all the days*, while that for "the end of the world" is *the consummation of the age*. "All the days" includes bad days as well as good ones; and there is therefore no time when Christians cannot depend upon the Lord. The final victory of Christ is certain, and the promise which he made here is both precise and detailed; and so, however long and perilous the journey, the Lord's people can always count on having the Presence of their Divine Leader with them. (Cf. Rom. 8: 31-39.)

Reciprocal Responsibilities of Preachers and Hearers

(Mark 16: 15, 16)

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.

The best way to study a passage of scripture, generally speaking, is to consider it in the full light of its context, both immediate and general; and this means in the case now before us that Mark 16: 14-20 should be read at this time. If one is a careful reader, he will soon learn that it is not always true that everything which is said in one place actually happened then and there. For example, it would not occur to the superficial reader that Jesus did not give the commission according to Mark at the time he met with the eleven at meat, and upbraided them because of their unbelief. But when verses 19, 20 of the chapter now before us is read, it appears almost certain that verses 15-18 were spoken by the Lord on the day of his ascension. J. W. McGarvey points out, however, that this is only one among the many instances in which details, which are not essential to the understanding of the chief thought to be conveyed, are omitted from one narrative, but found in another; all of which indicates that a Supreme Power was supervising the writing of the Sacred Records.

We are told in Hebrews 2: 9 that Jesus tasted death for every man, and both Paul (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4) and Peter (2 Pet. 3: 9) make it plain that God wants every individual in

the world to be saved. These are the reasons why Jesus commanded his disciples to preach the gospel to the whole creation; and it is both interesting and encouraging to read that this very thing was accomplished within the short period of approximately thirty years. (See Col. 1: 23; of Rom. 10: 18.)

The conditions of salvation, set forth in Mark's record of the Lord's commission to his disciples, are simple enough to be understood without comment, if people would only listen to the inspired penman, rather than to those who insist that baptism is not essential to the remission of sins. The principal clause in the first part of the statement is this, namely, "He . . . shall be saved"; but when we ask, What "he" shall be saved? the answer is clear and unmistakable: [he] "that believeth and is baptized." The principal cause is limited or modified by the words which name the conditions of salvation. If some one should say, "He that believeth and is baptized shall receive five thousand dollars," no one would misunderstand that statement; and we are, in the fear of God, compelled to say that people do not *misunderstand* that which Jesus says; they simply do not believe it. (Cf. Gal. 1: 6-9.)

Baptism is an act of faith, and no one is scripturally baptized who is not a believer. "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 rewarded of them that seek after him." (Heb. 11: 6.) No one can have faith regarding the manner in which he is to be saved, until he hears the word of the Lord (Rom. 10: 17; Luke 8: 12; Acts 14: 1); and that is why Paul spoke the word of the Lord to the Philippian jailor and his household, *before* they were baptized (Acts 16: 25-34). But when Christ sets forth the fate of those who do not believe the gospel message, it is not necessary for him to say, "He that disbelieveth *and is not baptized* shall be condemned"; for disbelief alone is sufficient to condemn a person. "He that believeth on him is not judged [condemned]; he that believeth not hath been judged [condemned] already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of

God." (John 3: 18.) John 3: 36 plainly shows that "saving faith" includes obedience. (Read James 2: 14-26; 2 Thess. 1: 6-10.)

The First Ingathering of Souls and the Brotherhood of Believers

(Acts 2: 37-47)

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. *For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation. They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.*

That which the people to whom Peter spoke heard, and which resulted in their being pricked in their heart, was the sermon which the apostle had just preached, and particularly its climax, as set forth in verse 36, namely, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." When those in the multitude to whom Peter spoke believed that which he said regarding their attitude and action toward Christ, they immediately realized the terrible condition they were in before God, and they cried out to know what they could do about it. The Holy Spirit was speaking through Peter (Acts 2: 4), and this is an instance of his convicting people of sin, according to the promise of Jesus (John 16: 7-11). People must be made to realize their sin *before* they are ready for salvation; and when the gospel, which was inspired by the Holy Spirit, is faithfully preached, the honest in heart who hear it will be convicted, or, convinced, of their sins and therefore in need of salvation.

Peter's answer to the inquiring

souls who stood before him is as clear and simple as their question had been. The apostle's reply is rendered by Goodspeed in these words: "Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, in order to have your sins forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise of it belongs to you and your children, as well as to all those far away whom the Lord our God calls to him.' " The original word for "unto" (*eis*) is the same term which is rendered unto in Matt. 26: 28; and there can therefore be no doubt about the design or purpose of baptism in the passage now under consideration—"in order to have your sins forgiven."

The necessary steps for those who believe the gospel message are repentance and baptism, as Peter made plain; and it is refreshing to read that "they then that received his word were baptized." That is always true of people who sincerely want to become servants of the Lord; and verse 42 shows the kind of people they become.

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 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 day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved.

The paragraph just quoted gives a good idea of the daily life of the early church, and how their religion affected both the Lord's people and those about them. The closing part of the second chapter of Acts records something of the growth of the church, beginning with Pentecost when it had its origin. The preceding portion of this section of the lesson text gives specific instruction regarding the way in which people enter the church; while here we see how the church continued to grow. In the statement, "And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved," the marginal reading is, "those that were being saved." Those

who were being saved were those who were receiving the message of the gospel: and when they complied with that which the Lord ordained for them, that is, when believers repented and were baptized, in order to have their sins forgiven, the Lord added them to the body of the saved

which was already in existence. This is sufficient to show that the church and the saved are one; and if any one doubts this, let him take the New Testament, go to any place where there was a church, and find a single person who was saved but who was not a member of the church.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is it so difficult for people outside the body of Christ to understand the meaning of church membership?
Give reasons for, saying that the church and the saved are one and the same.
What is the fundamental meaning of the term "church"?
Is it possible for one to be a citizen of a kingdom without being subject to its government? Give reasons for your answer.
What is the advantage, in this respect, of speaking of the church as the kingdom of Christ?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text written?
Why are many people attracted to the church?

The Authority of Christ and His Commission

Discuss the commission under which Christ served and the commission he gave.
What is involved in these two commissions?
In what two senses is the term "teach" used in the Lord's commission to his disciples?
What great promise did Jesus give to his followers?

Reciprocal Responsibilities of Preachers and Hearers

What is the best way, generally speaking, to study a passage of scripture?

What are the meanings of "specific" and "general" contexts?

Name some of the advantages of considering a passage's context.

Why were such great efforts made, and are continuing to be made, to save people?

Why do many people seem to have difficulty in understanding the Lord's statement in Mark 16: 16?

What does the passage actually say?

Give reasons for saying that baptism is an act of faith.

Why was it unnecessary for Jesus to say that he that disbelieveth and *is not* baptized shall be condemned?

The First Ingathering of Souls and the Brotherhood of Believers

What had the people heard, as set forth in the opening part of this portion of the lesson?

What do we learn here regarding the manner in which people are convicted of sin?

Why is conviction of sin essential before baptism and salvation?

What did Peter's answer on this occasion contain?

Who were baptized on the day of Pentecost?

What does Luke say regarding the daily life of the early Christians?

What evidence do we have of the growth of the church during that time?

What is meant by saying that the Lord added those who were saved to "them"?

How do we know that the "saved" and the "church" are one and the same?

Lesson XII—March 19, 1967

HOW TO LIVE IN THE CHURCH

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 3: 1-6; Heb. 5: 11-14; 2 Pet. 1: 5-11

1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ.

2 I fed you with milk, not with meat; for ye were not yet able to bear it: nay, not even now are ye able;

3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and do ye not walk after the manner of men?

4 For when one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of A-póΓ-

los; are ye not men?

5 What then is A-pol'-los? and what is Paul? Ministers through whom ye believed; and each as the Lord gave to him.

6 I planted, A-pol'-los watered; but God gave the increase.

11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing.

12 For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need

again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food.

13 For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe.

14 But solid food is for fullgrown men, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.

5 Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in *your* virtue knowledge;

6 And in *your* knowledge self-control; and in *your* self-control pa-

tience; and in *your* patience godliness;

7 And in *your* godliness brotherly kindness; and in *your* brotherly kindness love.

8 For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Je'-sus Christ.

9 For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins.

10 Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble:

11 For thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Je'-sus Christ.

Golden Text.—*"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"* (2 Pet. 3: 18.)

Devotional Heading.—Col. 3: 1-4.

Daily Bible Readings

- March 13. M..... Grow in Grace and Knowledge (2 Pet. 3: 17, 18)
- March 14. T..... Pray without Ceasing (Luke 18: 1-8)
- March 15. W..... Study the Scriptures Regularly (1 Tim. 4: 11-16)
- March 16. T..... Avoid Ungodly Conduct (Rom. 13: 11-14)
- March 17. F..... Speak Evil of No Man (Tit. 3: 1-7)
- March 18. S..... Neglect Not the Assembly (Heb. 10: 19-28)
- March 19. S..... Worship God Acceptably (John 4: 19-26)

Time.—First Corinthians, A.D. 57; Hebrews, A.D. 63 or 64; Second Peter, A.D. 67 or 68.

Places.—First Corinthians was written in Ephesus; Hebrews, Rome; Second Peter, Babylon.

Persons.—Paul and Peter, and those to whom they wrote.

Introduction

A satisfactory answer to the question, "How to live in the church," will be equivalent to giving the meaning of church membership. The church, as we have repeatedly seen in these studies, is the body of the saved; and we may be sure that the Lord has something worthwhile for his people to do. In speaking of his own attitude toward the subject, the apostle Paul said that he gave up everything "that he might 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, becom-

ing conformed unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead. 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." (See Phil. 3: 1-14.)

When the apostle Peter wrote his first letter, he said, "But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the

excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Pet. 2: 9.) The passage just quoted may be abbreviated, for the sake of emphasis, as follows: "Ye are . . . that ye may"; or, "Ye are what you are, in order that ye may glorify God by doing his will." (Cf. John 17: 4.) Paul told Titus that Christ gave himself for us, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good words." (Tit. 2: 14.) And again, "Faithful is the saying, and concerning these things I desire that thou affirm confidently, to the end that they who have believed God may be careful to maintain good works." (Tit. 3: 8.) "And let our people also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful." (Tit. 3: 14; of Col. 1: 9-12.)

That which has been said in the preceding paragraphs is sufficient to show that Christianity is a purposeful life. The religion of the New Testament has, indeed, been defined as the reproduction of the life of

Christ in the human heart. This, of course, will result in an active life; for faith apart from works is dead, and as one thinketh within himself, so is he. And not only will there be an active life; there will also be a definite aim on the part of the person who is striving to do the will of God. There is an old adage which tells us that a man without a purpose is like a ship without a rudder and a sail; and the lesson which is suggested applies equally to individual Christians and congregations. Paul says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2: 10.) And to the Romans he wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12: 1, 2.)

The Golden Text

"But *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*" The word "but," with which the passage just quoted begins, indicates a contrast; and if the statement is read in the light of its context, it will be easier to appreciate its significance. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things [that is, the things mentioned in verses 8-13], give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things before hand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness. *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* To

him be the glory both now and for ever. Amen." (2 Pet. 3: 14-18.)

The growth enjoined in the passage just quoted does not mean growth *into* the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; but, being already in his favor and possessing some knowledge of Him, we are to continue our growth in that favor and knowledge. The soul of man is the most important truth about him; because the soul came directly from God and has a direct connection with him. But notwithstanding its immortality, the soul must grow if the blessings which it is capable of enjoying, and which the Lord has provided for it, are to be received; and, like all other growth, it must be according to the fundamental laws of growth which God gave to regulate all such development. The fundamental laws of growth are not hard to discover; and any one who is willing to abide by them, and order his life according to them, will grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. Grace, as already indicated, means favor, while knowledge is that which we may

gain through the study of his revealed will.

The fundamental laws of growth are (1) *Vital force*. A plant, for example, cannot grow unless it is rooted in its native soil, and surrounded by wholesome atmosphere; and what is true of plant life is also true of the soul. (2) *Wholesome food which meets all the requirements of the soul*. A fuller discussion of this will

be found in the main text of the lesson. (3) *Active use of all the powers with which we are endowed* as set forth in Eph. 4: 11-16. (4) *Periods of rest*. The Christian life is both active and meditative, and one is as important as the other. These laws, if carefully observed, will result in a soul which is pleasing to God.

The Text Explained

The Spiritually Immature Are Deficient in Moral Values

(1 Cor. 3: 1-6)

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not with meat; for ye were not yet able to bear it: nay, not even now are ye able; for ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and do ye not walk after the manner of men? For when one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not men? What then is Apollos? and what is Paul? Ministers through whom ye believed; and each as the Lord gave to him. I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

The apostle Paul's reference to the spiritual condition of the Corinthian Christians should be considered in the light of verse 14 of the previous chapter, namely, "now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged." The marginal reading for "natural" is unspiritual, and the idea is that such a person does not have the capacity for rendering a verdict regarding spiritual matters. And so, in keeping with Paul's figure, the gospel, as it were, was on trial before would-be judges who were wholly unfitted to pass judgment on its merits; and, as *The Expositor's Greek Testament* points out, "like the Athenian philosophers, they give it first a hearing, but they have no organon [that is, a method for procedure or investigation] to test it by. The inquiry is stultified, *ab initio* [from the beginning], by the incompetence of the jury. The unspiritual are out of court as religious critics; they are deaf men judging music."

How often do we see such action repeated today in principle, that is, the uninformed and spiritually immature trying to direct the work of the Lord's church!

While the terms *psuchikos* (natural or unspiritual) and *sarkiokos* (carnal) are not exact synonyms, they are, nevertheless, as Trench points out, used interchangeably; and Paul therefore told the Corinthian brethren that he could not speak unto them as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto mere "baby Christians," as Williams has it. In commenting on this, Farrar says, "though softened by the word *brethren*, there was a crushing irony of reproof in these words: 'You thought yourselves quite above the need of my simple teaching. You were looking down on me from the whole height of your inferiority. The elementary character of my doctrine was after all the necessary consequence of your own incapacity for anything more profound.'"

As long as professed Christians manifest the attitude which characterized the Corinthian brethren, they not only cannot understand the spiritual teaching of the New Testament; they are not even in the position of learning as they should. There are many professed Christians who imagine that they know far more than their godly teachers; and they even go so far as to disparage these faithful men and -women who are trying to present the truth to them, and make it plain to them that they think that they have a better understanding of the truth than those who are trying to teach them. That, of course, might be true; but if they are manifesting "fleshy traits" (Gal. 5: 19-21), the chances are that they are still "baby Christians." Robertson observes that "Paul did not glory in

making his sermons thin and watery. Simplicity does not require lack of ideas or dullness. It is pathetic to think how the preacher has to clip the wings of thought and imagination because the hearers cannot go with him. But nothing hinders great preaching like the dullness caused by sin on the part of auditors who are impatient with the high demands of the gospel."

Earlier in his letter to the Corinthians, that is, the letter from which this section of the lesson text is taken, Paul had pointed out to the brethren their divided condition, which resulted from their factious attitude toward preachers; and now, taking himself and Apollos as examples, the apostle endeavored to show his misguided brethren the baselessness of such a stand. Preachers are not expected to be leaders of parties; they are merely instruments in the hands of God to make it possible for people to become Obedient believers in Christ. In saying that he planted, while Apollos waters, Paul was referring to their individual activities. Or, to drop the figure, Paul was the one who established the church, while Apollos, who came later, taught the brethren and builded them up in the most holy faith. (Cf. Rom. 15: 20; Acts 18: 24-28.) There was therefore no conflict between their labors, and neither was there any reason why any one should prefer one above the other. These men were both servants of God, and without his blessings, neither would have been able to accomplish anything whatsoever.

Proof of a Lack of Progress

(Heb. 5: 11-14)

Of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing. For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.

The writer of Hebrews, in the part of his letter which immediately precedes this section of the lesson text for today, had been discussing the high priesthood of Christ, after the order of Melchizedek. There were many other things about that subject which he would liked to have said; but the power of perception on the part of his readers made that impractical, if not indeed impossible. The text, of course, had reference to the people to whom it was addressed; but it is important for us to keep the fact in mind that the sluggishness which characterized them was not limited to them. The same condition is frequently seen today; and that means that the lesson is just as applicable now as it was at the time the epistle was written.

God expects his people, all of them with his help, to develop lives of usefulness. (Cf. Matt. 25: 1-30; 1 Pet. 2: 1, 2; Eph. 4: 11-16.) The last passage just cited, beginning with verse 13, reads as follows: "Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love."

There are too many people who are content with only a rudimentary knowledge of God's word and traditional teaching; such people are all too willing for others to do their thinking for them. The Hebrew Christians should have been teachers themselves, that is, they should have had a real and mature grasp of the subject of Christianity; but instead they were themselves *again* in need of being taught "the first things about the first things." This is what William Barclay calls a case of arrested development; and that, he says, is always pathetic. If there is no progress in God's order, then ret-

gression is inevitable. This is the force of the expression "ye have need again." This implies that they had previously known these things, but now they must be taught again the most elementary things regarding the gospel. This situation forcefully illustrates that which happens to people when they neglect to study the Bible; and it further explains why so many do not comprehend even the obvious responsibilities of the Christian life.

God's order in the spiritual realm is similar to that in the realm of nature. The baby's first need is that of milk—"as new born babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation." (1 Pet. 2: 2.) It was in this area that some of the Corinthians had failed, as we saw in the previous section of this lesson. (Read again 1 Cor. 3: 1, 2.) Those brethren were not even able to take the milk which Paul had tried to give them; and all of this, notwithstanding the high opinion which they had of themselves. "Milk" in the text now before us is, of course, used in a figurative sense; and the reference is to the less difficult truths of the Christian religion. It should be kept in mind, however, that those who need the milk instead of solid food "are without experience in the word of righteousness."

"Fullgrown men" are those who have reached maturity; and they stand in contrast with those who are described as babes. Such people have advanced to the point where they not only are able to receive "solid food," but their condition actually *requires* it. During the process of growth, those who follow the divine order are using their senses, that is their faculties or abilities for perceiving and understanding the truth; and as a result of this, they are able "to discern good and evil." The deplorable conditions which are described in this section of the lesson text fully explain why some people are unable to see anything wrong with many erroneous doctrines and practices.

The Unfolding of Character

(2 Pet. 1: 5-11)

Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your

virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul teaches that the unconverted are by *nature* the children of wrath (Eph. 2: 3); and inasmuch as those who are saved must be like the Lord before they can enter with him into glory (of. 1 John 3: 1-3), it follows that they must undergo a change, insofar as their nature is concerned. Paul, in discussing this, speaks of it as putting off the old man, and putting on the new man. (Eph. 4: 22-24.) One becomes a child of God when he obeys the gospel, and it is both reasonable and scriptural to conclude that he will become a partaker of the nature of his Father; and it is in order to ask, How is this done?

The answer to the question just asked is twofold, namely, (1) God's part, and (2) man's part. God's part is stated by Peter 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.) Many of the promises are conditional, and they stimulate us to better living. (See 2 Cor. 6: 17-7: 1.)

Man's part is set forth in the language of the section of the lesson text now before us. "For this very cause" (verse 5) has reference to that which God has done, that is, because of what God has done; and we

are exhorted to add on our part "all diligence" in seeing to it that we do our part. Or our diligent efforts must be added to God's promises. The term "diligence" indicates that we are to interest ourselves most earnestly in the accomplishment of the task before us. Taking our faith as the basis, we must add the seven Christian graces which Peter specifies, if we are to develop the kind of character which is pleasing to God.

(1) *Virtue* is moral energy, manliness, or courage. Our convictions should be held in a way becoming to a man, and we should have the courage to stand for what we believe. Our faith must be translated into vigorous action; for it is not enough to bluster and blow about what we believe. (2) *Knowledge* is gained by studying the Bible, and it is certain that courage without knowledge can become dangerous; and no one can please God without knowledge. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 16; Hos. 4: 6; Matt. 11: 29.) Knowledge is within the reach of all, but it requires effort to gain it. (3) *Self-control* is holding one's self within due limits, as it respects pleasures, duties, and all things else. (4)

Patience is steadfastness (see marginal note), and Thayer calls it "the characteristic of a man who is unworried from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings." (Cf. the "fearful" in Rev. 21: 8; Heb. 10: 25, 26.)

(5) *Godliness* is reverence, respect, or piety toward God. (6) *Brotherly kindness* is, according to Thayer, "the love which Christians cherish for each other as brethren." (Cf. John 13: 35; 1 John 4: 20, 21.) Brotherly love is a powerful motive for Christian living. (7) *Love* is universal, that is, love for all men, regardless of their status; and it is distinct from and 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; for love tempers duty into service. Such love is not directed by sense and emotion, but by deliberate choice; and it seeks its object's highest good. When these graces become characteristic of the Christian, and remain with him, there is no longer any doubt about his relation to God and his ultimate destiny. (Read 2 Pet. 1: 10, 11.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is involved in answering the question about how to live in the church?
How did Paul answer the question with reference to himself?
What did Peter say regarding this issue and what does his statement imply?
Why did Christ give his life that people might be saved?
How do we know that Christianity is a purposeful life?
How alone can man be sure of pleasing God?

The Golden Text

In what context are the words of the golden text found?
What does it mean to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ?
Discuss the fundamental laws of growth.

The Spiritually Immature Are Deficient in Moral Values

Discuss this section of the lesson text in the light of its background.
What was the spiritual condition of the Corinthian Christians?
What application does this situation have for people today?
What does Paul say regarding the place and work of preachers in the Lord's service?

Proof of a Lack of Progress

Of what was the writer unable to speak,

according to the first part of this section?

Why was he unable to discuss the matter further?

What does God expect of his people?

Why are so many people content with only a rudimentary knowledge of God's word?

How did the writer describe the spiritual condition of the Hebrew Christians?

What is God's order for spiritual growth?

In what sense are "milk" and "solid food" used in this part of the lesson text?

What is said about the characteristics of "fullgrown men"?

The Unfolding of Character

Why is a change in nature imperative in the case of those who are going to heaven?

In what way does the apostle Paul describe the change?

How is the change actually brought about?

What is God's part?

What is man's part and what motive does Peter assign for action on our part?

What is the meaning of "diligence"?

How can we go about developing a character which will please God?

What are the seven Christian graces Peter names and how may they be added?

Why is universal love absolutely essential to a character which is pleasing to God?

What assurance does Peter give to those who add the Christian graces?

Lesson XIII—March 26, 1967

THE CHURCH IN HEAVEN

Lesson Text

John 14: 1-3; 2 Cor. 5: 1-10; Heb. 12: 22-24

1 Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me.

2 In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

1 For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.

2 For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven:

3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life.

5 Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

6 Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that, whilst we

are at home in the body, we are absent from, the Lord

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight);

8 We are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord.

9 Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him.

10 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.

22 But ye are come unto mount Zi-on, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Je-ru'-sa-lem, and to innumerable hosts of angels,

23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 And to Je'-sus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than *that of* Abel.

Golden Text.—*“And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them ”* (Rev. 14: 13.)

Devotional Reading.—Rev. 21: 1-5.

Daily Bible Readings

- March 20. M.....Christ, the Firstfruits (1 Cor. 15: 12-19)
- March 21. T.....Our Hope Set on God (1 Tim. 5: 1-5)
- March 22. W.....Hope of Israel (Acts 28: 17-22)
- March 23. T.....Hope of the Resurrection (Acts 23: 6-11)
- March 24. F.....Hope Our Anchor (Heb. 6: 13-20)
- March 25 S.....Hope Abounding (Rom. 15: 8-13)
- March 26. S.....Multitude No Man Could Number (Rev. 7: 9)

Time.—John, A.D. 30; Second Corinthians, A.D. 57; Hebrews, A.D. 63 or 64.

Places.—John, Jerusalem; Second Corinthians, Macedonia and Ephesus; Hebrews, Rome.

Persons.—Jesus and the eleven Apostles; Paul and those to whom he wrote.

Introduction

The term "church," as has already been pointed out in these lessons, was first employed by Jesus when he told Peter just how he was going about his work of saving the lost. (See Matt. 16: 18.) With the whole of the inspired record before us, we are able to bring the entire process into focus. After the Lord had made possible the salvation of the human race, by his death, burial, and resurrection (of. 1 Cor. 15: 1-4), he authorized the gospel, that is, the "good news of salvation," to be preached to the entire world, and those who responded to the call which went forth were builded into his church. It has been repeatedly stated that the church is made up of those people who are separated from the world, and called together in one body. These "called out and called together" people are the ones who are going to be saved in heaven, insofar as this dispensation is concerned, provided they are faithful to the Lord. (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 5-11.)

One of the several figures under which the church of the Lord is presented in the New Testament is that of the bride of Christ. (Cf. Rom. 7: 1-4; 2 Cor. 11: 2; Eph. 5: 22-33.) In one of the closing scenes of this age, and consequently that of the world, the final salvation of the Lord's people is presented under the likeness of a marriage feast. "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying

Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife

hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true words of God." (Rev. 19: 6-9.)

There is, of course, a sense in which all the people who are saved in heaven are the "church of God"; for they are the *separated ones*, and the "called and chosen and faithful" (of. Num. 23: 9; Acts 7: 38; Eph. 3:

14, 15); but the reference in this lesson is primarily to those who will enter heaven as members of the church which Christ established, and over which he rules as head. The Lord's sole purpose in calling people into his church here upon the earth is to save them from the evil one, and to prepare them for an eternal abode in the world to come; but it is a recorded truth, which those who run may read, that all who enter the church here and now will not enter the eternal kingdom. In his discourse in parables, Jesus says, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was filled, they drew up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good into the vessels, but the bad they cast away. So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." (Matt. 13: 47-50.)

The Golden Text

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them" One of the principal purposes of the Book of Revelation is to reassure the people of God, that is, the church of the Lord. Other parts of the New Testament frequently point out the truth of the great conflict which will

be continuously carried on between the church and the evil one; and example after example of this terrible struggle is cited in the inspired record. It appears that the book from which the golden text for today's lesson is taken was the last of the New Testament books to be written; and its over-all theme is that of the struggles and ultimate triumph of the church.

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus

said to his disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be caused to stumble. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God. And these things will they do, because they have not known the Father, nor me. . . . These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16: 1-3, 33.) In speaking of the grievous times to come, the apostle Paul warned Timothy, "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3: 12); and as Paul and Barnabas were preparing to return from their first missionary journey, Luke says of them as they revisited the newly established Galatian churches, "Confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14: 22). When Paul wrote his first letter which has come down to us, he said to the persecuted Thessalonians, "That no man be moved by these afflictions; for

yourselves know that hereunto we are appointed." (1 Thess. 3: 3.)

But true to his promise, Jesus will not leave his suffering people comfortless. In the letter which he authorized John to send to the angel of the church in Smyrna, the Lord said, "Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." (Rev. 2: 10.) And now, turning to the section of the Book of Revelation from which the words of the golden text are taken, we have an inspired description of the terrible struggle of the church against its arch enemies, Satan, anti-Christian governments, and false religions; and what could be more reassuring than the words which John was told to write, namely, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them." (Cf. Psalm 72: 14; 116: 15; Acts 7: 59, 60.) Who can estimate the influence of Stephen's suffering and death?

The Text Explained

Grounds for Hope and Confidence

(John 14: 1-3)

Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

This section of the lesson text is a part of the Lord's final discourse to his disciples on the night of his betrayal; and it is easy to see that the mind and heart of the Saviour are in it. These glorious words are always as new as the latest sunrise; and the last words in their praise will never be spoken, while time continues. Hope has been brought into the hearts of countless thousands by these words, while people without number have been comforted by them.

In speaking of the occasion of

these remarks, Schaff notes that such an event occurred but once in the world's history, and that the fulness of eternity itself was condensed into a few fleeting moments. The farewell words of our Lord (13: 31-17: 26) stand alone even in the Book of books. The nearest approach to them may be found in the parting song and blessing of Moses (Deut. 32 and 33), and in the farewell address of Paul to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20: 17-35). But we have in the Lord's remarks more than words; we have things, verities, acts of infinite love going out from God, and going into the hearts of men. Bengel sums up the principal thought in the Lord's last talk with his disciples before his crucifixion in these words: "I came from my Father in heaven, I fulfilled his will on earth; and I return to my Father."

It appears that the part of the discourse of Jesus on the occasion now before us from John 13: 31 to 14: 31 was delivered while he and the elev-

en disciples were still at the table where they had eaten the passover supper, and where his own supper had just been instituted. It further appears that the address began immediately after Judas left the room where they were; and it is evident that many things that evening had conspired to trouble the disciples. (Read John 13: 21-38.) It was not strange therefore that they were possessed of a sorrowful mood; and Jesus, knowing that, sought to reassure them. Phillips renders the Lord's statement to them in these words: "You must not let yourselves be distressed—you must hold on to your faith in God and to your faith in me. There are many rooms in my Father's House. If there were not, should I have told you that I am going away to prepare a place for you? It is true that I am going away to prepare a place for you, but it is just as true that I am coming again to welcome you into my own home, so that you may be where I am."

Heaven is described in the Bible as being the dwelling place of God (1 Kings 8: 30; Matt. 6: 9), and that means that heaven itself is as real as God is. (Cf. Heb. 11: 6.) No one can read the fourth chapter of the Book of Revelation, without having brought before his mind the picture of God upon his throne and surrounded by the hosts of the glory world. The material of our world is not as *real*, as is the spiritual: this is implied in the portion of the lesson text now under consideration. Heaven is pictured throughout the New Testament as being a place to which the righteous should look forward. It is a realm of joy (Luke 15: 7) and peace (Luke 19: 38). The names of the righteous are recorded there (Luke 10: 20; Phil. 4: 3); and there the Christian will receive his final reward (Matt. 5: 12).

The Christian's life is in Christ, and it will not end with physical death; for the quality of this life is eternal, and it can no more be destroyed than can Christ. (See Col. 3: 1-4; 1 John 5: 10-13.) It follows therefore that the life of God's people must be continued after death; and that is why Jesus says that he is going to prepare a place for them. The inspired description of heaven is intended to represent the ultimate

triumph of God's purpose in a re-deemed people who are made secure for ever in a holy city. It was in this way that Jesus comforted his disciples during the last talk he had with them, before going to the cross; and he does the same thing for every other child of God who will read that which the Holy Spirit has left on record for them.

The Heavenly Home Joyfully Anticipated

(2 Cor. 5: 1-10)

For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life. Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight); we are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord. 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.

In discussing the persecutions, tribulations, and hardships which characterized his and his fellow laborers' ministry, the apostle Paul manifested a spirit of optimism; as may be seen by reading the reason which he gave for his hopeful outlook in the last paragraph of the preceding chapter, namely, 2 Cor. 4: 16-18. If there were no hope, there would be no optimism; for the latter proceeds upon the assumption that good will ultimately triumph over evil. Webster defines optimism as "an inclination to put the most favorable construction upon actions and hap-

penings, minimize adverse aspects, conditions, and possibilities, or anticipate the best possible outcome; a cheerful and hopeful temperament." Christian optimism does not ignore nor belittle the disorder and evil which exist in the world; and the Christian optimist is not blind to the realities which are found all around him. He freely concedes that things are not as they should be; but, following the lead of Paul, he is willing to postpone sentence upon the facts, until the time when an intelligent judgment will be possible. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28.)

The spirit of hopefulness which has just been described was Paul's philosophy of life; and the first part of the lesson text now before us was intended to illustrate it. (Cf. Phil. 1: 19-26; Rom. 8: 24, 25.) This hopeful outlook, however, was not confined to Paul and the early Christians; but is the common lot of all faithful followers of Christ. Those who are filled with this Christian optimism are, by their faith and consequent life, continuously bearing witness to the power and grace of God, which are theirs in both good -and bad times. (Cf. Isa. 26: 3, 4; Matt. 28: 20.) Faithful Christians are full of hope, when situations seem hopeless; for it is then that they are compelled to draw upon the spiritual resources of the Christian faith. Christian optimism is not merely wishful thinking, or an effort to escape the reality of conditions as they are; it is, rather, the facing of unpleasant and evil situations with courage and hopefulness, because of the knowledge ("we know") which belongs to Christians through their faith in Jesus. (Cf. Heb. 6: 19, 20.)

The kind of "groaning" mentioned here by Paul, was also referred to by him in Rom. 8: 18-23; and it all came about as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. (Cf. Rom. 8: 26, 27.) It has already been pointed out that Paul did not object to suffering for the cause of Christ; but it is a fact, often expressed by him, that he longed to go and be with Jesus. Lipscomb notes that "Christians are waiting for the redemption of their bodies from mortality and suffering. Their redemption in Christ will not be completed until their bodies are raised from the dead and glorified

and are become like Jesus in his glorified and immortal state. Paul has in these verses [Rom. 8: 18-23] presented to us the far-reaching and appalling results of sin, and has given us a picture of the future glorious state that shall come to men." The "naked" state to which the apostle refers is that of the disembodied spirit; and what he is saying is that he does not want to be found in that condition, but rather with the spiritual body which God has prepared for his glorified people. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 35ff.)

As Paul continues with the text now before us, he affirms the confidence which was his as he began in verse 1. He understood God's will and intention regarding his people. To be "at home in the body" is to be alive in the flesh; and that, in turn, means to be absent from the Lord in the glorified state. (Read again Phil. 1: 21-24.) The parenthetical statement of verse 7 is rendered by Williams in these words: "for here I live by what I believe and not by what I see."

The apostle Paul was fully aware that the final day of accounts is coming; and it was his aim to be ready to meet the Lord at that time in peace. 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 thoughts and actions. In the words of Archibald Alexander, "Men are more accountable for their motives, than for anything else." Hugh Blair says that "in the eyes of that Supreme Being to whom our whole internal frame is uncovered [of. Heb. 4: 12, 13], motives and dispositions hold the place of action." (Cf. Matt. 5: 27, 28; 1 John 3: 15.) The word "for" connects verses 9 and 10, and it is easy to see that the fact of the judgment is sufficiently potent to cause any sincere person to make every effort to please God. (Cf. Acts 17: 30, 31; John 5: 22, 23.)

The Superior Privileges and Experiences of Christians

(Heb. 12: 22-24)

But ye are come unto mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled: in heaven, and to

God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel.

The preceding verses of the paragraph, that is, verses 18-21, should be carefully read before beginning the study of this section of the lesson text for today; for it is there that we get the first part of the contrast between mount Sinai and mount Zion. And so, instead of returning to the terrifying experiences at Sinai, the writer of the letter from which the text is taken would have the somewhat confused Hebrew Christians take their stand before the reassuring spiritual mount Zion; for it is there that they are brought into fellowship with eternal realities. Paul had previously written to the Philippian brethren, and had said, "For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Phil. 3: 20.) And beginning with the text now under consideration, Paul describes the meeting place of God and his people—the place where the Father manifests his presence, and where his people dwell. (Cf. Eph. 2: 19-22: Matt. 18: 20.)

After having named the place of meeting, the writer then tells who are there. He mentions first an innumerable host of angels, and the saints of joyful convocation. The

original word for "general assembly" means a *festal gathering*; and this, again, is in sharp contrast with the terror-stricken multitude at Sinai. The "church of the firstborn" (the term "firstborn" is plural, as may be seen from the text—"who are enrolled in heaven") means the church of the Lord, or the people who were born into the family of God and have not forsaken their birthright, but who have retained their privileges as the firstborn (of. Heb. 12: 16); and they are enrolled in heaven (of. Phil. 4: 3). This figure is probably based on the well known practice of city officials who inscribed the names of all their citizens on tablets or scrolls.

God, the final Judge of all, before whom every individual must stand or fall, is the great Center of the realities to which his people have been introduced (of. Rev. 4: 1-11); and he will assign, without appeal, each soul to his own destiny. Those who are faithful to Christ have nothing to fear; for he has promised to confess their names before the Father and the holy angels. (Cf. Matt. 10: 32, 33; Rev. 3: 5; Luke 12: 8, 9.) The "spirits of just men made perfect" probably includes all who have died in God's favor since Abel. (Cf. Heb. 11: 39, 40.) Abel's blood called for vengeance, while the blood of Christ opened the way for reconciliation and holy fellowship.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Discuss the New Testament meaning and use of the term "church."

What does the divine record say regarding the church as the bride of Christ?

What is the particular thought which is to be stressed in this lesson?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?

Why would an assurance like this be needed?

Grounds for Hope and Confidence

Discuss the setting of this portion of the lesson text and its impressiveness.

Why did the disciples who were with Jesus then need encouragement and reassurance?

What does the Bible teach with reference to the realities of heaven?

What is suggested in this lesson regarding the continuance of our life in Christ?

Why is it impossible for our life in Christ to end with physical death?

The Heavenly Home Joyfully Anticipated

Why was Paul always able to manifest a spirit of optimism while suffering as a Christian?

What is the meaning of "optimism" and who is a "Christian optimist"?

In what way does the Christian optimist view the disorders of the world of today?

Is it possible for any child of God to be a Christian optimist? Give reasons for your answer.

What kind of "groaning" did Paul have reference to in the text now before us?

What does our "complete" redemption in Christ include? Give reasons for your answer.

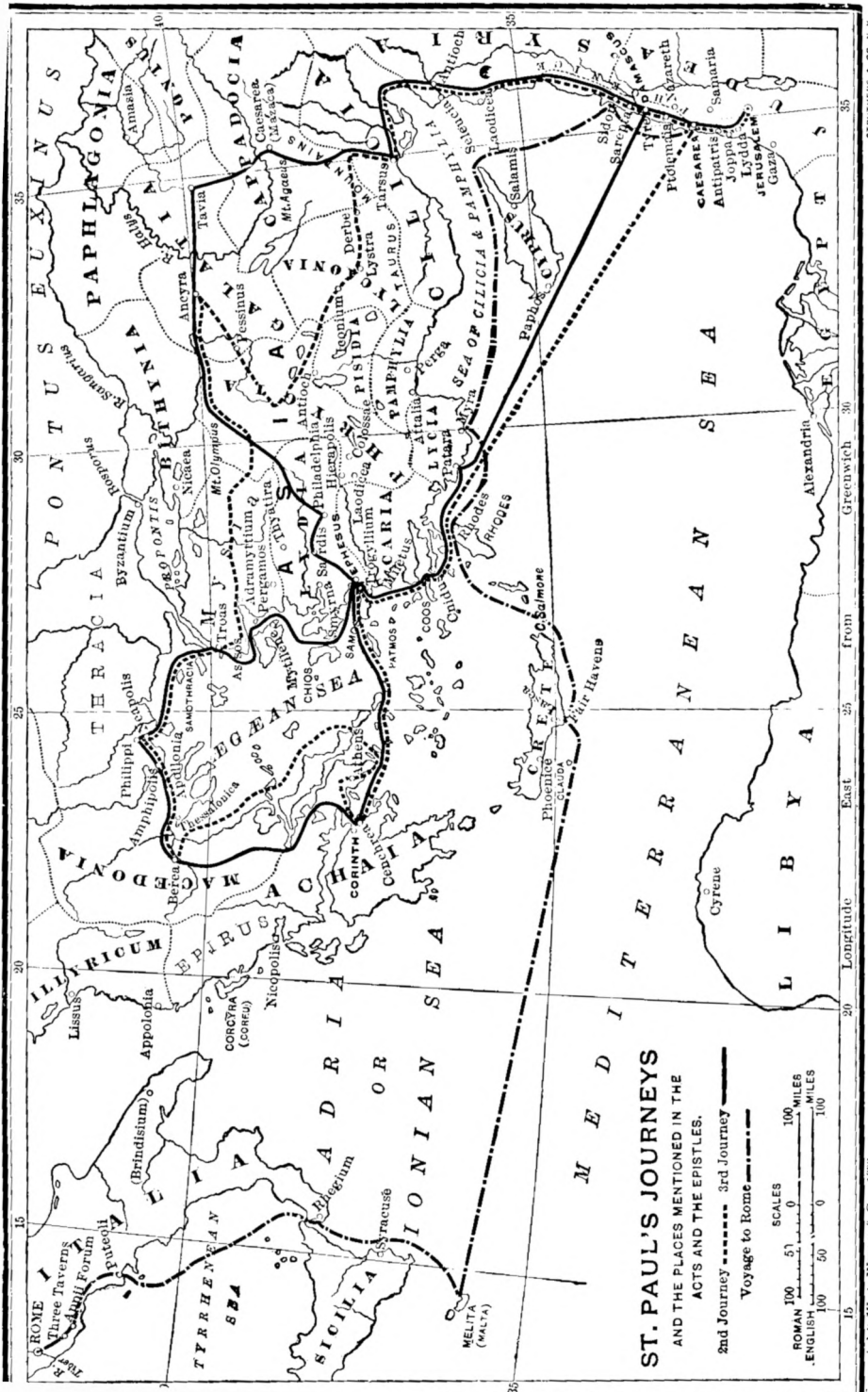
What powerful motive does Paul assign for an all-out effort to please God?

What does the Bible teach with reference to the place and power of motives in our lives?

The Superior Privileges and
Experiences of Christians

Under what circumstance were the words of this portion of the lesson text spoken?
What was the writer's purpose in writing them?
What is meant by the "meeting-place of God and his people"?

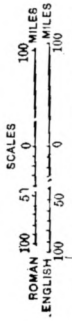
Whom does he say are present and what is the attitude of the Lord's church?
In what sense is the church the "firstborn"?
What will characterize the judgment of God at the last day?
Who are the "spirits of just men made perfect" and what is said regarding the blood of Christ and Abel?



ST. PAUL'S JOURNEYS

AND THE PLACES MENTIONED IN THE ACTS AND THE EPISTLES.

2nd Journey 3rd Journey -----
 Voyage to Rome -----



SECOND QUARTER THE CHURCH—ITS EARLY HISTORY

(Second Hall' of Six-Month Course)

AIM.—*To study thoroughly the origin, doctrine and practice of the New Testament church.*

Lesson I—April 2, 1967

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH

Lesson Text

Luke 24: 48, 49; Acts 1: 12-14; 2: 1-4, 14-16, 37-42

48 Ye are witnesses of these things.
49 And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high.

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

13 And when they were come in, they went up into the upper chamber, where they were abiding; both Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bar-thol'-o-mew and Mat'-thew, James *the son* of Al-phae'-us, and Si'-mon the Zealot, and Ju'-das *the son* of James.

14 These all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

1 And when the day of Pen'-te-cost was now come, they were all together in one place.

2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of lire; and it sat upon each one of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

14 But Peter, standing up with the

eleven, lifted up his voice, and spake forth unto them, *saying*, Ye men of Ju-dae-a, and all ye that dwell at Je-ru'-sa-lem, be this known unto you, and give ear unto my words.

15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose; seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day;

16 But this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Jo'-el.

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?

38 And Peter *said* unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Je'-sus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar oil', *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him.

40 And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation.

41 They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added *unto them* in that day about three thousand souls.

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”* (Matt. 16: 18.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 10: 34-48.

Daily Bible Headings

- March 27. M.....The Promise of Power (Acts 1: 1-12)
- March 28. T..... Vision of the Kingdom (Dan. 7: 13, 14)
- March 29. W..... Law to Go Forth from Jerusalem (Isa. 2: 1-4)

March	30.	T.....	Promise of the Church (Matt. 16: 13-21)
March	31.	F.....	Promise of the Spirit (Joel 2: 28-32)
April	1.	S.....	Feast of Pentecost (Lev. 23: 9-21)
April	2.	S.....	Pentecost, the Beginning (Acts 11: 1-18)

Time.—A.D. 30.

Places.—Jerusalem and mount Olivet.

Persons.—Jesus, his disciples, his mother, and the multitude.

Introduction

No one can read carefully and thoughtfully the first three chapters of the Ephesian letter without reaching the conclusion that Jesus Christ is the central fact and figure of history. The incarnation was unprecedented, and his virgin birth made him the only absolutely unique person in the annals of time. Prior to his coming to the earth, the history of the human race had been almost wholly characterized by sin and alienation from God; but man was created in the Divine image, and Jehovah was not willing to abandon him to an eternal death, without a supreme effort to save him. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18-21.) The desire to rescue mankind from the power of the evil one is the background against which God's purpose in Christ (Eph. 3: 11), was formed. This purpose is also called the "purpose of the ages" (see marginal note). It was gradually unfolded through the preceding dispensations; but it was not until the coming of Christ that it reached its full fruition. (Cf. Rom. 10: 4.) This truth is clearly set forth by Paul in the first twelve verses of Ephesus 3.

It is also clear from the passage just cited that, in the economy of God, Christ and the church are inseparably bound together. This is to say that God's eternal purpose in Christ, so far as the world is concerned, is accomplished in and through the church. Paul declares that the manifold, that is, the many-sided or much variegated, wisdom of God is displayed through, or by means of, the church. The material

universe declares the glory of God (Psalm 19: 1, 2), and, in a similar manner, the church is the "theatre" (of. 1 Cor. 4: 9) where God's multifarious wisdom is unfolded. The church is also called the "fulness," that is, the complement of Christ, or that which makes him complete. (See Eph. 1: 22, 23.) Any worthwhile study of God's purpose in Christ, therefore, must also include the church, which is the principal theme of the lessons of this quarter.

Practically all Bible students are agreed that the Lord has a church in the world today; but there is widespread disagreement as to the *time* of the church's establishment. The time element, to some people, is a matter of little consequence; but the error of that contention will become evident, as we proceed with this study. In fact, it is utterly impossible for any one to understand the teaching of the Bible regarding the church, without some knowledge of its establishment. The truth of the statement just made may be illustrated and emphasized by taking into consideration the oft-repeated comparison of the word "church" with some related terms, such as "kingdom" and "body." All three of the terms just mentioned—church, kingdom, and body—refer to one and the same thing, that is, the people of the Lord viewed from different standpoints. One has only to read Acts 1: 6, 7 in order to see that the kingdom of Christ had not been established before Jesus ascended to heaven.

The Golden Text

"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." These words were spoken by Jesus only a few months before his crucifixion; and the use of the future tense should make it clear to any thoughtful person that the church had not been es-

tablished up to that time. Jesus himself said that he came to the earth "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19: 10); and he announced to Peter that he purposed to accomplish this task by building his church (*oikodomēsō mou tēn ekklēsian*) which, in effect, would be

the house into which his people would be gathered. (Cf. Acts 2: 47.) Or, to use the figure which is frequently found in the New Testament, the people who are redeemed by Christ are his church, or, which is the same thing, his house. "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." (1 Tim. 3: 14, 15; of. Eph. 2: 19-22.)

One of the reasons why many people do not understand the New Testament teaching regarding the church which Jesus established, is that they have never learned the basic meaning of the term "church." There are some words found in the Greek New Testament which were evidently coined by inspiration, since they had no previous history in Greek literature; but the original word for "church" is not one of them. The Greek word for "church" (*ekklēsia*) was in common use among Greek-speaking people during the time of Christ and the apostles. Jesus was the first to use the term, so far as the literature of the New Testament is concerned, as may be seen by reading the words of the golden text for today, and Matt. 18: 17. These are the only two instances of the occurrence of the word in the gospel records. The first time the word appears in the inspired record, the reference is to the church in the aggregate, that is, as a whole; while the second reference is to a single congregation. (See marginal note.)

The literal meaning of the original term for church (*ekklēsia*) is an as-

sembly which had been called out from among others, and, consequently, called together, for any purpose. There is therefore nothing about the original word itself which indicated the character of the assembly. It might have been religious, political, or even an unorganized mob, as may be seen by reading Acts 7: 38, 19: 32, 39, 41. Thus, the *kind* of church which was under consideration would always have to be determined by the context; or, which is the same thing, other terms and circumstances will indicate whether the reference is to a church of the Lord or to a church of men. When Jesus therefore said that he would build his church, he meant nothing more than that he would call his people together from the world, and constitute them into an assembly, to be known as the people of God in contrast with the people of the world. (Cf. John 10: 16; 15: 18, 19; 17: 14-16; 1 Pet. 2: 9.) Robertson (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*) points out that the word originally meant an *assembly*, but that it came to mean an "unassembled assembly," as in Acts 8: 3. The people of God during the days of Moses were God's church (*ekklēsia*) for that period, and they had the Old Testament as their law (see again Acts 7: 38); and, in like manner, the people of God during the age of Christ are his church (*ekklēsia*) for this period (see 1 Cor. 15: 9; 1 Tim. 3: 15; of. Heb. 3: 1-6), and we have the New Testament for our law. (Read Gal. 3: 15-4: 7 for the inspired contrast between the law of Moses and the Gospel of Christ.)

The Text Explained

There Is a Time to Wait before the Lord

(Luke 24: 48, 49; Acts 1: 12-14)

Ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high.

It should often be emphasized that the closing part of the Book of Luke and the beginning of the Book of Acts cover substantially the same facts in Luke's historical record. This is particularly true with reference to the promise which Christ gave re-

garding the coming of the Holy Spirit. It is true that different expressions are used, but they are, for the most part, used interchangeably. If these thoughts are kept in mind, it will be much easier for one to understand the historical record which is now before us.

And so, if one wants to get the full significance of the record of the Lord's remarks to his disciples, which he evidently made on various occasions but on the same general subjects, he should read Luke 24: 48-53 in the light of Acts 1: 1-12:

for it is obvious that the two records overlap each other. (Cf., for example, Luke 24: 48 with Acts 1: 8; Luke 24: 49 with Acts 1: 4, 5; and Acts 24: 50-53 with Acts 1: 9-12.) The first part of the portion of the lesson text now before us says, "Ye are witnesses of these things." The work which the disciples did in bearing witness for Christ is graphically told in the Book of Acts. This work, however, was not to begin until the disciples were fully equipped for it; and it was for that reason that Jesus told them to wait for the promised power from on high. Acts 1: 8 says, "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." If one will read the Book of Acts, and other related scriptures, he will see that that is precisely what the early disciples did. (Cf. Rom. 15: 19-23; Col. 1: 23.)

The "promise of my Father" in the passage now before us is, as has already been pointed out, identical with the "promise of the Father" in Acts 1: 4; and, in each instance, the disciples were told by Jesus to remain in Jerusalem, until they received the promise, which was the Holy Spirit. In the case of the gospel record, they were to tarry in the city, until they were "clothed with power from on high"; while in Acts they were told not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise which would come to them "not many days hence." To be clothed with power from on high, and to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, both figurative expressions, refer to one and the same thing; and that promise was specifically fulfilled in Acts 2: 1-4, when "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." There is absolutely nothing said in the New Testament, or elsewhere by Divine authority, which teaches that the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" is anything other than being filled with the Holy Spirit, which resulted in the disciples' being clothed with power from on high, whereby they were given the ability to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Cf. Acts 2: 33.)

Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is nigh unto Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey off. And when they were come in, they went up into the upper chamber, where they were abiding; both Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. These all with one accord continued stedfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

The final sentence in Luke's first volume of his two-volume historical record says, "And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, blessing God." (Luke 24: 52, 53.) A "sabbath day's journey," according to Jewish tradition, was based on Josh. 3: 4. The Israelites were required to march about two thousand cubits (approximately three quarters of a mile) behind the ark, and from this came the idea that the tabernacle was that distance from the camp of the people; and since the Israelites were allowed to go to the tabernacle on the sabbath day (of. Num. 28: 1-10), two thousand cubits became the distance allowed for a sabbath day's journey which, as already noted, was approximately three quarters of a mile.

The scene depicted in the passage now before us has been described as the first prayer meeting, in which the disciples of Jesus were engaged following the ascension of their Lord; and it is certain that no better exercise could characterize any of God's people, praying to him while waiting for further instruction. (Cf. Acts 9: 5, 6, 11.) As already pointed out in this section of the lesson text, Jesus had told his disciples what their work would be, but he had also charged them not to leave the city of Jerusalem, until they had been divinely prepared to accomplish that which was expected of them. The group mentioned in the paragraph now under consideration consisted of the eleven apostles, some women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brethren. (Cf. Acts 1: 15.) The brethren of Jesus had evidently undergone a great change in their attitude toward him, since they were last heard from. (Cf. John 7: 5.)

The reference to Mary in the passage now before us is the last mention of her in the New Testament; and we have no further definite information regarding her. One tradition says 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. It is obvious that both of these traditions cannot be true; and it is, of course, possible that neither one is correct. We simply do not know what happened to the mother of our Lord, after her last appearance in the inspired record. However, there is one thing that we do know, namely, her final appearance in history was as a disciple of Christ and engaged in worship to God, and not as the object of any idolatrous homage. And what better admonition 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.)

The Blending of the Time and the Occasion

(Acts 2: 1-4, 14-16)

And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Pentecost was the second of the three great annual feasts of the Jews (see Ex. 23: 14-17); and if one will read Lev. 23: 15, 16 and Deut. 16: 9 he will see that Pentecost always came on the first day of the week. There are several reasons why the Pentecost of Acts 2 is of special significance. (1) It was the first time that Jesus had been heard from after his ascension. He had been put to death by the highest ecclesiastical and civil tribunals known to man, and he had, as it were, appealed his case to the Supreme Court of Heaven (John 16: 7-11); and it was on this Pentecost, when the Jews

throughout the world were in Jerusalem, that the Divine decision was given. (Cf. Mark 14: 61-64; Luke 23: 1, 2; Acts 2: 36.)

(2) This was the day on which the Holy Spirit began his work for the conversion of the world. The work of the Spirit during the personal ministry of Christ was preparatory, but something of his ministry during the reign of Christ may be learned from such passages as John 14: 16-18; 16: 7-14; Acts 2: 37-39; 5: 32; 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20. (3) It was on the Pentecost of this lesson that some important prophecies concerning the present dispensation were fulfilled, or began to be fulfilled, as may be seen by reading Joel 2: 28-32; Isa. 2: 2, 3. (4) It was on this day that the first announcement of a complete salvation from sin was made, as we shall see in this lesson.

(5) It was on this Pentecost that the first law which was ever issued in the name of Christ was proclaimed.

(6) It was on this day that Peter, for the first time, used the keys of the kingdom of heaven. (7) The law of pardon which was announced on this day is the law of pardon for all nations and for all time. (Cf. Luke 24: 46, 47; Acts 2: 38; Matt. 28: 19, 20.)

Some Bible students are of the opinion that others than the apostles were together in one place at the time of this lesson; but be that as it may, we know that the twelve apostles were there. At least, they appear to be the only ones who were involved in the miracle of the occasion. It seems quite probably that the purpose of the sound, which resembled that of a mighty wind, was intended to attract the multitude, and call them together to the place where they could see and hear the apostles speak. To say the least of it, that was the effect which it had. (See verse 6.) The tongues "like as of fire" possibly indicated divine favor, or, which is more probable, the conferring of the power necessary to enable the apostles to speak inspired languages. Alford thinks that the "sound" was the means by which the Holy Spirit was manifested to their hearing, just as the "tongues" manifested his presence to their sense of sight.

The apostles were the plenipotentiary ministers of Christ, and it was

therefore essential that they be enabled to perform works which only God can do; and it was for this reason that Jesus promised them such power. (See Acts 1: 8; of. John 3: 1, 2.) This power was given to these men under the figure of a baptism; but later on when Peter referred to it, he spoke of it as a gift. (See Acts 11: 17; 15: 8.) A failure to understand and accept the figurative import of the baptism in the Holy Spirit has resulted in a rejection of the plain teaching of the New Testament regarding water baptism as a condition of salvation. As long as people are taught that they can and should be baptized in the Holy Spirit, just that long will they refuse to be baptized in water for the remission of their sins.

But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spake forth unto them, saying, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and give ear unto my words. For these are not drunken, as ye suppose; seeing it is but the third hour of the day; but this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel.

If the preceding paragraph of the chapter is read, it will be seen that Peter was offering an explanation of the miracle which had just been performed, and was getting the people ready to listen, with favor, to that which he was about to proclaim unto them. The Old Testament Scriptures, which they accepted, had predicted these things; and that was calculated to have a powerful effect upon them. Read the entire second chapter of Acts.

When the Church Became a Reality

(Acts 2: 37-42)

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation. They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

This section of the lesson text shows something of the effect which Peter's sermon had on the listening multitude, or at least some of them, and that which they did about it. The apostle's answer showed them how to get rid of their sins. We are here enabled to see how the Lord calls people out of sin and to himself, and how they become his followers. This is the church; and inasmuch as this was the first gospel sermon in fact, these people, along with the apostles and other disciples who were present that day, became the first members of the church which Jesus said that he would build. Verse 42 is the first statement of church history. (Cf. Matt. 28: 20.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What impressions are gained by reading the first three chapters of Ephesians?

What do we learn regarding God's eternal purpose in Christ?

In what way are Christ and the church related.

Why is the time of the church's establishment important?

The Golden Text

When and under what circumstances did Jesus speak the words of the golden text?

What is the literal meaning of the term "church"?

Why is there such widespread misunderstanding regarding the church of the New Testament?

There Is a Time to Wait before the Lord

Discuss the relationship between the Books of Luke and Acts.

Give proof of the conclusions which you reach.

Why were the disciples told to wait or tarry before beginning their witnessing for Christ?

What was the promise of the Father for which they were to wait?

Discuss this promise in the light of both Luke and Acts.

What was a sabbath day's journey and how was the distance determined?
 In what way did the disciples spend their time while waiting for the Lord's promise?
 What do we learn regarding Mary, the mother of Jesus, at the time of this lesson?

The Blending of the Time and the Occasion

What was the day of Pentecost and on what day of the week did it always fall?
 Why was the Pentecost of this lesson of special significance?
 Who were together in one place when the day arrived?
 Describe the miraculous manifestations which were seen and heard.
 What were probably the purposes of the sound and the tongues?
 Why did the apostles need such miraculous power at the time of this lesson?

Why do so many people reject the teaching of the New Testament regarding water baptism?
 What was Peter's first effort designed to do, as he began to speak to the multitudes?
 What effect would the citing of their scriptures be expected to have upon them?

When the Church Became a Reality

What effect did Peter's sermon have on some of the people who heard him?
 What was their response to it?
 What answer did the apostle give to them and why?
 Who were benefited by the gospel message on that day?
 In what way did the church come into existence or how was it established?
 How did all of this fit into the prediction which Jesus made in Matt. 16: 18, 19?
 What did the early church do, as set forth in Acts 2: 42?

Lesson II—April 9, 1967

LIBERALITY IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Lesson Text

Acts 2: 43-47; 4: 32-37

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45 And they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need.

46 And day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart,

47 Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was

his own; but they had all things common.

33 And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Je'-sus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need.

36 And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Bar'-na-bas (which is, being interpreted, Son of exhortation), a Le'-vite. a man of Cy'-prus by race,

37 Having a field, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9: 7.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 4: 13-31.

Daily Bible Readings

April 3. M..... Example of Liberty (Acts 4: 32-36)
 April 4. T..... Deception in the Early Church (Acts 5: 1-11)
 April 5. W..... “Lay by ... As Prospered” (1 Cor. 16: 1, 2)
 April 6. T..... The Great Contribution (2 Cor. 8: 1-24)
 April 7. F..... Sympathy for Others (Acts 11: 27-30)

April 8. S.

April 9. S.

TIME.—A.D. 30.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Members of the early church.

Do Good unto All Men (Gal. 6: 1-10)
Pure and undefiled Religion (James 1: 18-27)

Introduction

One of the great tests of Christian character is one's attitude toward worldly possessions. The truthfulness of this statement may be seen by reading such scriptures as Mark 10: 17-22 and Luke 12: 13-21. The principle involved in the situations just cited was clearly stated by Jesus, when he said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other." (Matt. 6: 24.) Trust, that is, confidence in or reliance upon God, is a vital factor in pleasing him. The writer of Hebrews says, "And without faith J that is, trust or confidence | 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.) God will not share that trust or confidence with any other person or thing; and there is no more effective way to determine one's attitude toward him, let it be repeated, than by the manner in which he regards his material possessions.

Not only may one's material wealth have the effect of demonstrating his attitude toward God; it also shows something of his relationship toward his fellow man. "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 who-so hath this world's goods, and be-holdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth." (1 John 3: 14-18.)

There will never be a time when the Lord's people, in one place or another, will not have an opportunity for helping the poor and needy. Jesus said, "For ye have the poor always with you, and whensoever ye will ye can do them good"; and it is for that reason that the Lord's people should frequently examine their own standing with reference to their less fortunate neighbors. A failure to recognize the claims of both God and man in him and his possessions was one of the fatal mistakes which the foolish rich man made. (Read again Luke 12: 13-21; of. 16: 19-31.) In his first letter to one of his sons in the gospel, Paul said, "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; of. Gal. 6: 7-10; Matt. 25: 31-46.)

The Golden Text

"Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." This passage can best be understood in the light of its immediate context, which is as follows: "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 ail 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.)

When one carefully considers the teaching of the New Testament with reference to giving, or, which is the same thing, one's liberality, he will learn that there are some specific motives which should govern Christians in this phase of their service to him. These motives are (1) *The desire to obey God.* (Matt. 7: 21; James 2: 10; 4: 17.) This is, of course, not only the first, but it is also the highest motive which man can have. (2) *As a means of spiritual development.* The giving which the Lord requires is a means of growth and development. Giving up material things in the proper spirit will always result in spiritual growth and spirit riches. No motive therefore should ever be put before a Christian to induce him to give, which would not develop him spiritually and leave him richer for the giving. (3) *As a proof of love.* The truth of this proposition is plainly set forth in such passages as 2 Cor.

8: 8, 9, 24. (Cf. John 14: 21; 1 John 5: 3.) (4) To *provide means for carrying on the work which the Lord has ordained for his people to do.* (1 Cor. 9: 13, 14; 16: 2.)

The fuller context of the passage which serves as the golden text for today's lesson contains that which may very properly be spoken of as Paul's statement of the *principles* which should govern Christians in their giving. And when one takes into consideration the actual words of the golden text itself, he is forced to the conclusion that the giving which is pleasing to God must be characterized by a purpose. To give with a purpose is to have an aim in mind, and make a sincere effort to discharge the obligation which grows out of it. Or, to state the same thing in another way, the giving which pleases God must result from *settled convictions and a determined purpose*; and not from an *occasional impulse*. There is no place for purposeless and spasmodic giving in the service of the Lord: God loves a cheerful giver, that is, one who is prompt and joyous in his giving. No one should hold on to that which he should give as long as he can; our giving should be done *weekly*, not *weakly*.

The Text Explained

The Practice of the Early Church

(Acts 2: 43-47)

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 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 day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved.

The last two verses of the paragraph which precedes this section of the lesson text reads as follows: "They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls. And they continued

stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers." The reference was to the result of Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost. Those who made up the church at that time had committed themselves to Christ, and the passage just cited gives us some idea of the Spiritual activities which characterized them. Verse 42 of the chapter from which this portion of the lesson text is taken emphasizes the worship of the early church, while the passage now before us tells something of the fellowship which the early Christians enjoyed, along with their daily activities.

The "fear" referred to in the passage now before us was the reverent awe which characterized unbelievers, and it was evidently brought about, in part at least, by the signs and wonders which were wrought through the apostles. The so-called "community of goods" was necessary

because many of those who had been won to Christ were doubtless from among those who were sojourning in Jerusalem, and who were without sufficient financial resources to enable them to continue in Jerusalem until they could be grounded in their newly found faith. These were evidently the people who had left their homes in distant regions, and had come to Jerusalem to attend the feast of Pentecost. It is possible that some of them had been there since before the feast of the pass-over, which occurred nearly two months before; and while their material resources which they had brought with them were sufficient to take care of them until after the feast of Pentecost and to get them back to their homes: they were not enough to enable them to remain in the capital city indefinitely.

There is no indication that the economic situation which is described in the portion of the text which is now before us prevailed elsewhere, so far as the Lord's people were concerned during the early days of the church, as may be seen by the numerous references in the New Testament to the rich and the poor. (Cf. 1 Tim. 6: 17; Gal. 2: 10; 1 Cor. 16: 1, 2; James 2: 1-5.) This is enough to convince any fair-minded person that no reference was to a *community of goods*, but rather to the manner in which the Lord's people, under apostolic supervision, dealt with a temporary situation which was before them. And there is sufficient teaching in the New Testament to warrant the conclusion that the people of the Lord should follow the example of the primitive followers of Christ in dealing with similar conditions locally, if and when they might arise. "For I say not this that others may be eased and ye distressed; but by equality: your abundance being a supply at this present time for their want, that their abundance may also become a supply for your want; that there may be equality: as it is written, He that gathered much had nothing over; and he that gathered little had no lack." (2 Cor. 8: 13-15.)

It should also be observed that the beneficiaries of the liberality of the early Christians, along with their benefactors, were not idle because

their material needs were being met, and they were therefore freed from the necessity of physical labor (of. 2 Thess. 3: 6-15); but all together, both the benefactors and the beneficiaries, "day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people." It is not surprising to learn further on in Luke's inspired record that many of the people of Jerusalem became obedient to the faith; and as rapidly as that occurred, the Lord added them to the body of those who were already saved which was the church. (Cf. Eph. 1: 22, 23; 5: 23.)

The Love and Unity of the Early Church

(Acts 4: 32-35)

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. For neither was there any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need.

The early church, within a relatively short time, numbered many thousands of members; and it is altogether probable that they came from practically all walks of life. It is true that they were bound together by the ties of a common faith; but it is at the same time nothing short of remarkable that so many people, with so many different backgrounds, could live together for so long a time, without having a major sin charged against them. The gospel of Christ had evidently had its way with them, and they had been able to remove all the selfishness from their lives. The early church had many admirable traits of character, but there was none more striking than the all but universal interest in the common welfare of the brethren.

When the Lord's people are willing to push self into the background (of Matt. 16: 24), and concentrate on the good of others, it is difficult for wrongdoing to arise. Some one has said, Begin at either end of sin, and you will find "I" in the middle. That statement is true; and it is doubtful if any sin is entirely free from selfishness.

The magnificent generosity which was displayed by the early church was not the result of a commandment from the Lord to that effect, that is, so far as the record is concerned. This grand trait of Christian character was due, rather, to the love for each other which had been generated in their hearts by the gospel. And if we are willing to consider the facts as they are contained in church history, this was one of the principal factors which accounted for the continual growth of the church. In his book, *Personal Religion and Politics* (p. 24), W. H. Carnegie says:

"The astonishing spread of Christianity through the length and breadth of 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. These doubtless were contributory factors, but the main factor was the type of life displayed by the Christians themselves. The best men of the time were profoundly dissatisfied with the coarseness and selfishness and ineffective intellectualism with which their social surroundings were charged. They were longing for an atmosphere of thought and feeling, and for modes of life and conduct, to which their nobler nature could respond. And gradually they became aware that what they were seeking for was in their midst—little communities of men and women living together as members of a united family live, tending to their sick, caring for their poor, teaching their ignorant, consigning their dead with reverent hopefulness to the grave, always ready to place their beneficent activities at the disposal of those outside their own fold who were in need of them. And so they 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."

Thus, the church in Jerusalem was a united church, which resulted from a common faith, and animated by a common Spirit. (See 1 Cor. 12: 12, 13.) The very first recorded statement of church history, as we have already seen, says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2: 42.) And as long as that condition prevailed, the Lord's people could not be otherwise than united in heart and soul; and they could not refrain from using their earthly possessions for the good of all concerned, as the need arose. "So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith." (Gal. 6: 10.) "But 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?" (1 John 3: 17.) A united church is never a selfish church, either as a congregation or as individual members.

When Luke says, "And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all," he was citing an inspired example of "supported truth," which means that the preaching of the Lord's ambassadors was more effective because the church was upholding it by faithful Christian living, which showed itself in perfect unity and unexcelled benevolence. Later on, the apostle Paul wrote these words, "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 ought to be an impressive lesson to all of us today; for it is a well known fact that the strongest kind of gospel preaching can be made ineffective by unfaithfulness on the part of those who profess to be the Lord's people.

In saying, "For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the

prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need," the inspired penman explained how the process worked. Those who had possessions sold them, and took the money to the apostles; and then each person who had need was given that which supplied his need. This plainly shows that there was no equalization of property; instead, each person received only that which he needed. This idea is forcefully confirmed, and clearly illustrated, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, as may be seen by reading the first part of Acts 5. They were neither required to sell their property, nor give the money which they received for it.

An Individual Example of Christian Benevolence

(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 in the sacred Volume attached to names. It frequently happened in the Old Testament that a person's original name was changed, because it no longer adequately described his character or the work he was doing; and that practice continued through the New Testament period. Jacob, for example, was at first a "heel-catcher" (of 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 Si-

mon . . . thou shalt be called . . . Peter." (John 1: 42.)

And so it was with Joseph, an early Christian and the man about whom we are studying in this section of the lesson text. 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*. This change in names, in the case of the man now under consideration, was so complete that no one today knows him by his first or original name. Nothing is said regarding the occasion for the change of names in the case now before us, as in the cases of Jacob, Peter, and others; but it is not difficult for us to see, even with the meager account of his work as a Christian teacher, that there was a singular degree of correspondence between his character and his name.

There was some reason 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 could have been in order to provide a suitable contrast to the case of Ananias and Sapphira, which immediately follows. (See Acts 5: 1-11.) But whatever may have been the reason behind Luke's remark regarding the generosity of Barnabas, we know that it was in keeping with his character. We have already seen that many others were doing the same thing, but only the name of Barnabas is mentioned. Luke's record of the activities of the early church was written long after they took place; and that fact should be taken into consideration when we endeavor to think of a reason for singling out the generosity of this good man. (Cf. Acts 11: 22-24.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is one's attitude toward material possessions a great test of character?
In what way did Jesus and Paul deal

with the principle involved in this question?
Why will God not share the confidence of his people with any other person or thing?
What other relationship of life does one's attitude toward material possessions demonstrate?

Why is the question which we are now discussing so important? Cite some fatal mistakes regarding this issue which are recorded in the New Testament.

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of the golden text for today's lesson?

What are the principal motives which are set forth in the New Testament for giving?

What does Paul teach regarding the principle of Christian giving?

What is "purposeful giving" and what is its place in the Christian system?

Why is "weekly giving" essential to pleasing the Lord and character building?

Why is a lesson like this so valuable to our own growth and development?

The Practice of the Early Church

What over-all picture of the early church is presented in the closing part of Acts 2?

What was the "fear" which "came upon every soul" and what was the cause of it?

Why did the disciples have all things common?

Why did so many sell their possessions?

Does the Lord expect all of his people throughout the age to follow this example? Give reasons for your answer.

Under what conditions, then, should the practice be repeated?

In what way did these early Christians spend their time and why? How were the "outsiders" affected and what did the Lord do about it?

The Love and Unity of the Early Church

How was it possible for such a multitude to be of "one heart and soul"?

Why did they feel as they did about their material possessions?

What notable effect was demonstrated in their lives?

What were some of the major factors in the rapid growth of the early church?

Discuss the principal motives which actuated the Jerusalem church.

Why was the preaching of the apostles so effective?

What important lesson should we learn from this?

How do we know that there was no such thing as an "equalization of property" among the early disciples of the Lord?

An Individual Example of Christian Benevolence

What lesson do we learn from the Scriptures regarding the importance of names? Cite some examples.

What was the evident reason for the change in names with respect to Barnabas?

What probable reason did Luke have for singling out the generosity of Barnabas?

Discuss something of the place of Barnabas in the history of the early church.

Why will the example of Barnabas always be an inspiring one?

Lesson III—April 16, 1967

PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH

Lesson Text

Acts 4: 1-4, 13-22

1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sad'-du-cees came upon them,

2 Being sore troubled because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Je'-sus the resurrection fro m the dead.

3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in ward unto the morrow: for it was now eventide.

4 But many of them that heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

13 Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Je'-sus.

14 And seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

16 Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been wrought through them, is manifest to all that dwell in Je-ru-sa-lem; and we cannot deny it.

17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

18 And they called them, and charged them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Je'-sus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye:

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard.

21 And they, when they had further threatened them, let them go, finding nothing how they might pun-

ish them, because of the people; for all men glorified God for that which was done.

22 For the man was more than forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was wrought.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“And they spake the word of God with boldness ”* (Acts 4: 31.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 4: 23-31.

Daily Bible Readings

April 10.	M.....	Warnings of Persecution (Matt. 10: 16-23)
April 11.	T.....	Persecution for All (2 Tim. 3: 1-13)
April 12.	W.....	Support in Persecution (Luke 12: 1-12)
April 13.	T.....	Example of Persecution (Acts 6: 8-15)
April 14.	F.....	Beginning of Great Persecution (Acts 7: 54; 8: 1-3)
April 15.	S.....	Peter and James Persecuted (Acts 12: 1-19)
April 16.	S.....	Paul's Sufferings (2 Cor. 11: 22, 23)

TIME.—A.D. 30.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Peter, John, the Jewish leaders, and others.

Introduction

The persecution of the Lord's people began with the slaying of Abel by his brother Cain; and the practice has not ceased since that time, except when faithfulness itself disappeared, and there was no cause for such opposition. All that one needs to do in order to see the truthfulness of the statements just made, is to read the Bible through from Genesis to Revelation. The apostle Paul stated the principle on which persecution is based, when he wrote his final letter before going to his own death, namely, "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3: 12.) The force of this statement can be recognized when we take into consideration the difference in the attitude which is manifested toward a dedicated child of God and a merely good moral man. The reason for the lack of unyielding opposition to the good moral man is that he is already in the service of the devil, and there is therefore no need for the evil one to persecute him. (Cf. Rom. 5:7.)

But all the results of persecution are not bad; for the simple reason that no one, no matter how devoted to the Lord he may be, knows how strong his faith is, until it has been tried; and since none but the faithful can please God, it is to our advantage that our faith be subjected to an adequate test. One New Testament writer put the question in this way: "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold tempta-

tions; knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing." (James 1: 2-4.) Persecution can become an important test of one's faith. Jesus declares, "Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you." (Matt. 5: 10-12.)

During the Lord's last discourse with his disciples, he said, "If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no excuse for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had

sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this is come to pass, that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." (John 15: 18-27.)

The lesson which we are to study today is a record of the first conflict which occurred between the followers of Christ and the people of the world; and the facts which are set forth in the text are a clear demonstration of the truthfulness of the words which Jesus spoke in the passage just quoted. The Lord's people and the world are diametrically opposed to each other, and the conflict

between them is always inevitable. When we think of the *world*, we usually think of irreligious people; but the New Testament regards all people who are out of Christ as being of the world. Prior to his death on the cross, the "persecutors" of the text were the Lord's people under Moses; but when Christ died and the law was nailed to the cross, all men were declared to be under sin. (Cf. Col. 2: 14; Gal. 3: 22; Rom. 3: 9; 11: 32.) And so, from Pentecost and onward, only those who are called out of the world in response to the gospel are regarded as being his people. (Cf. Acts 10: 34, 35; 2 Thess. 2: 13, 14.) The issue therefore is clearly drawn: Jesus is in the center, as it were, and while the world uses every means at its hands to counteract his claims, the Spirit and his disciples bear witness of him.

The Golden Text

"And they spake the word of God with boldness" The words just quoted from the closing part of the passage which serves as the devotional reading for today's lesson. Luke's purpose in writing this part of his narrative, or so it seems, was to preserve a record of the reaction of the disciples to the treatment which had been accorded them by the rulers of the Jews, or by those who were opposing the Lord and his church. The full statement of the context is a record of the prayer and praise of the persecuted disciples of Christ, namely.

"And being let go, they came to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And they, when they heard it, lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, O Lord, thou that didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David thy servant, didst say,

Why did the Gentiles rage,
And the peoples imagine vain things?
The kings of the earth set themselves in array,
And the rulers were gathered together,

Against the Lord, and against his Anointed:

for of a truth of this city against thy holy Servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel foreordained to come to pass. And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, while thou stretchest forth thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of thy holy Servant Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness." (Acts 4: 23-31.)

It should be observed that "they spake the word of God with boldness" was the result of their prayer to that end, and the knowledge that the Lord was with them. God's people will always have opposition to faithful preaching in this wicked world, even among so-called brethren (of. 2 Tim. 4: 1-5); but if they are willing to take their case to God in prayer and rely upon him for his blessings, they have nothing to fear.

The Text Explained

The Church's First Clash with the Jewish Leaders

(Acts 4: 1-4)

And as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, being sore troubled because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in ward unto the morrow: for it was now even-tide. But many of them that heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

The speaking unto the people, referred to in the opening verse of this section of the lesson text, was Peter's sermon which is recorded in the preceding chapter, but which was cut short by his and John's arrest. The men who interrupted the preaching of the two apostles were the *priests*, whose duty it was to teach and conduct the temple worship, the *captain of the temple*, or the commander of the guard made up of Levites which stood on duty at the gates of the temple and elsewhere on its grounds, to maintain order (of. 1 Chron. 26: 1-19), and the *Sadducees*. The text says that they were sore troubled because (1) they taught the people, and (2) proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. The Lord's principal opponents, before his death, were the Pharisees, because of his opposition to their traditions and hypocrisy; but after his resurrection the Sadducees were the ones who were sore troubled, because they denied the resurrection. (Cf. Acts 23: 6-8.)

If the "priests" in question were not themselves Sadducees, they probably joined with those who opposed the apostles, because they felt that their work as teachers of the people was being interfered with by the preaching of the ambassadors of Jesus. But because of the late hour of the day, they put the apostles in ward unto the morrow. But notwithstanding the excitement which must have arisen among the people over the arrest of the apostles, the sermon which had been cut short was not without effect; for many of them that heard the word believed, and the

number of the men came to be about five thousand.

The Awkward and Embarrassing Position of the Jewish Authorities

(Acts 4: 13-17)

Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. And when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been wrought through them, is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

The occasion for the sermon by Peter was the reaction of the multitude to the miraculous healing of the cripple man at the Beautiful door of the temple. (Read Acts 3: 1-10.) In continuing the narrative, Luke says, "And as he held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this man? or why fasten ye your eyes on us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made him to walk?" (Acts 3: 11, 12.) The apostle then continued his sermon (Acts 3: 13-26), until he was forced to stop by his and John's arrest. On the following day, the Jewish leaders, apparently all or a part of the Sanhedrin, had the two imprisoned apostles brought before them, and they inquired, "By what power, or in what name, have ye done this?" (verse 7.) The vagueness of the question which was put to Peter and John could not have been by accident; for the men who asked it were trained specialists in the art of interrogating witnesses. And if the two apostles had been disposed to quibble regarding the question, they could have replied, "Done this preaching? this miracle? or what?"

Their would-be judges knew that these men had done nothing contrary to the law, but they evidently framed the question as they did in the hope that the bewildered followers of Jesus would be frightened into saying something which would give them the basis for a charge against them.

But the cunningly devised question which was directed to Peter and John served them well, for it provided them with the opportunity to select the type of answer which was best suited to their purpose, and it is certain that no answer which could have been given would have been more unwelcomed to their judges. However, the answer which Peter and John gave was not of their own framing; for Jesus had previously warned his disciples that such situations would come to them. (See Matt. 10: 16-20.) After pointing out to the Jewish leaders the ridiculous position in which they had placed themselves before God, Peter concluded his remarks in these words: "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein ye must be saved." (Acts 4: 12.)

Whether or not the men of the Sanhedrin recognized Peter and John as the two disciples of Jesus who were present when he was condemned to death is not clear; but one thing is certain, namely, they recognized them for what they were on the occasion now before us. There was no doubt in their minds but that they belonged in the same category in which they had found Jesus. They were aware of the fact that they had killed Jesus, but they evidently made up their minds that they would deal more cautiously with these two men, at least for the time being.

The word "unlearned" literally means unlettered or uneducated, in contrast with the cultured training of the rabbis, while "ignorant" indicates that which the world usually means by the term *layman*. The original word for "ignorant" is *idiōtēs*, the very term from which we have our word "idiot." In commenting on this term, A. T. Robertson says, "It does not mean 'ignorant,' but a layman, a man not in office (a private person), a common soldier and not

an officer, a man not skilled in the schools, very much like *agrammatos*. It is fro?u *idios* (one's own) and our 'idiosyncrasy' is one with an excess of such a trait, while 'idiot' (this very word) is one who has nothing but his idiosyncrasy. Peter and John were men of ability and of courage, but they did not belong to the set of the rabbis."

Peter and John were, in the estimation of the Sanhedrin, *private citizens* in contrast to the officials, all of which implies that they were without professional training and knowledge. But these would-be judges recognized that these men had something else which they did not expect them to have; and with the man who had been healed standing with them, there was nothing that they could say against it. Their immediate aim was to maintain their *status quo*, but deep down in their own hearts they had to admit that they had signally failed even in that. All of this clearly implies that they were not interested in learning any new truth, which they may not have then known; instead they made up their minds to try to see that the facts which had been so clearly demonstrated before their eyes spread no further.

The attitude which these members of the highest court among the Jewish people manifested on the occasion now before us reveals something of the depths of depravity to which religious leaders can descend. They privately admitted that the power of God had been clearly revealed through Peter and John (of. John 3: 1, 2), and they knew that it would be useless to deny it; but they had rejected Jesus as the Messiah, had put him to death, and had tried to prevent his resurrection (Matt. 27: 62-66), and now they must either admit their error, confess their sin, and change their religious attitude, or continue their fight against the claims of Christ.

The value of this lesson to us is seen in the fact that it has been brought down to date. One of the chief issues in which denominational leaders are united is their persistent effort to see that the teaching of Jesus with reference to baptism as a condition of salvation "spread no further among the people." They have both misunderstood and reject-

ed his teaching on this subject, something which they could easily see, if they would only read, without prejudice, that which the New Testament says about it. (Cf. Acts 13: 27; Matt. 22: 29; Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 18: 8.) It is sad to observe that there is hardly a denominational preacher anywhere now, who does not do his best to make certain that the people who come under his influence reject this teaching of the Lord. They themselves have been taught to reject it; and being confronted with preaching which emphasizes the Lord's teaching on the subject, they must either continue their denial of it, or admit their mistake and change religiously. Privately they admit that which the Bible says on the subject, but publicly they reject both precept and example, as set forth in the Scriptures.

That which has just been said is not an issue which should be lightly considered, but one which was clearly anticipated by the Holy Spirit, as may be seen by reading the following passages: "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema." (Gal. 1: 6-9.) "Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written." (1 Cor. 4: 6.) "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 9-11.)

The Apostles Further Threatened and Permitted to Go

(Acts 4: 18-22)

And they called them, and charged them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard. And they, when they had further threatened them, let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people; for all men glorified God for that which was done. For the man was more than forty years old, on whom the miracle of healing was wrought.

The action of the Sanhedrin in dealing with Peter and John was a confession of their failure to accomplish that which they had set out to do; but they, in their stubbornness of heart, were not willing to confess their error. This is a trait of human nature which is still seen too often today. It is also a noticeable fact that when people make up their minds to continue their opposition to the truth, that they will get further away from God, rather than closer to him. Luke points out that the Sanhedrin, a short time later, was confronted by a similar situation, but were held in restraint, to some extent, by one of their own members. "But they, when they heard this, were cut to the heart, and were minded to slay them. But there stood up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in honor of all the people, and commanded to put the men forth a little while. . . . And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown: but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them; lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God. And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles unto them, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go." (Read Acts 5: 33-42.)

We also see in the text now before us the proper spirit which should be shown by all Christians who are faced with a threat like the one

aimed at Peter and John. They were specifically told by the Sanhedrin "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus"; but the apostles calmly, and with dignity, answered, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw

and heard." (Cf. Acts 5: 27-29.) It sometimes happens that the Lord's people are brought into such situations for his sake, *for a testimony unto those who oppose the gospel plan of salvation*; and then, at the proper time, God will deal with the opposition appropriately. (Cf. Rom. 2: 16; 2 Thess. 1: 7-10.)

Questions for Discussion

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

What was done with Peter and John when they were arrested and why?

Introduction

What does the Bible teach with reference to the persecution of God's people?
What is the basis for such persecution and why isn't the "good moral man" So treated?
What are some of the good results which come from persecution for Christ's sake?
Why does the world hate the Lord and his people?
Who are the people whom the New Testament regards as being in and of the world?
What is the position of Christ in these relationships and what is the duty of his people?

The Awkward and Embarrassing Position of the Jewish Authorities

What was the occasion for Peter's sermon to which the Jewish leaders objected?
What was the first move of the Sanhedrin on the following day?
In what way did the apostles deal with the situation?
In what light did the Jewish leaders regard Peter and John on the occasion now before us?
What is the meaning of "unlearned" and "ignorant," as used in the text?
Why did the Sanhedrin deal so cautiously with the *unlearned* and *ignorant* apostles?
What appears to have been the sole motive of the Jewish leaders?
What did their attitude manifest regarding themselves?
What is the principal value of all of this to us?
Why do denominational people object so strenuously to the Lord's plan of salvation?
Why should all of this be regarded with seriousness by the Lord's people?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstance did Luke record the words of this portion of our lesson?
What appears to have been his purpose in writing the passage from which the golden text is taken?
What contributing factors enabled the disciples to speak the word of God with boldness?
What lesson should be learned from all of this for our day?

The Apostles Further Threatened and Permitted to Go

What did the action of the Sanhedrin in dealing with Peter and John reveal?
In what way is this trait of human nature still in evidence today?
What always happens to people with this disposition in their relation to God?
What and under what circumstance was the Sanhedrin restrained a little later on?
What lesson should we learn from this?
In what way should the Lord's people deal with the threats which are made against them?
What is doubtless often being accomplished by such confrontations?

The Church's First Clash with the Jewish Leaders

What "speaking" was being done unto the people at the time of this lesson?
Who were the men who interrupted the apostle's sermon?
What was their objection to the preaching of the apostles?
What change was made in the opposition to Jesus after his resurrection and why?
Why would the priests be opposed to the apostolic preaching?

Lesson IV—April 23, 1967

A PROBLEM IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Lesson Text

Acts 6: 1-8

1 Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Gre-cian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.

2 And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Look ye out therefore, brethren,

from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will continue stedfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word.

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Ste'-phen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Proch'-o-rus, and Ni-ca'-nor, and Ti-

mon, and Par'-me-nas, and Nic-ó-la'-us a proselyte of An'-tl-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.

Golden Text.—*“And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women”* (Acts 5: 14.)

Devotional Reading.—Acts 6: 9-15.

Daily Bible Readings

April 17. M.....	Barnabas, a Liberal Man (Acts 4: 32-36)
April 18. T.....	Ananias and Sapphira Try to Deceive (Acts 5: 1-11)
April 19. W.....	Sin of Lying (Prov. 6: 16-19)
April 20. T.....	Deceitful Tongue Destroyed (Psalm 52)
April 21. F.....	Satan, Father of Liars (John 8: 44-55)
April 22. S.....	Pretenders, Liars (1 John 2: 1-6)
April 23. S.....	Destiny of Liars (Rev. 21: 5-8, 24-27)

Time.—A.D. 30 or 31.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—The twelve, the multitude of the disciples, and the seven.

Introduction

It is fair to assume that the Jerusalem church in its beginning was as nearly perfect, as it was possible for an organization to be perfect which is composed of imperfect human beings. It appears almost certain that at least some of the twelve apostles were present with the church during its entire career, up to this point in its brief history. And while sin had reached forth its unholy hand and touched some of the members of the church (see Acts 5: 1-11), it does not appear that any serious problem faced the body of Christ as a whole, before the time of this lesson. Luke tells us that the infant church “continued stedfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2: 42); and he further informs us that “the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul” (Acts 4: 32).

But, as already indicated, the church in Jerusalem, as is true of all subsequent ages, was made up of human beings; and even apostolic direction and supervision did not, and apparently could not, prevent problems from arising among the brethren.

As long as the membership of the church must be drawn from the world of humanity around it, problems will continue to trouble those who are engaged in the service of the Lord. But the fact that “humanisms” manifest themselves in the church does not mean that Christian people should allow them to destroy the work which has been ordained for them to do. The very presence of “problems” should be a challenge to every faithful child of God, and especially the leaders of the various congregations. Dedicated followers of Christ should endeavor (1) to find a solution to the problems, and (2) to save those who are involved in them. Furthermore, the presence of problems in the church does not always necessarily mean that those who are primarily responsible for raising them, are themselves in the wrong. Problems often arise when no one involved in them is really at fault; but if no effort is made to solve them according to the teaching of the New Testament, it probably will not be very long before there will be brethren who are involved in wrongdoing.

No thoughtful person would contend that there is a specific plan revealed in the New Testament for the settlement of any and every problem which may arise; but it is true that the over-all teaching of the word of the Lord, and the principles which it sets forth, is sufficient for any and all situations which can come before Christian people. The apostle Paul declares that "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; of. 2 Pet. 1: 3.) When the Lord's people are familiar with, and are able to apply, the *principles* which are set forth in the New Testament, and are willing along with that to manifest the spirit of Christ, there will be few problems with which they will have to deal which will be beyond a reasonable solution.

The Golden Text

"And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." The history of the early church is one continuous narrative of additions to the body of Christ. The beginning day of the church witnessed a membership of about three thousand, and that number continued to grow daily. "And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved," or, as the margin has it, those that *were being saved*. (Acts 2: 47.) The miraculous healing of the lame beggar at the Beautiful door of the temple, and Peter's second sermon which was occasioned by it and which was cut short by the Sanhedrin, as we observed in last week's lesson, saw the number of male believers come to be about five thousand (Acts 4: 4); and there is every reason to think that the growth of the church continued. The occasion for the statement which serves as the golden text for today's lesson grew out of the action of the Lord and his people toward the first sin in the church, as may be seen by reading the first part of the fifth chapter of Acts. In the words of the inspired penman, "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people: and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. But of the rest I hypocrites such as Ananias and Sapphira! durst no man join himself to them: howbeit the people magnified them; and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." (Acts 5: 12-14.)

In commenting on the material of which the early church was composed, McGarvey says, "Such a church is certain to experience a rapid growth in numbers; for its high

qualities will inevitably draw to it the true-hearted in the community about it. This church did grow with marvelous rapidity. It soon numbered five thousand men, besides women and children; and if the latter classes maintained anything like the ratio they do in modern times, the whole number must have been at least ten thousand. It was at this stage of its progress that the remark is made which I have taken for my text. The multitude of these ten thousand believers were of one heart and one soul. We talk much these days about Christian union. We can't talk too much about it. We are solicitous, as believers have not been for ages past, for the fulfillment of our Saviour's prayer in behalf of the union of all that believe in him. Have we forgotten that this prayer was at one time fulfilled to the very letter?"

That which has been said in the preceding paragraphs is sufficient to show something of the conditions for growth of the body of Christ here upon the earth; and those who are responsible for the oversight of the Lord's people should make every effort to see that no problem which arises among them will remain a festering sore, until the community about them becomes disgusted with, rather than attracted to, that which professes to be the body of Christ. The true secret of numerical growth, so far as the church of the Lord is concerned, is expressed in the following words, namely, "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. And with great power gave the

apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great

grace was upon them all." (Acts 4: 32, 33.)

The Text Explained

An Unpleasant Situation Corrected

(Acts 6: 1-6)

Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. 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. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus a proselyte of Antioch; whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them.

"These days" probably refer to the general period with which chapter 5 closed. It has already been pointed out in this lesson that the church, from its beginning, had been bound together by the ties of an all but perfect fellowship; but as the chapter from which the present lesson text is taken opens the scene is changed somewhat, and for the first time in the church's experience the spirit of unity was threatened with the murmurs of dissatisfied disciples. The "Grecian Jews" were Israelites who lived outside Palestine, who had acquired Greek culture, and who spoke the Greek language. The "Hebrews" were the Jews who lived in the homeland, spoke the language, and followed the customs of their fathers. The former were called "Hellenists," while the latter, as the text indicates, were referred to as "Hebrews."

It was pointed out in an earlier lesson that many of the people who had come to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost were probably among those who had been converted to

Christ; and that they were providentially detained in Jerusalem, until they were properly grounded in the truth. It is also very likely true that these were some of the people who were having to be aided with the gifts of others, being, as they were, away from home and their normal means of livelihood. The facts, as they are found in the passage now under consideration, make this view almost certain, since the Grecian Jews were those who lived outside of Palestine. There is no indication that the neglect of the Grecian widows was intentional. The number of the disciples had reached into the thousands (of. Acts 4: 4), and it would be difficult, unless some brethren were especially charged with that responsibility, to supply the needs of every deserving person. But neglected people are not happy people; and so, whether unintentional or not, complaints were certain to be registered.

The occasion now before us, as already pointed out in this lesson, furnished the first real test of the unity which had characterized the church in Jerusalem since its beginning; but the apostles who were guided by the Holy Spirit were not willing for that unity to be replaced by dissension. The problem which had been created by the alleged neglect of the Grecian widows needed a solution; and the inspired leaders of the church had one to propose. Whatever the previous plan for distributing the supplies to those in need had been, it apparently was no longer adequate; and the apostles themselves were not willing to take the required time from their own God-given duties, and see to the distribution of the food themselves. A need had arisen and a plan to meet it had to be formulated; and that appears to have been the Lord's method of introducing new arrangements into the work of the church.

The church, up to the time of this lesson, had been under the immediate oversight of the twelve apostles themselves (of. Acts 2: 42), but the time would soon come when congregations of the Lord's people would

be established in other parts of the country; and they, of course, would need men to serve in them as overseers. These men, as the later record shows, would be known as elders, overseers, and shepherds, whose principal duties are indicated by the terms which are used to designate them. (Cf. Acts 20: 17, 20; Eph. 4: 11.) But, for the time being, the apostles themselves would continue the work which would later be done by elders, which, of course, is more important than serving tables. But the time had arrived, and the need was present, when other men would have to be selected to look after the latter responsibilities.

The entire church was pleased with the proposal made by the apostles, and immediate steps were taken to see that the plan was put into operation. It is true that the seven men who were selected to serve tables were not called "deacons" at the time of their appointment, but since they were appointed to *serve tables*, that is, *minister to tables*, as the marginal note has it, and inasmuch as the word "serve" (*diakoneo*) is the verb form of the noun *diakonos* (deacon), it appears that the seven men 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 before us. The early disciples were not called "Christians" until several years after the church was established (Acts 11: 26), but that does not mean that they were not Christians during the time between Pentecost and Antioch: they simply were not called Christians; and what was true of them is evidently also true of the men who served in the church, which was later designated by the term "deacon."

There are some other matters which should be noted in connection with the selection and appointment of the seven men to serve tables, namely, (1) the "selection" was made by the *brethren*, that is the church, and not by the apostles. This, however, does not mean that the brethren were free to choose just any seven men; for the *character* of the ones to be chosen was carefully stated by the apostles themselves. This same principle holds good today in the matter of the selection of

those who are to serve in the work of the church, that is, elders and deacons; but the New Testament just as specifically sets forth the *character* of those who are to be chosen. (Cf. 1 Tim. 3: 1-13; Tit. 1: 5-9; 1 Pet. 5: 1-3.) No congregation is ready to select men for these places which has not been taught the truth regarding such matters. When an informed congregation selects the men who are to serve as elders and deacons among the brethren (of. 1 Thess. 5: 12), more interest in and respect for their work will be manifested.

(2) The men who were selected by the Jerusalem church to serve as deacons were all from the group which did the murmuring, as may be seen by considering their Greek names. The generous spirit which was manifested by the Hebrews toward their Hellenists brethren doubtless had a sobering effect on the latter; and the motive behind this attitude was evidently to settle the difficulty which had arisen, and see to it that it remained settled. (3) The "laying on of hands" was employed by the early church in separating various ones to special work. (See Acts 13: 1-3; 1 Tim. 4: 14; 2 Tim. 1: 6.) In some instances, during the days of miracles, special power was granted through the laying on of hands; but that was not the primary purpose of that act. Its ordinary purpose was to indicate that the one on whom hands were laid was to act on behalf of those *by* and *for* whom hands were laid, as in the case of elders and deacons who were to act for or on behalf of the church. In commenting on the first passage cited above, McGarvey says "This incident clearly demonstrates another fact in regard to this ceremony, that it possesses none of the magical power to impart spiritual grace which has been superstitiously ascribed to it; for surely Barnabas and Saul were not destitute of any grace which could be imparted to them by Symeon, Lucius, and Manaen. The truth is, that this ceremony, now no longer called ordination in the English Scriptures, was nothing more than a method of solemnly commending a man to God for the ministrations to which he was being set apart."

The entire congregation, let it be repeated and emphasized, was

pleased with the proposal which the apostles made for dealing with the situation which had arisen, because of the neglect of the Grecian widows in the daily ministrations, and which threatened the peace which the church had enjoyed since the body of Christ had become a reality. The brethren, accordingly, selected the men who were to serve the tables and the apostles appointed them "over this business." This orderly procedure will satisfy every demand which can confront a congregation today, in the selection and appointment of elders and deacons. Two of the seven men who were appointed in Jerusalem on the occasion now before us, Stephen and Philip, became effective gospel preachers. We shall consider something about the work of Stephen in the closing section of the lesson text for today, and more about both of these men in future lessons.

The Rapid Growth of the Early Church

(Acts 6: 7)

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

The New Testament declares that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1: 16), and this section of the lesson text is a forceful demonstration of the truthfulness of that statement. When Luke says that "the word of God increased," the reference is not to the amount of the word which was preached, but rather to the effect of the word in the lives of the people who heard it. The church was still at peace, and the apostles, having been relieved of the responsibility which in all probability would have been theirs if the seven men had not been appointed to oversee the work of feeding the needy, were free to devote their time to prayer and to the ministry of the word (of. Acts 4: 33); and with their popularity with the people, generally speaking, greater results were seen from their efforts. There is no way to estimate with any degree of accuracy, the number of disciples who were in Jerusalem at this time; but inasmuch as the number had previously reached five thousand

men, to say nothing of women and younger people, and since the number of disciples at the time of this lesson was being multiplied *exceedingly*, the entire company must have reached many thousands.

The significant remark regarding the priests, in the passage now under consideration, should not be overlooked. Their relationship to the Jewish religion, as teachers and directors of the worship under the law of Moses, made them the chief conservators of the 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 the 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 the priests were obedient to the faith, Luke means that they were obedient to the gospel. "The faith" (the article is in the original) is equivalent to "the gospel." (Cf. Rom. 1: 5; Gal. 1: 23; Jude 3.)

A Broader Field of Activity for Stephen

(Acts 6: 8)

And Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people.

One of the qualifications of the seven who were to be appointed to oversee the tables in the Jerusalem church was that they be full of the Holy Spirit; but that statement, in and of itself, does not mean that they could exercise miraculous power. The ability to exercise miraculous power on the part of any member of the church, including the apostles themselves, depended on the will of the Spirit. Concerning spiritual gifts Paul said, "All these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as he will." (Read 1 Cor. 12: 4-11.) "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2: 4.) There was evidently a reason why Stephen was given the power to perform miracles; and the next two verses indicate something of the results which followed his demonstrations.

When people of ability, both natural and acquired, become devoted servants of the Lord, they will soon find themselves engaged in every kind of worthy endeavor of which they are capable, in furthering the cause of Christ here among men. 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, which he used for the purpose of

confirming the message which he was 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, the latter's ability as a preacher and a debater was such as to make it impossible for his opponents to make any headway with him, as may be seen by reading the remainder of the chapter.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What was the general spiritual condition of the early church up to the time of this lesson?
Why could not unity among the brethren continue for all time to come?
What was the first real problem which confronted the Jerusalem church?
In what way did the apostles feel and act toward it?
How should any really spiritually-minded Christian feel about problems in the church?
What is the most satisfactory way of dealing with problems among brethren?

The Golden Text

What do we know about the growth of the early church?
How do you account for such continuous growth in the midst of such great opposition?
What are the most effective conditions for numerical growth of the church, even today?
What are some of the great hindrances to such growth?
What can you say of the church of which you are a member with reference to these things?

An Unpleasant Situation Corrected

To what time was reference made in the beginning of this section of the lesson text?
What was the real threat, at the time of this lesson, to the unity of the church?
Who were the "Grecian Jews" and the "Hebrews"?
Tell something of the "material" condition of the Jerusalem church at the time of this lesson.

What kind of action did the newly created problem demand?

Why does every congregation of the Lord's people need capable leaders?
What solution did the apostles set forth for the problem in hand?

Give reasons for thinking, or not thinking, that the seven men were deacons.

What are the facts regarding the manner in which the seven men became deacons?

What type of spirit did the Hebrew Christians manifest toward their critics?

What are the scriptural guide-lines for the appointment of elders and deacons today?

What was the purpose of the laying on of hands?

How did the entire church feel toward the proposal which the apostles made for settling the difficulty which had arisen among them?

The Rapid Growth of the Early Church

What great truth does this section of the lesson text illustrate?

What did Luke mean by saying that the word of God increased?

What must have been the total number of disciples at the time of this lesson?

What is indicated by the fact that many of the priests became obedient to the faith?

What did they do when they obeyed the faith?

A Broader Field of Activity for Stephen

What preparation did Stephen have for greater work in the kingdom of Christ?

What made it possible for any Christian in New Testament times to perform miracles?

When Stephen began his wider activities, where did he soon find himself?

Lesson V—April 30, 1967

THE EARLY CHURCH DISPERSED

Lesson Text

Acts 7: 54-60; 8: 1-5

54 Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy

Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Je'-sus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the

heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord;

58 And they cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59 And they stoned Ste'-phen, calling upon *the Lord*, and saying, Lord Je'-sus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And there arose on that

day a great persecution against the church which was in Je-ru'-sa-lem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Ju-dae'-a and Sa-ma'-ri-a, except the apostles.

2 And devout men buried Ste'-phen, and made great lamentation over him.

3 But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and dragging men and women committed them to prison.

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.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”(2 Tim. 3: 12.)*

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Pet. 4: 12-19.

Daily Bible Readings

April 24.	M.....	Stoning of Stephen (Acts 7: 54-60)
April 25.	T.....	Church Dispersed (Acts 8: 1-12)
April 26.	W.....	Persecution of Prophets (2 Chron. 36: 11-16)
April 27.	T.....	Suffering for Righteousness' Sake (1 Pet. 4: 1-19)
April 28.	F.....	Great Sufferers (Heb. 11: 32-40)
April 29.	S.....	Blessings of Persecution (Matt. 5: 1-13)
April 30.	S.....	Rest for Faithful (Rev. 21: 1-8)

TIME.—A.D. 32.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Stephen, the Sanhedrin, Saul, and others.

Introduction

It has already been pointed out in these studies that it was evidently God's purpose to keep the early church in Jerusalem, and adjacent villages, until they were grounded in the truth and prepared to teach others. That, of course, was a temporary arrangement, and the time came when the dispersion was inevitable. Both the remaining in Jerusalem and the scattering abroad were evidently directed by the providence of God, who employs human and other agencies in carrying out his holy designs. The apostle Paul says, "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8: 28.) The providence of God is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Bible, and when the Lord's people understand and are willing to abide in it, they are content with whatever their lot may be. (Phil. 4: 10-13.)

The early church, as any informed student of the Scriptures knows, did not break away from everything connected with the law and customs of Moses at first, but continued to conform to some of them, such as visiting the temple at the various hours of prayer and walking orderly, after the manner of the law. (Acts 21: 24.) This accounts, in part at least, for the fact that the church was not assailed at first with implacable animosity. It is true that the Sadducees did try to silence the apostles, who were preaching the resurrection of Jesus, and the hope of a similar raising from the dead on the part of his faithful followers; but there was nothing like a concentrated effort on the part of all the Jews to oppose the newly established church. (Cf. Acts 5: 33-42.) But when the time arrived in the development of the great fundamental principles of the gospel, and the

apostles and others began to speak of the law of Moses as a temporary arrangement in the economy of God (Gal. 3: 15-4: 7), which was to be superseded by a spiritual and enduring system, both the Pharisees and the Sadducees combined their efforts and resources to crush the entire Christian movement.

The occasion for the onslaught at the time of this lesson was the situation which grew out of the zeal and ability of Stephen, one of the seven who had been selected by the Jerusalem church, and appointed by the apostles, to see that the needy disciples received their portion in the daily ministrations. Judging from his name, as was suggested in an earlier lesson, Stephen must have been a

Hellenist; and when his influence began to be felt beyond the tables which he had been serving, and conflict with his fellow unbelieving Hellenists was inescapable. After observing that nothing is said in the record regarding the work for which he had been appointed, *Smith's Bible Dictionary* notes that Stephen seems to have been an instance, such as is not uncommon in history of a new energy derived from a new relationship. He, seemingly, went beyond his six deacon-companions, and entered the field of polemics. He first arrested the attention of his opponents by his miraculous ministrations; and this led to a series of disputations which eventually caused his death.

The Golden Text

"Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" The words just quoted were written to Timothy by his father in the gospel, on the eve of the latter's going to be with Jesus. The general subject about which he was writing was the grievous times which were coming. After assuring the younger man that the opponents of the truth "shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be evident unto all men," the apostle cited his own example, with which Timothy was familiar, to show that God is able to take care of all impending situations. His words are: "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. Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and imposters shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and has 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. 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: 10-17.)

The passage just quoted may be described as Timothy's divine resources for dealing with the grievous times to come, and, of course, for any other faithful Christian. It is well to note that Paul did not say that any "Christian" who lives a godly life shall suffer persecution, but rather all who would live godly in "Christ Jesus" shall be so treated. The wording which the apostle employed is very suggestive; for it indicates the secret of the life and the sphere in which it is lived. A godly life in Christ Jesus involves the aggressive kind of witness which Paul gave in the cities he mentions, which, in addition to winning souls for Christ, aroused violent opposition to the Lord's messenger. The passage which serves as the golden text is rendered by Phillips in these words: "Persecution is inevitable for those who are determined to live really Christian lives."

Taking the whole context into consideration, one might say that Paul was "preaching" to Timothy, and using his own life as the text. *The Interpreter's Bible* notes that the credentials of the true Christian are his scars; the gospel preacher must expect to suffer if he is really in earnest. (Cf. Gal. 6: 17.) *The Interpreter's Bible* then goes on to say that there are three ways of facing a fu-

ture which bristles with difficulties, namely, (1) Pretend that the difficulties do not exist; but for such a naive attitude there is bound to be a rude awakening. (2) Cringe before the difficulties and thereby acknowledge defeat in advance; and it is certain that nothing but defeat will be the lot of those who manifest this kind of a spirit. (3) Face the future in the Christian way, and thereby confront the difficulties with the faith that God is able to make his

people sufficient for any kind of situation which may come upon them. This is the kind of faith which Paul had, as he looked back upon the trials from which God had delivered him. But he hastens to warn Timothy that such faith is no guarantee of an existence free from suffering. Paul himself faced the executioner's block after a life of suffering; but he did so with supreme confidence in the Lord. (Cf. 2 Cor. 12: 7-10; 2 Tim. 1: 12; 4: 6-8.)

The Text Explained

A Fit of Fury and a Martyr's Testimony

(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 stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. 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 giving conclusive proof that their fathers had consistently rejected God's purpose for them, Stephen closed his address with these words: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them that showed before 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 made against them. William M. Taylor says that he had touched the sore spot in their consciences with the smarting acid of his searching speech, while A. T. 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" is found in only one other place in the New Testament, namely, Acts 5: 33; a different word is used in Acts 2: 37. In saying that "they gnashed on him with their teeth," the historian means that they rushed at him like a pack of hungry, snarling wolves, which was a sign of violent rage. This was the end to all the pretense of judicial soberness. Rage was added to their anger, as they lost all self-control and were characterized by a violent boiling over of feelings, a sense of frustration, or, which is practically the same thing, a temporary derangement of the mind, in their determination to get revenge.

One of the qualifications which was required of the men who were appointed to serve tables in the Jerusalem church was to be "full of the Spirit"; and it is affirmed in this section of the lesson text that that was still true of Stephen. The vision which was vouchsafed to him was to encourage him in his most critical experience in life. He knew that his earthly pilgrimage was about over, and in the goodness of God he was permitted to behold the place of his final abode. Jesus was represented

as "standing," as if to welcome the first of his disciples who was giving his life for him. This record has been preserved for the instruction and comfort of all others who are called upon to make the supreme sacrifice.

The manner in which the judges acted was certainly a strange way for the Supreme Court of the Jews to end its session; 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 speech from the man who was on trial before them, they themselves would have doubtless admitted, in their sober moments, that their conduct was wholly unbecoming to men who posed as judges. The least that can be said of them, as already pointed out, is that they completely lost control of themselves.

Halford E. Luccock notes that the action of the hostile crowd after Stephen's address followed a pattern endlessly repeated. They closed the avenue through which new information might have reached them, and took refuge in "rushing." They ceased to think, and were motivated by hate. Or to say the same thing in another way, 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 first mention of Saul, who later became the apostle Paul, is made in this section of the lesson text; and it is certain that he never would have been the great Christian teacher and writer that he was, if he had been unwilling to listen. (Cf. Acts 22: 1-16.) There are some who are wont to question the record of the stoning of Stephen by the Jews, on the ground that they had no right to inflict capital punishment, since that prerogative belonged to the Romans. Mobs in this country do not have that right either, but that does not

prevent lynchings now and then. There are some Bible students who think that the so-called trial and the murder of Stephen took place between the time of the recall of Pilate, and the appointment of his successor; but even if that were true, it must be admitted that the Sanhedrin was motivated by the mob spirit in their action toward Stephen.

Not only did Stephen follow the example of Jesus in praying for his enemies who were killing him (Luke 23: 34), but the fact that he addressed his words to Jesus shows that he regarded him as being a Divine Personality. Stephen 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 on Saul, and perhaps many more. (See Acts 22: 17-20.)

The idea of death as a sleep, advanced by Jesus and the New Testament writers (John 11: 11; 1 Thess. 4: 13-15) introduced into Christian thinking a new concept of man's demise. Our word "cemetery," in fact, is from the original word from which we have "he fell asleep," the literal meaning of which is *the sleeping place of the dead*; and as used in the text now before us, it is, in the words of Knowing, "a picture word of rest and calmness which stands in dramatic contrast to the rage and violence of the scene."

A Great Persecution and the Burial of Stephen

(Acts 8: 1-3)

And Saul was consenting unto his death.

This verse, as indicated in the American Standard Version, actually belongs to the preceding chapter, or this verse should be the closing verse of chapter 7. The mad career of Saul, as an unrelenting persecutor of the church, as well as the dramatic end of such a course, is described by himself in the following words which were addressed to king Agrippa: "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this I also did in Jerusalem: and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and

when they were put to death I gave my vote against them. And punishing them oftentimes in all the synagogues, I strove to make them blasphemous; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities. Whereupon as I journeyed unto Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying unto me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the goad. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me. Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision: but declared both to them of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judaea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance." (Acts 26: 9-20; cf. 1 Tim. 1: 12-16.)

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.

If we keep in mind the passage just quoted from Paul, we can get some idea, along with the words of the text, of the intensity of the persecution which was waged against the church at the time of this lesson, and which resulted in the dispersion

of the Jerusalem brethren. It appears that God, in *his* providence used the wicked ways of the enemies of his people to accomplish his purpose in sending the disciples of Christ to proclaim the way of salvation to others. (Cf. Psalm 76: 9, 10; Rom. 9: 17.)

The action of the devout men who buried Stephen was in marked contrast with that of the frenzied mob which had murdered him. The text itself gives no indication as to whether or not the men who buried Stephen were members of the church. David Thomas says that two objections have been urged against the idea that they were members of the church, namely, (1) the high improbability of Christians being allowed by the infuriated persecutors to perform this service, if it was known that they were the Lord's disciples; and (2) the expression "devout men" is nowhere else applied to Christians. The accuracy of this last statement, however, is not certain. Ananias is called a "devout" man in Acts 22: 12; and while both Young and Strong, in their concordances, say that the words for "devout" in the two passages are not the same, yet the original text of Westcott and Hort has the same word in both places.

It is, of course, possible that the men who buried Stephen were, or were not, members of the church; and again, it is possible that some of them were members and some were not. The question, in and of itself, is not important. But whoever they were, it is well to note that not all the Jews in Jerusalem at the time of Stephen's death were mad with rage. There were some who had a calm and pious sympathy for the victim, if not for his cause. And this is also a good time to consider the fact that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." When people lose their temper and attack with angry words those whom they do not like, if not with literal stone, that alone is a good sign that they themselves are the ones who are in the wrong.

The original word for "lamentation" is found nowhere else in the New Testament. Its literal meaning is *to beat*, and the reference is to the practice of beating the breast as a sign of great distress. Some Bible

students think that the term "over" is not used merely in the sense of *about* or *concerning*, but in the literal sense of mourning over the dead body. But be that as it may, there is every reason to regard the lamentation itself as being genuine. It also required courage on the part of the men involved to make this demonstration in the face of the angry Sanhedrin; since it implied that they did not regard their action in putting Stephen to death as being justified. Devout men do not honor a criminal in this way.

The Beginning of a Great Evangelistic Campaign

(Acts 8: 4, 5)

It is both interesting and encouraging to note that the persecuted disciples apparently felt no resent-

ment toward those who were afflicting them. They had accepted the gospel of Christ, had partaken of his spirit, and were putting his teaching into practice. They loved the souls of men, and were anxious for others to learn about their newly found Saviour. If those who read and study the Book of Acts will follow Luke's plan of writing, they will see that the historian traced the activities of the disciples through the eighteenth verse of chapter eleven; and then beginning with verse nineteen of that same chapter, he began another thread of his history. Or Luke went back to Jerusalem and started in another direction. The work of Philip in Samaria is mentioned first, and from that we go next to his contact with the Ethiopian eunuch, which will be our next lesson.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Why, apparently, was the early church kept in Jerusalem for the first few years of its existence?

What was the principle behind the staying in the city and the dispersion?

What are some of the ways in which God accomplishes his providential designs?

What, seemingly, delayed the bitter persecution of the church in Jerusalem?

What made the persecution of this lesson inevitable?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of the golden text?

What are the divine resources which the Christian has for meeting trials and tribulations?

What are the credentials of a true Christian?

What are the various ways in which a child of God can face the perils of the future?

A Fit of Fury and a Martyr's Testimony

What *things* had the effect of cutting the members of the Sanhedrin to the heart?

In what sense were they cut to the heart?

Why was Stephen able to maintain his composure during the mob violence?

What seems to have been the purpose of the vision which came to him?

What encouragement should we get from his experience?

What is suggested by the fact that Jesus was "standing" at the right hand of God?

Discuss the conduct of the Sanhedrin, following Stephen's address.

In what way is their action often repeated, even today?

What are the principal evil effects of "rushing"?

What important question should we ask ourselves when new and disturbing ideas are presented to our minds?

Who was the young man whose name was "Saul"?

Why do some people question the fact of the stoning of Stephen by the Jews?

What do we learn regarding Stephen from the request which he made to the Lord?

What is suggested by the expression "he fell asleep"?

A Great Persecution and the Burial of Stephen

What was the attitude of Saul toward the death of Stephen?

What did he say at a later time regarding his experience as a persecutor?

Discuss the intensity of the persecution of this lesson.

How are the wicked ways of people sometimes used of God to accomplish his purposes?

How did the action of the "devout" compare with the conduct of the Sanhedrin?

What is usually true of people who lose their temper and say unkind things about others?

In what ways were the lamentations of the devout men manifested?

Why would it require courage on their part to conduct themselves as they did?

The Beginning of a Great Evangelistic Campaign

What spirit characterized the disciples as they left the city of Jerusalem?

Discuss Luke's record of this great evangelistic campaign.

Lesson VI—May 7, 1967

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

Lesson Text

Acts 8: 26-40

26 But an angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Je-ru'-sa-lem unto Ga'-za: the same is desert.

27 And he arose and went: and behold, a man of E-thi-o'-pi-a, a eunuch of great authority under Can-da'-ce, queen of the E-thi-ó'-qi-ans, who was over all her treasure, who had come to Je-ru'-sa-lem to worship;

28 And he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet I-sa'-iah.

29 And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran to him, and heard him reading I-sa'-iah the prophet, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31 And he said, How can I, except some one shall guide me? And he besought Philip to come up and sit with him.

32 Now the passage of the scripture which he was reading was this,
He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;
And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb,

Golden Text.—“*They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word*” (Acts 8: 4.)

Devotional Reading.—Acts 8: 14-24.

Daily Bible Readings

May 1.	M.....	Gospel for All Men (Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15, 16)
May 2.	T.....	Invitation to All (Matt. 11: 28-30)
May 3.	W.....	Gospel, God's Power to Save (Rom. 1: 9-17)
May 4.	T.....	Importance of Preaching (1 Cor. 1: 18-25)
May 5.	F.....	People of Ethiopia (Isa. 18: 1-3)
May 6.	S.....	Gospel in Earthen Vessels (2 Cor. 4: 1-7)
May 7.	S.....	Ministry of Angels (Heb. 1: 1-14)

Time.—Probably A.D. 33.

Place.—On the way between Jerusalem and Gaza.

Persons.—The Holy Spirit, an angel, Philip, and the eunuch.

Introduction

The Book of Acts may very properly be called the New Testament's book of conversions, and it is reasonable to suppose that it contains all that people should know about that

So he opened not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away:
His generation who shall declare?

For his life is taken from the earth.

34 And the⁴ eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other?

35 And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Je'-sus.

36 And as they went on the way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, *here is water*; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip: and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing.

40 But Philip was found at A-zo-tus: and passing through he preached the gospel to all the cities, till he came to Caes-a-re'-a.

were scattered abroad went about

preaching the word” (Acts 8: 4.)

Devotional Reading.—Acts 8: 14-24.

Daily Bible Readings

May 1.	M.....	Gospel for All Men (Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15, 16)
May 2.	T.....	Invitation to All (Matt. 11: 28-30)
May 3.	W.....	Gospel, God's Power to Save (Rom. 1: 9-17)
May 4.	T.....	Importance of Preaching (1 Cor. 1: 18-25)
May 5.	F.....	People of Ethiopia (Isa. 18: 1-3)
May 6.	S.....	Gospel in Earthen Vessels (2 Cor. 4: 1-7)
May 7.	S.....	Ministry of Angels (Heb. 1: 1-14)

Time.—Probably A.D. 33.

Place.—On the way between Jerusalem and Gaza.

Persons.—The Holy Spirit, an angel, Philip, and the eunuch.

Introduction

The Book of Acts may very properly be called the New Testament's book of conversions, and it is reasonable to suppose that it contains all that people should know about that

subject. There is, of course, information on the question of conversion in other parts of the New Testament, but it is in the Book of Acts that one may find the most detailed ac-

count of the subject. Just before Jesus left his disciples to return to his heavenly Father, he gave to them that which is known as the great commission; and it is a fact, capable of verification, that every case of conversion in the book now under consideration, was carried out in terms of the great commission. This means, of course, that the commission itself should be carefully studied and understood in connection with the study of individual cases of conversion.

A mere glance at the lesson subjects for this quarter will show one that we are to consider several cases of conversion; and as we begin this part of the study, it might be well to take a look at the Book of Acts itself. The entire book falls into two major parts, namely, the first twelve chapters, and the last sixteen chapters; and each of the two major parts is further divided into two parts. An analysis of the whole book from the standpoint of its four parts is as follows: (1) The church in Jerusalem, 1: 1-8: 4; (2) The spread of the gospel in Judaea and adjacent countries, 8: 5-12: 25; (3) Paul's missionary journeys among the Gentiles, 13: 1-21: 16; (4) Paul's four years' imprisonment, 21: 17-28: 31.

The Golden Text

"They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word" Although these words were part of the lesson text for last week's lesson, it is well to consider them in their context at this time. Following the brutal slaying of Stephen, 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." (Acts 8: 1b-3.) And then follows the words of the golden text, namely, "They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word."

The moving spirit in the terrible persecution which was waged against the Jerusalem church, fol-

More is said about the labors of Peter in the first twelve chapters of the book, than about any of the other apostles; while Paul is the dominant personality in the remainder of the book.

The Book of Acts is a record of the carrying out of the commission which Jesus gave to his disciples, just prior to the establishment of his kingdom; and this part of the divine record must be understood in the light of that momentous charge. It may well be said, in fact, that the march of Christianity from Pentecost and onward, is but an extension of the work which Jesus began during his personal ministry. The lessons which we have considered so far in this quarter have had to do with the origin and progress of the church in Jerusalem; but with the martyrdom of Stephen, the scene changes. The lesson for today begins the account of preaching the gospel outside of Jerusalem, in keeping with the Lord's prediction in Acts 1: 8; and the particular line of events which Luke narrates runs from 8: 4 to 11: 18. And then, beginning with 11: 19, Luke goes back to Jerusalem and begins the history of another line of action, which ends with 12: 25.

Following the martyrdom of Stephen, was Saul; and he evidently felt that the entire Christian movement was completely contrary to the teaching of the Old Testament. Moses had pronounced a curse upon every one who "hangeeth on a tree" (see Deut. 21: 23; Gal. 3: 13); and inasmuch as that was what had happened to the founder of the Christian movement, Saul evidently reasoned that he was only a pretender, and that his cause and all who supported it should be destroyed. (Cf. Acts 26: 9ff; Phil. 3: 1-11.) There was never a doubt in Saul's mind, at anytime during his entire career, but that he was rendering faithful service unto God. (Cf. Acts 23: 1; 24: 16; 1 Tim. 1: 12-3 6.) And it was for this cause that Saul did not hesitate to change anything in his life, when once he was convinced that he was in the wrong.

But when the disciples who were driven out of the city of Jerusalem realized that they could no longer

preach the gospel there, they resolved to preach it wherever they might go; and they did this with great joy in their hearts. They were simply using their extremity as their opportunity for furthering the cause of Christ. The disciples who were scattered abroad went about proclaiming the good tidings of Jesus and what he was offering to do for all who would obey him. That which

we have here has been repeated thousands of times since it first happened to the Jerusalem Christians, and the efforts which the scattered disciples made in the great field of evangelism have left no doubt in the minds of informed people regarding the truthfulness of the oft-repeated proverb that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

The Text Explained

The Preacher and the "Prospect" Brought Together

(Acts 8: 26-31)

But an angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza: the same is desert. 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.

It is probably not out of place to speak of the lesson now before us a dramatic case of conversion, which features the "work of four"; and with this idea in mind, it is easy to see that the first actor in the drama was "an angel of the Lord." The artist's conception of an angel is usually that of a white being, with golden hair and long wings. But in the Bible sense of the term, an angel is simply a *messenger*, or, which is the same thing, one who is sent; and if one will read the Bible carefully, he will soon see that angels sometimes assumed the form of human beings. (Cf. Heb. 13: 2; Gen. 18: 1-8; 19: 1-11.) The angel of the lesson now before us clearly represented the divine side in the conversion of the eunuch, and his particular work was to bring the preacher and the man to be converted together. It should be carefully observed that the angel

did not say a single word to the eunuch; and, so far as the eunuch knew, the angel had no part whatsoever in his conversion.

The angel's instruction to Philip was to "arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza: the same is desert." Philip apparently was in the city of Samaria when the angel spoke to him (Acts 8: 5-25), and if so, he was about thirty-six miles north of Jerusalem. The instruction which he received from the angel was to travel "toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza: the same is desert." Gaza was on the seacoast, southwest of Jerusalem. (See map for the relative locations of Samaria, Jerusalem, and Gaza.) The "desert" probably referred to an 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.

Philip promptly obeyed the voice of the angel; and when he reached the designated road, he saw the man whom Luke described in the text now before us. The eunuch was either a Jew or a proselyte to the Jewish religion; and he was what we would call the Secretary of the Treasury in the government which he served. The original word for "Candace" is *Kandake*, which Thayer says was "a name common to the queens of a region of Ethiopia whose capital was Napata; just as the prop-

er name *Ptolemy* was common to the Egyptian kings." The New English Bible renders the passage in these words: "This man was a eunuch, a high official of the Kandake, or Queen, of Ethiopia, in charge of all her treasure."

The eunuch now in question was evidently a devout man, and had probably been to Jerusalem to worship during one of the annual feasts of the Jews. The fact that he was a "eunuch" would keep him from entering the "assembly of Jehovah" (of. Deut. 23: 1), but that would not prevent his entering the court of the Gentiles, where men from all nations, both clean and unclean, might worship. (Cf. 1 Kings 8: 41-43; Matt. 21: 12-16.) The fact that the eunuch was reading his Bible was indicative of his frame of mind; but when Philip reached the road the Ethiopian was travelling, he did not know that he was to contact that particular man: for he had done all the angel had told him to do.

This brings us to the second "actor" in the drama now under consideration, namely, the Holy Spirit; and the part which he was to play in the conversion of the eunuch is told by Luke in one short sentence, namely, "And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." This is in marked contrast with the popular denominational teaching on this subject today. It is easy to see that so far as the Bible itself is concerned, the Holy Spirit did not tell Philip anything else to do; for he knew that when once a man of the evangelistic zeal of Philip came face to face with an opportunity like this, he would preach Jesus unto the man. That is what he had been doing in Samaria. (See Acts 8: 5.)

It is also a noticeable fact that the Holy Spirit did not say a single word to the man to be converted; and there is no evidence whatsoever that he brought any miraculous power of any kind to bear upon him. Just as in the case of the angel, the Spirit's part in the drama now under consideration was to get the preacher and the man to be converted together. There is not, in fact, an example in all the New Testament in which the Holy Spirit, or any one else representing the divine side of

the question, even dealt directly with the sinner in an effort to convert him. This brings us to the end of the work which was done by the agents of the Lord's side in the conversion of the eunuch. We shall next consider

The Work of the Evangelist (Acts 8: 32-35)

Now the passage of the scripture which he was reading was this,

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;

And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb,

So he openeth not his mouth:

In his humiliation his judgment was taken away:

His generation who shall declare?

For his life is taken from the earth.

And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other? And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Jesus.

It is well to keep in mind the fact that Philip was not an apostle, in the sense that the twelve were. He, along with Stephen and five other men, had been selected to administer to the needy in the Jerusalem church; but, like Stephen, his labors went beyond the service of tables. Philip was driven out of the city of Jerusalem by the persecution which was set off by the martyrdom of Stephen, and he did extensive preaching in Samaria, as may be seen by reading that part of the Acts 8 which precedes the text of this lesson. He is called an "evangelist" in Acts 21: 8, which means that he was a herald of the gospel message, the message which was first made known through the inspired apostles of Christ. (Cf. 1 Cor. 2: 6-10; 2 Cor. 5: 18-20.)

It has already been pointed out that Philip promptly obeyed the voices of the angel and the Holy Spirit; and it is easy for one to observe something of the zeal which characterized him, as he beholds him running to the chariot in which the eunuch was riding. When he reached the carriage, he heard the man reading the prophet Isaiah; and upon being asked if he understood that which he was reading, he re-

ceived the polite reply, "How can I, except some one shall guide me"? The attitude which was manifested by the eunuch clearly shows that he did not consider Philip's question improper or impolite. It is never difficult for the teacher of God's word and the one who needs to be converted to get together, when they both manifest the sincerity which characterized these two men.

The eunuch was reading from that which we know as the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and Philip, "beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Jesus." That would be both natural and easy for the evangelist; for it was about Jesus that the prophet was speaking. And if one should ask what it means for one to preach Jesus to another, the answer is that he would tell (1) of the Lord's coming into the world, and of the principal events of his life here upon the earth, climaxing them with his death, burial, and resurrection. Paul wrote the Corinthians that he was "determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2: 2); and he himself says that is what he preached unto them. (See 1 Cor. 15: 1-4.) The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, according to the scriptures, are the fundamental facts of the gospel, and no one can preach Jesus who does not emphasize them.

(2) In preaching Jesus, one also sets forth the provisions which the Lord has made in order that men may enjoy the salvation which he has made possible for them. (See Luke 24: 46, 47; Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 36-39.) The telling of the story of salvation is the message of the entire Book of Acts. Gospel preaching also involves the telling of the promises which Jesus makes to all who obey him, including the remission of their sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and eternal life to all who are faithful until death. It is easy to see from 2 Pet. 1: 4 that the promises are used on the divine side of salvation as motives unto obedience.

It should be kept in mind that the great body of the disciples of Christ who were driven out of Jerusalem by persecution were not preachers of the gospel, in the popular meaning

of that term; but when they were compelled to flee for their lives, those who were scattered abroad went about preaching the word. They were all familiar with the word (of. Acts 2: 42), and they knew what had happened to them; and it was for these reasons that they could tell others about it. This should be an impressive lesson to all of us; for it is evident from the teaching of the New Testament (of. Heb. 5: 11-14) that any Christian, within a reasonable time, should be able to teach others. But it should be obvious to any casual observer that the situation referred to here is in marked contrast with the indifference with reference to Bible study which is manifested by many professed disciples of Christ today.

Obedience and Rejoicing

(Acts 8: 36-40)

And as they went on the way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. 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: passing through he preached the gospel to all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

The eunuch gave every indication that he wanted to know the truth; and it was for that reason that he listened to Philip with an open heart. The New Testament abounds in evidence to the effect that the Lord will bless all such people in coming to a knowledge of the truth. "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Many of them therefore believed; also of the Greek women of honorable estate, and of men, not a few." (Acts 17: 11, 12; of. John 7: 17.)

After having learned the truth regarding the salvation which is made known through the gospel message, the eunuch was anxious to render immediate obedience; and it was for

that reason that he commanded the chariot to stand still, while he was baptized by Philip. He had asked the evangelist what stood in the way of his being baptized, and when he learned that it depended on his faith, he evidently satisfied Philip that he was a believer, and there was therefore no further delay in obeying the Lord in baptism.

Those who customarily use the King James Version of the Bible sometimes wonder why verse 37 of the passage now before us is left out of the American Standard Version, the version which is used in these lessons. It should be noted in the first place that this omission is not peculiar to the American Standard Version; practically all modern versions omit the verse in question. McGarvey says that "in regard to scarcely any reading are the textual critics more unanimously agreed, or on better manuscript evidence, than the rejection of this verse as an interpolation." This, however, does not mean that what verse 37 contains did not take place; it simply means that Luke did not make a record of it. The whole context implies that Philip made some kind of reply to the eunuch's question, and that the latter satisfied the evangelist that he did believe; and it was probably for this reason that the interpolator reported that which he was sure did take place. Furthermore, we know that Luke did not always re-

port everything which was said and done on every occasion (of., Acts 2: 4U); and so instead of criticizing one version for leaving something out, it might be well to ask, Why did another version put in that which was omitted by others?

The context clearly implies that the eunuch became a believer as a result of that which was preached to him, and it is clear from that which Luke records that he was immersed by the evangelist; for if that is not true, then there would be no point in saying that both men went down into the water *before* the baptism; and that they came up out of the water *after* the baptism. The baptism itself took place between the going down into and the coming up out of the water.

The expression "caught away" (*harpazo*) probably means that it was done both suddenly and miraculously. (Cf. 2 Cor. 12: 2, 4; 1 Thess. 4: 17; Rev. 12: 5, where the same original word is used.) Azotus was the old Philistine city of Ashdod. (Sec map.) Caesarea was the home of Philip, or at least it was later on. (Sec Acts 21: 8.) It should be observed that the rejoicing on the part of the eunuch came after his obedience to the gospel; and if he related the facts of his conversion to some one later on, he would necessarily have to limit them to his experience from the time that Philip came into his life.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is the primary function of the Book of Acts?
In what way is the history of the book related to the Lord's commission to his disciples?
Give a brief analysis of the Book of Acts and discuss its four principal parts.
In what way is the Book of Acts related to the Lord's personal mission here on the earth?
What great change took place at the time of this lesson?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstance did Luke write the words of this text?
Who was largely responsible for the terrible persecution of the church at this time?
In what way did Saul probably seek to justify his course in this respect?
What kind of a record did he always maintain and how could he do it?

How was it possible for the disciples to preach in the face of the terrible persecution?

The Preacher and the "Prospect" Brought Together

Who were the four principal "actors" in the case of conversion now before us?
What is the usual idea of an angel and what does the Bible teach on the subject?
What was the work of the angel in the case of the conversion now before us and how did he go about accomplishing it?
In what kind of a place did the principal part of this narrative take place?
What are the pertinent facts regarding the man who needed to be converted to Christ?
What was the Spirit's part in the conversion?
Why wasn't it necessary for him to say more to Philip on the occasion now before us?
What basic New Testament teaching does the work of the Spirit here emphasize?
What, then, is the work of the Holy Spirit?

it in any case of New Testament conversion?

The Work of the Evangelist

Who was the "Philip" of this lesson and how did he come to be in Samaria?

What is the basic meaning of an "evangelist"?

What kind of an attitude did Philip manifest throughout this entire narrative?

In what way did he introduce himself to the man in the chariot?

How did the latter evidently regard the question which Philip asked him?

Just how did the preacher begin his sermon on the occasion now under consideration?

What is involved in preaching Jesus?

What made it possible for all the scattered disciples to be preachers of the gospel?

What important lesson should we learn from all this, or why are not all the Lord's people preachers today?

Obedience and Rejoicing

What admirable trait of character did the eunuch manifest in his relation to Philip?

Why did he want to be baptized and why was Philip willing to baptize him?

What are the principal facts regarding verse 37 of this section of the lesson text?

What happened to Philip and what attitude did the eunuch manifest and when?

Lesson VII—May 14, 1967

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL

Lesson Text

Acts 9: 1-19

1 But Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2 And asked of him letters to Damas'-cus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Je-ru'-sa-lem.

3 And as he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damas'-cus: and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven:

4 And he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he *said*, I am Je'-sus whom thou persecutest:

6 But rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

7 And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but beholding no man.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw nothing; and they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damas'-cus.

9 And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.

10 Now there was a certain disciple at Damas'-cus, named An-a-ni'-as; and the Lord said unto him in a vision, An-a-ni'-as. And he said, Behold, I *am here*, Lord.

11 And the Lord *said* unto him.

Arise, and go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Ju'-das for one named Saul, a man of Tar'-sus: for behold, he prayeth;

12 And he hath seen a man named An-a-ni'-as coming in, and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight.

13 But An-a-ni'-as answered, Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to thy saints at Je-ru'-sa-lem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gen'-tiles and kings, and the children of Is'-ra-el:

16 For I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake.

17 And An-a-ni'-as departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Je'-sus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou earnest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

18 And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized;

19 And he took food and was strengthened.

And he was certain days with the disciples that were at Damas'-cus.

Golden Text.—*“Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.”* (Acts 26: 19.)

Devotional Reading.—Gal. 1: 11-17.

Daily Bible Readings

May 8. M.....	“Conversion of Paul,” by Luke (Acts 9: 1-19)
May 9. T.....	Account of His Own Conversion (Acts 22: 3-21)
May 10. W.....	Second Account of His Conversion (Acts 26: 2-23)
May 11. T.....	Third Reference to His Conversion (Gal. 1: 11-24)
May 12. F.....	Gains and Losses of Paul (Phil. 3: 1-16)
May 13. S.....	Example of God’s Grace (1 Tim. 1: 12-17)
May 14. S.....	Fruits of Faithful Service (2 Tim. 4: 1-8)

Time.—A.D. 33.

Places.—Damascus and on the road thereto.

Persons.—Jesus, Saul, and Ananias, and the men who journeyed with Saul.

Introduction

With the exception of Jesus Christ himself, Saul of Tarsus, who became the apostle Paul, was probably the greatest exponent of Christianity the world has ever seen. The original conception of the Messiahship of Jesus was Jewish, and the religion which the Lord founded was cradled, so to speak, in Judaism; and, humanly speaking, no religion which was intended to benefit the race could have had a more unpromising cradle. The Jews were not a missionary people, in the commonly accepted meaning of that term, and they certainly were not inclined to accept the Gentiles as fellow Christians; to say nothing of taking the gospel to them. The Jews, to be sure, were zealous in their efforts to proselyte others to their faith (of. Matt. 23: 15); but it does not appear that they had any interest whatsoever in converting the Gentiles as such.

That which has just been said meant that in order for the Christian message to reach all mankind, it would be necessary to find a unique man, and it is a recorded fact that that man was the apostle Paul. He was a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, and a Roman citizen (Acts 22: 3, 27, 28), all of which meant that he had a direct connection with the three great influences of his day, namely, the religion of the Hebrews, the language and culture of the Greeks, and the law and government of the Romans. Although a Hebrew of the He-

brews (Phil. 3: 5), Paul also knew the Greeks and the Romans as few Jews knew them; and he was therefore eminently fitted to deal with the two worlds of his day. His extraordinary vigor and vitality, and his freedom from the narrow limits of Judaism, made it possible for his unusual powers to have a world-wide influence.

William M. Taylor supposes that Paul was about thirty-five years old when the persecution arose about Stephen. Luke informs us that Saul had a prominent part in the murder of that good man (Acts 7: 58; 8: 1; 22: 20); and, as we have already seen in previous lessons, he was a leader in the terrible persecution which resulted in the church being driven from Jerusalem. But notwithstanding his ferocious part in the persecution, Saul was always sincerely trying to please God (of. Acts 23: 1; 24: 16); and when once he learned the truth, no man was more diligent than he to build up that which he has been trying to destroy (Gal. 1: 23). The real key which unlocked the gates for the early tide of Christian evangelism was Paul’s inspired, practical, and powerful proclamation of the universal gospel. He was able to show that God’s love for national Israel had merged into a wider love for spiritual Israel, composed of people from all nations.

The Golden Text

“Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision” There was one day in the

life of Paul which was unique in all of his experience; that was the day he met the Lord on the Damascus

road. From the day his name appears in history, no one can truthfully say that Paul did not do his best to be well pleasing to God. He was a persecutor of the church, as we have already seen; but he was equally zealous for the faith of his fathers. Although the persecution which he waged was bitter, his motive was pure; for he verily thought within himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus; and that was what he did with all the power of his soul. (See Acts 26: 9-11.) But because Saul was always conscientious in that which he did, it was never hard for him to change his course, if and when he learned that he was going in the wrong direction. He was a man on whom a heavenly vision would never be wasted.

When Paul spoke the words which serve as the golden text for today's lesson he had spent many years preaching the faith which he once sought to destroy. His conversion to Christ had been genuine; and it is doubtful if any follower of the Prince of Peace has suffered more for his cause, than did the apostle to the Gentiles. When Paul stood before king Agrippa, on the occasion of the address from which the words of the golden text are taken, he had already finished three great missionary journeys, and had been in prison in Caesarea two years; but having the opportunity to speak before the king and other dignitaries, he largely forgot himself in his effort to win Agrippa for Christ. The address in which the words of the golden text are found is one of the truly great speeches of all time; but we are primarily concerned at this time with his reference to the "heavenly vision."

What were some of the things

which Paul saw in that heavenly vision? (1) *He saw that he was ignorant.* Although trained in the best schools of the land, and regarded as a finished scholar of his day, Paul readily saw that he was really ignorant of the most important things of life. (See 1 Tim. 1: 13; of. Acts 13: 27; 3: 17; Isa. 55: 8, 9.) Jesus gave the key for learning the will of God. (See Matt. 11: 25ff; of. John 7: 17; Acts 22: 10.) (2) *He saw that he was a sinner.* One of the meanings of the term "sin" is "to miss the mark" (1 Tim. 1: 6; 6: 21; 2 Tim. 2: 18, marginal note in all three instances); and it makes no difference therefore how sincere and zealous one may be in his efforts to please the Lord, he sins if he does not do as God has directed. (Cf. Rom. 10: 1-3; Phil. 3: 5, 6; Acts 24: 16; 1 Tim. 1: 15.)

(3) *He saw that his teacher was wrong.* Paul was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the greatest teachers of his day, and was "instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers" (Acts 22: 3); but with all his learning, he had not before the time of his vision seen the simple truth that the old law had been fulfilled in Christ (Matt. 5: 17; Rom. 10: 4), and that God is now speaking through him (Matt. 17: 5; Heb. 1: 1, 2; Acts 3: 22, 23). (4) *He saw that it was necessary for him to break away from the law and traditions of his fathers.*

A thing like that is never easy for one to do, especially for one who is sincere and devoted to the cause he has long espoused; and if one will observe it in the lives of Paul and others, he will be able to get some idea of the tremendous price which must often be paid. (Cf. Matt. 10: 34-37; Phil. 3: 7ff.)

The Text Explained

The Day Saul Met Jesus

(Acts 9: 1-9)

But Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and asked of him letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them beyond to Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, it came

to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus: and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven: and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men that journeyed with him stood

speechless, hearing the voice, but beholding no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw nothing; and they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.

It is here that Luke resumes his account of the conduct of Saul, which he began in Acts 8: 3 with these words: "But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and dragging men and women committed them to prison." And so, instead of changing for the better, the man from Tarsus was evidently increasing his activities against the disciples of Christ. His own words regarding this were, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this I also did in Jerusalem: and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my vote against them. And punishing them oftentimes in all the synagogues, I strove to make them blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities." (Acts 26: 9-11.)

Saul of Tarsus was a relentless persecutor, and one with less courage would have despaired of success in destroying the new faith, and especially since new congregations were springing up in all parts of the country, even in "foreign cities." And it is equally true that none but the most faithful among the Lord's people would have any hope for the conversion to Christ of a man like Saul. But the spread of Christianity did not discourage Saul; for he had the authority and the prestige of the Sanhedrin behind him. Conybeare and Howson point out that that body of the Jews claimed the right to exercise authority over the Jews in religious matters wherever they lived, just as they did in Jerusalem and in all the land of the Jews. Julius Caesar had issued a decree, which was later confirmed by Augustus, which permitted the Jews everywhere to live under their own laws, and arrests like those which Saul proposed to make would attract little or no attention in foreign cities, so long as the rights of Roman citizens were

respected. Furthermore, the authority of the high priest was recognized by Jews in all sections of the Roman Empire, in pretty much the same way in which the supremacy of the pope is acknowledged, in our day, by Roman Catholic churches in all lands.

The city of Damascus, one of the oldest and most enduring cities in the world, was about one hundred and forty miles northeast of Jerusalem; and it was, at the time of this lesson, the capital of Syria. The city was founded, according to Josephus (Ant. 1: 6. 4), by Uz, a grandson of Shem. (See Gen. 10: 21-23.) G. A. Smith points out that Damascus was the stage upon which two great crises were enacted, namely, (1) the conversion of the first apostle of Christianity to the Gentiles; and (2) the first so-called Christian city to be taken by the Moslems. There appears to have been a fairly large Jewish population in Damascus when Saul went there, and it is possible that the number of Christians at that time was somewhat impressive. (Note the plural "synagogues".)

Many reasons have been assigned for referring to the Christian life as "the Way." (Cf. Acts 19: 9, 23; 22: 4; 24: 14, 22.) It may have been because it was "a new and living way" (Heb. 10: 20), which required all who entered it to change the direction of their lives. But whatever may have been the reason for referring to it as the Way, it was evidently well known to the people of that day. The Christian people at that time were clearly distinguished from the people of the world. (Cf. Matt. 5: 13-16; 1 John 2: 15-17; James 4: 4.) They had been called out of the world by the gospel of Christ, and it was their first and foremost responsibility to be loyal to him. (Cf. John 15: 18, 19; 17: 14-16.) But regardless of the holy character of the people of the church, the fury of Saul knew no bounds; and he had no respect for either men or women.

We learn from Paul's two accounts of his meeting the Lord on the Damascus road that it was at midday or about noon; and that the light which shone from heaven was above the brightness of the sun. (See Acts 22: 6; 26: 13.) We are also told that the voice which he heard was in the Hebrew language. (Acts 26: 14.) This was one day in the life of Paul

which he could never forget. He had always been zealous for the faith of his fathers; and it was because of the conscientiousness which always characterized him that he would gladly welcome new light with reference to his relationship with God.

When Luke wrote his abridged account of the conversion of Saul, his plans evidently included the incorporation of Paul's two versions of the incident in his record, and thereby making the complete account dependent of the three briefer reports. Although the light which flashed out of heaven was above the brightness of the sun in its zenith, Saul looked into it and saw Jesus. (Acts 9: 17; 1 Cor. 15: 8.) He did not at first know the identity of the person who he saw, nor whose voice he heard; but he evidently recognized him as a supernatural being. This view becomes almost certain when we consider the question which he asked in Acts 22: 10; "And I said, What shall I do, Lord?" The direction which Jesus gave in verse 6 of the portion of the lesson text now under consideration was in response to the question just referred to.

It is doubtful if there was ever a man who so completely emptied himself and stood ready to listen to that which the Lord had to say, as did Saul of Tarsus. His attitude is a splendid commentary on Matt. 16:

24, which teaches self-denial as the first condition of discipleship. Everything which came to Saul's attention at the time of this lesson was diametrically opposed to that which he thought was right, but that did not deter him; for his life-long desire and determination to please God were as pronounced as ever. This attitude toward God on the part of the man who was turning to the Lord never changed, as may be seen by reading the epistles which he later wrote. He said in one of them, "Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him." (2 Cor. 5:

9.) Saul had no trouble in understanding how he was persecuting "Jesus"; he knew that he was persecuting the followers of Jesus, and that of course meant that he was persecuting their leader. Christ always identifies himself with his disciples. (Cf. Luke 10: 16; Matt. 25: 34-45.)

It should be observed that Jesus himself did not tell Saul what to do to be saved. This was due to the fact that he had already committed the work of making known the way of salvation to others. (Cf. Matt. 28:

19, 20; 2 Cor. 5: 18-20.) It should also be noted that Jesus did not appear to Saul to convert him, but to make him a witness. (See Acts 26: 16, 17; of. 22: 14, 15.) The preparation for Saul's apostleship was one thing, while his becoming a Christian was another: he had to obey the gospel with reference to the latter, just like any one else; and that meant that he had to learn the truth regarding it. (Cf. Rom. 1: 16, 17; Acts 2: 37-39.)

In Paul's report of the incident now before us, he said that the men who were with him beheld the light, but did not hear the voice of him who spoke to Saul. (Acts 22: 9.) It has already been pointed out that Jesus spoke in the Hebrew language. (Acts 26: 14.) The marginal reading for "voice" in Acts 9: 7 is *sound*; and when we take all three of the accounts into consideration, the obvious truth is that the men with Saul heard only the sound of the voice, but did not understand that which was spoken, that is, they did not understand the conversation which took place between Jesus and Saul. They saw the light, but not Jesus; they heard the sound of the voice of Jesus, but did not understand that which he said to Saul.

The fact that Saul opened his eyes does not imply that they had been closed since the light first came upon him; for if that had been true, he would not have seen Jesus. He evidently gazed into the light as long as he was able to do so, with the result that when he opened his eyes he discovered that he was blind. Saul's blindness was proof that something had really happened to him, and that it was not the result of his imagination; and his entrance into the city was altogether different from that which he had planned. Instead of a victorious persecutor and a conqueror of the disciples of Christ, he was himself a penitent believer in Jesus and as helpless as a child. His long period without food and drink was proof of his true inward condition.

The Lord's Commission to Ananias

(Acts 9: 10-16)

Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and the Lord said unto him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth; and he hath see a man named Ananias coming in, and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight. But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake.

The only information which we have regarding the Ananias who is referred to in the narrative now before us, is with reference to that which he did in connection with the conversion of Saul. It does not appear that what he said in reply to the Lord's direction to him was intended as an objection to the Lord's command, but rather to get all the facts together and make sure that he really understood the divine will. Just as soon as the matter was further explained to him, he went to Saul without any further question.

The Lord, in speaking to Ananias regarding Saul, called the latter "a chosen vessel unto me." He knew the kind of man Saul was, and he knew that he would make every effort to do God's will, regardless of the cost. This was what made him a fit instrument for the Lord's use; and inasmuch as suffering must often be endured on the part of the messengers of the truth before it is seen and accepted by some, the Lord knew that he had a man in Saul who was willing to "endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." (2 Tim. 2: 10; of. 2 Cor. 12: 7-10.)

Enlightenment and Obedience

(Acts 9: 17-19)

And Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou earnest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened.

Ananias was one of the men whom Saul meant to arrest, and take him bound unto Jerusalem; but instead he became the Lord's agent in the latter's conversion. All Christians should always be prepared for any service which the Lord, in his providence, may direct them into. It is also worthy of note that submission to the Lord makes brothers of all men. (Cf. Isa. 11: 6-9.) McGarvey thinks that Ananias addressed Saul as "Brother," not because he was a fellow Israelite, but because he was at that time a fellow believer, and in the way of obedience. The fact that Ananias could tell Saul that which happened to him before he reached the city, was sufficient proof to convince the latter that he was the man whom Jesus had prepared him to expect. (See verse 12.)

The text now before us makes it plain that Saul was to receive the Holy Spirit, but it does not say whether it would be before or after his baptism. That, however, is not a question which should concern us. (Cf. Acts 8: 15, 16; 10: 44-48.) Saul's conversion took place during the age of miracles, and he was being prepared for the apostleship, neither of which has any application to people of this day. The "scales" which fell from Saul's eyes were probably a deposit which had formed on them, as a result of the inflammation caused by the intense glare of the light from heaven. Luke does not say that they were *scales*, but "as it were" scales. The original words for "scales" and "fell" are found only here in the New Testament, and were both medical terms. The terms of pardon were revealed by Jesus in his final commission to his disciples, as already pointed out; and if one

will read all the facts which are connected with the conversion of Saul, he will see that they were complied with in every detail. If Saul was saved the moment he believed, as is

popularly taught today, then he was saved three days before his sins were washed away; for that took place when he was baptized. (See Acts 22: 16; of. 1 Pet. 3: 21.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What kind of a place does Paul occupy in the history of Christianity?
What great change in the outlook of the Lord's people was largely brought about by him?
In what ways was Paul especially fitted for the great work which he did for Christ?
What was one of Paul's greatest traits of character?

The Golden Text

What was one of the greatest days of Paul's entire life, as it respects this lesson?
Why was that true?
Under what circumstances did Paul speak the words of the golden text for today's lesson?
What was his principal aim on that occasion?
How did he feel about the heavenly vision?
What were some of the things which he saw that day?

The Day Saul Met Jesus

In what way did Luke begin his narrative regarding Saul's conversion?
Why was Saul such a bitter persecutor of the early Christians?
Why did he keep up his pace in the face of such heavy odds?
Why did he extend his efforts to foreign cities?

Where was Damascus and what is known of the city?
What was a probable reason for referring to Christianity as "the Way"?
At what time of the day did Saul's meeting with Jesus take place?
Relate the principal facts as they occurred on that occasion.
What was the reaction of Saul to the Lord's appearance to him?
Why didn't Jesus tell him what to do to be saved?
Why, then, did the Lord appear to him?
What is said regarding the men who journeyed with Saul and how explain the apparent discrepancy?
What change did the appearance of Jesus make on Saul's entrance into the city?

The Lord's Commission to Ananias

Who was this Ananias?
What was his reaction to the Lord's command to him?
In what sense was Saul a chosen vessel unto the Lord?
In what ways did Paul demonstrate his fitness for the Lord's service?
Why is suffering often essential before others see and accept the truth?

Enlightenment and Obedience

What changes did the events of this lesson make in the relationship between Saul and Ananias?
In what way would Saul be sure that Ananias was the man whom he was expecting?
What did Ananias say to Saul and what did the latter do?

Lesson VIII—May 21, 1967

FIRST GENTILE CONVERTS

Lesson Text

Acts 10: 1-8, 24-27, 44-48

1 Now *there was* a certain man in Caes-a-re'-a, Cor-ne'-li-us by name, a centurion of the band called the I-tal'-ian *band*,

2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.

3 He saw in a vision openly, as it were about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in unto him, and saying to him, Cor-ne'-li-us.

4 And he, fastening his eyes upon him, and being affrighted, said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God.

5 And now send men to Jop'-pa, and fetch one Si'-mon, who is surnamed Peter:

6 He lodgeth with one Si'-mon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side.

7 And when the angel that spake unto him was departed, he called two of his household-servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;

8 And having rehearsed all things unto them, he sent them to Jop'-pa.

24 And on the morrow they entered into Caes-a-re'-a. And Cor-ne'-li-us was waiting for them, hav-

ing called together his kinsmen and his near friends.

25 And when it came to pass that Peter entered, Cor-ne'-li-us met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

26 But Peter raised him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and findeth many come together:

44 While Peter yet s p a k e these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word.

45 And they of the circumcision that believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gen'tiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47 Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Je'-sus Christ. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Golden Text.—*"Who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house"* (Acts 11: 14.)

Devotional Reading.—Acts 10: 9-21.

Daily Bible Readings

- May 15. M..... Gentiles to Be Grafted In (Rom. 11: 11-32)
- May 16. T..... Gentiles Promised Justice (Isa. 42: 1-9)
- May 17. W..... Gentiles to Honor Jehovah (Mal. 1: 6-14)
- May 18. T..... Gentiles Free of the Law (Acts 15: 23-29)
- May 19. F..... Wall of Partition Abolished (Eph. 2: 11-22)
- May 20. S..... Conversion of Cornelius (Acts 11: 1-18)
- May 21. S..... Antioch, Great Gentile Church (Acts 11: 19-26)

Time.—Probably A.D. 40.

Place.—Caesarea.

Persons.—Peter, Cornelius, and those with them.

Introduction

With the Bible as our guide, along with our knowledge of human nature, we know that the most satisfactory way of getting the facts of the Lord's method of saving people before others is to state the plan, and then illustrate it by showing how it worked in the case of individual instances of conversion. This method of teaching the truth is within the reach of every one who is charged with the responsibility of trying to win others to Christ; and it goes without saying that the most satisfactory and effective illustrations of conversion are those which have been recorded in the New Testament.

The case of conversion which we are to consider today is remarkable, first, because it was the initial instance of conversion from among the Gentiles; but also, and chiefly, because it plainly implies that, regardless of the uprightness of one's moral character, all men need a Savior; for "there is none righteous, no, not one; . . . for all have sinned, and fall

short of the glory of God." (See Rom. 3: 10, 23.) The man who was converted to Christ, on the occasion of our lesson today, was not a bitter enemy of Jesus, as was Saul of Tarsus; he was not a cruel and rapacious man, neither was he guilty of crucifying the Son of God, as were the people of Acts 2; instead, he was a man of benevolence, devotion, and uprightness of life. The account of the conversion of Cornelius therefore should be of unusual interest to us.

It is interesting to observe that when we meet with a representative of the Roman military system in the New Testament, and especially a centurion, he is generally a man who wins our esteem and admiration. For example, the centurion of Capernaum, who built the synagogue for the Jews of that city, whose servant Christ healed, and whose faith was singled out by Jesus for the highest praise. (Luke 7: 1-10.) The centurion Julius, was in command of the soldiers and prisoners on the ship which started out with Paul on his

journey to Rome. (Acts 27: Iff.) The centurion who was in command of the crucifixion of Jesus and who, when the Lord died, exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God." (Matt. 27: 54.) And then, the centurion of our lesson for today, Cornelius.

Cornelius was stationed in Caesarea, and was in command of a superior company of soldiers, a part of a Roman legion, known as the Italian band, or, as the marginal note has it, a cohort. The age in which Cornelius lived was one of unspeakable corruption and licentiousness (of. Rom. 1: 28-32), with Roman soldiers exercising great power. But in spite of that widespread and degrading condition, Cornelius was conspicuous for

his moral and religious character. Much is being said in these times regarding the relative importance of heredity and environment. They are, of course, both important, and every one is vitally affected by them but in the final analysis, it is the individual himself who is responsible for channeling these influences. Even the casual observer knows that in many instances men with the best of environments have failed; while others have come to nobility of character and greatness of achievement in spite of unfavorable surroundings. (Cf. Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden; Joseph in Potiphar's house; Daniel in the court of Nebuchadnezzar; and the saints in Caesar's household. (Phil. 4: 22.)

The Golden Text

"Who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house." The words just quoted were spoken by Peter to his critics in Jerusalem, following his return there after the conversion of Cornelius and his household. The men who contended with the apostle regarding his visit in the home of a Gentile, and partaking of his hospitality, were evidently members of the church, but who still held on to their Judaistic tendencies. (Acts 11: 1-3, 18; of. 15: 5.) There is no reason for assuming that they were in the least insincere with reference to their viewpoint; they were simply honestly mistaken. And there is, perhaps, no better place than right here to observe the manner in which the Holy Spirit corrects people who are sincere and conscientious in their attitude toward questions about which they are in error; and there is nothing better for us to read on the subject than Luke's record of it, namely, Acts 11: 1-18.

Notwithstanding the plainness of New Testament teaching with reference to the Lord's method of reaching the lost, many people who profess to teach the truth regarding the plan of salvation have no hesitancy in saying that sinners are saved by means other than the gospel message. Just before Jesus left his disciples to return to the Father, he said to them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation." (Mark 16: 15.) And later on Paul said to the Ro-

mans, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith." (Rom. 1: 16, 17.)

The practical meaning of righteousness, as used by Paul, is that state or condition which is imputed by the Lord, whereby those who submit to the teaching of the gospel are acceptable to him, and who are regarded as if they had never sinned. The failure to follow God's plan in this respect is described by Paul in these words, "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.) The only way in which one may "subject" himself to God's righteousness, is to *submit* himself to that which he says. (Cf. Psalm 119: 172; Matt. 3: 15; Eph. 1: 13; 1 Pet. 1: 22-25.)

The Vision of Cornelius and the Command to send for Peter

(Acts 10: 1-8)

Now there was a certain man in Caesarea, Cornelius by name, a cen-

ture of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always. He saw in a vision openly, as it were about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in unto him, and saying to him, Cornelius. And he, fastening his eyes upon him, and being affrighted, said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and fetch one Simon, who is surnamed Peter: he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side. And when the angel that spake unto him was departed, he called two of his household-servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; and having rehearsed all things unto them, he sent them to Joppa?.

Caesarea was built on the site of Strato's Tower. The cities of Caesarea and Joppa are now called *Kaysariyeh* or *Qaisariyeh* and *Jaffa*, respectively; and both have prominent places in New Testament history. The former was rebuilt by Herod the Great, and named in honor of Caesar Augustus. After the banishment of Archelaus, who succeeded his father as king of Judaea (Acts 2: 22), Caesarea became the official residence of the Roman governors, who ruled the country, the fifth of whom was Pontius Pilate. Caesarea was about sixty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem, and was located, as one may see from the map, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, where a splendid harbor was constructed. This city was the home of Philip the evangelist (Acts 21: 8); and it was there that Paul was imprisoned for two years, where also he preached to Felix and made his defense before Festus and Agrippa (Acts 24: 24-27; chapters 25, 26). And finally, it was from Caesarea that Paul began his journey as a prisoner to Rome. (Acts 27: 1ff.)

Joppa was also on the coast of the Mediterranean, and was the seaport of Jerusalem, some thirty-five miles to the southeast. It was to Joppa that timbers from Tyre were floated for both the building of Solomon's temple (2 Chron. 2: 16) and the rebuilding of the temple by Zerubbabel (Ezra 3: 7). It was from the

port in Joppa that Jonah sailed on his ill-fated trip toward Tarshish; and it was in the city that Peter raised Dorcas from the dead. (Acts 9: 36-43.) This was the occasion for Peter's being in Joppa when Cornelius sent for him to come to Caesarea. *Harper's Bible Dictionary* says that the famous "Jaffa oranges," which are grown on the Plain of Sharon, are shipped from Joppa, and that her Jewish and Arab "hamals" (longshoremen) are a living commentary on the words of Jesus, as recorded in Matt. 11: 28. *Hastings' new one volume Dictionary of the Bible* says that a railway connects Joppa with Jerusalem, and that the area around the city is noted for its fruit-growing, and that its orange gardens are world-famous. Joppa is a little over thirty miles south of Caesarea. Tel Aviv was founded in 1909 as a suburb of Joppa, but now Tel Aviv is the chief city.

The moral character of Cornelius was commendable in every way, but it is plainly stated that he was not a saved man; this, as we have already seen, is the positive teaching of the golden text—"who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house." The following are the traits of character which were ascribed to Cornelius, namely, (1) a devout man, (2) one that feared God with all his house, (3) who gave much alms to the people, (4) prayed to God always, (5) a righteous man, and (6) well reported of by all the nation of the Jews. (See Acts 10: 20, 22.) This should certainly be enough to convince any sincere person, who stops to think, that it requires more than moral character to save a person.

The question is often raised as to whether or not God will hear the prayer of a person who is not a Christian, and the text now before us should throw some light on the subject. Luke quotes the angel as saying, "Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God." We also saw in last week's lesson that Saul, while waiting to be told what to do, was also praying, according to the words of Jesus himself, which were spoken approvingly. (See Acts 9: 11.) When Cornelius told Peter about his experience with the angel, he said, "Four days ago, until this hour, I was keeping the

ninth hour of prayer in my house; and behold, a man stood before me in bright apparel, and saith, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God." (Acts 10: 30, 31.)

There are some brethren who, in their efforts to prove their contention that God will not hear the prayers of those who are not his people, quote John 9: 31 with an air of finality; but if they would only stop and consider the context of the passage, they would easily see that it has no direct bearing on the question of God's hearing the prayers of alien sinners. The passage just referred to reads as follows: "We know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do his will, him he heareth." The language just quoted was, in the first place, that of the man whose eyes Jesus had just opened, and not that of an inspired man; and, in the second place, he was not talking about an alien sinner, but rather about a sinner among God's people. In other words, the former blind man's point was that God would not hear the prayer of one of his people who was a sinner; which, of course, is still true. Solomon notes that "he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination" (Prov. 28: 9), which, of course, is true of aliens as well as those who are in covenant relationship with the Lord. But when those who are not the Lord's people manifest the spirit which characterized Saul of Tarsus and Cornelius, their prayers are had in remembrance before God.

The apostle Peter was the one to whom Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and it therefore became his privilege to open the doors of the kingdom, the church, to both Jews and Gentiles, that is, to all who might seek entrance therein; and when once the doors were open, they were never closed again. (See Matt. 16: 18-19; Acts 2: 37-41.) The last passage which has just been cited contemplated both Jews (you and your children) and Gentiles. (All that are afar off, of. Eph. 2: 14-22.) Some may wonder why it required so much to convince Peter that the Gentiles were entitled to gospel privileges, including church membership, after his statement in Acts 2:

39; but it is altogether possible that he expected them to become Jews before, or in connection with, their becoming Christians. (Read Acts 15; Gal. 2: 11-16.)

The Meeting of Peter and Cornelius

(Acts 10: 24-27)

And on the morrow they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius was waiting for them, having called together his kinsmen and his near friends. And when it came to pass that Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter raised him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in, and findeth many come together.

It was pointed out earlier in this lesson that Joppa is about thirty miles from Caesarea, and if one reads all the record, he will see that it took about two days each way for the men to make the trip between the two cities, which they probably did on foot. The men whom Cornelius sent left Caesarea on the day he saw the vision, and arrived in Joppa the next day; and on the return trip with Peter and his brethren, they left Joppa, after spending the night there, on one day, and arrived in Caesarea the next day. (Cf. Acts 10: 30.)

When Peter and his company reached the home of Cornelius, the latter was waiting for him, along with many others whom the centurion had invited in. As Peter entered the house, Cornelius fell down before him, to indicate his feeling toward the apostle. It should be observed that the original term for "worshipped" means, according to the marginal note, an act of reverence, whether paid to a creature or to the Creator. But Peter immediately set about to correct any erroneous impression which Cornelius may have had. It is, of course, proper and right for people to show due respect for preachers of the gospel; but it is never right for the latter to allow themselves to become the objects of undue devotion. (Cf. Matt. 23: 8-10.)

The portion of the chapter from which the lesson text is taken, between this and the next section, that is, verses 28-43, should be read at

this point; and if that is done, those who are studying this lesson will get the facts which led up to Peter's remarks to the assembled audience, as well as to the sermon of the apostle itself. It is worthy of notice that the accounts of the first conversions to Christ from among the Jews and the first from among the Gentiles are characterized by great detail. These were historic marks in the forward march of the cause of Christ here among men.

The Results Which Followed Peter's Sermon

(Acts 10: 44-48)

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit jell on all them that heard the word. And they of the circumcision that believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

The evident purpose of the miraculous giving of the Holy Spirit to Cornelius and his household was to convince the Jewish brethren, and others through them, that the Gentiles were entitled to gospel privileges, including church membership. The reception of the Holy Spirit was proof that they were acceptable to God. The fact that Cornelius and his people spoke with tongues was a convincing demonstration that they did possess the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 14: 22.)

Furthermore, it is a fact, worthy of notice, that in every instance where the Holy Spirit was miraculously imparted, one or more of the apostles was (or were) present; and it will be easy for us to understand why this was true, when we remember that they were the plenipotentiary ambassadors of Jesus, with power to make all necessary decisions respecting his kingdom.

The first instance of the miraculous impartation of the Holy Spirit was on the first Pentecost, following

the Lord's ascension back to the Father; and the purpose of coming of the Spirit at that time was to enable the apostles to make known the conditions of salvation. The apostles were charged with that responsibility (of. 2 Cor. 5: 18-20), and a miracle was needed to demonstrate the fact that they were indeed speaking for the Lord, when they made known the terms or conditions of salvation. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18-20.)

The second instance of the miraculous giving of the Holy Spirit, in the Book of Acts, was in connection with the conversion of the Samaritans who had been led to Christ through the preaching of Philip. (Acts 8: 14-17.) The Jews had no dealing with the Samaritans (John 4: 9), and that meant that there would be a question in the minds of the Jewish disciples regarding their acceptance into the church. And so, "when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit: for as yet it was fallen upon none of them: only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit." With the miraculous demonstration, through the laying on of the apostles' hands, the reception of the Samaritan brethren into the fellowship of the Lord's people had apostolic approval.

The third instance of the reception of the Holy Spirit miraculously was when the Lord was ready to receive the Gentiles into the body of Christ; and the miracle which was wrought on the occasion of the lesson now before us gave that which was about to be done apostolic approval, and eliminated any objection to their reception. (Cf. Acts 11: 15-18.) The fourth instance of the miraculous reception of the Holy Spirit was in connection with the Ephesian men who had been baptized into John the Baptist's baptism, which had ceased to be authoritative. They accepted Paul's teaching on the subject, were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus; and when Paul laid his hands upon them, they received the Holy Spirit. It was in this way that apostolic approval was given to the

teaching that John's baptism was no longer valid. (See Acts 19: 1-7.)

It is clear from the text now under consideration that Peter regarding the miraculous giving of the Holy Spirit on the occasion now before us as God's way of showing that the Gentiles were acceptable to him. "The water" (the article is in the original) designates *water* as the recognized and customary element of baptism; and the command to be baptized in the name of Jesus was in keeping with the commission which Jesus gave to his disciples.

The conversion of Cornelius, more than any other conversion recorded in the New Testament, proclaims the truth that all men, regardless of their moral character, need a Saviour. (Cf. Rom. 3: 10, 23; 1 Tim. 2: 5; John 14: 6.) It is important to remember that the first man who

was converted to Christ from the Gentile world was not a thief nor a drunkard nor a malefactor of any kind; instead, he was a man with very high religious principles and practices, and one who put many of the professed followers of God among the Jews to shame: and the same thing can be said of many professed Christians today. The miraculous has, of course, passed away, and no one has any God-given right to expect an angel to appear to him visibly, as was true in the case of Cornelius; but there are reasons for believing that the providence of God is often responsible for one's being placed in a position, and under favorable circumstances, for being taught the truth regarding himself and the way in which he can obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.

Questions for Discussion

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

Intro (friction)

What is the most satisfactory way of getting the plan of salvation before people?

Why was the case of the conversion of Cornelius such a remarkable one?

What was usually true of the centurions we read about in the New Testament?

Discuss the relative importance of heredity and environment.

Where do we find the greatest responsibility for channeling these influences?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of the golden text spoken?

Why was Peter criticized for going into the home of Cornelius and eating with him?

What place do "words" have in the Lord's plan for saving the lost?

Discuss the practical meaning of "righteousness" as found in Paul's writing.

The Vision of Cornelius and the Command to Send for Peter

Where were the cities of Caesarea and Joppa located?

What place do they occupy in the New Testament record?

Tell something about them as they are today.

What does Luke say regarding the moral character of Cornelius prior to his conversion?

What do the Scriptures teach with reference to God's hearing the prayers of aliens?

Discuss John 9: 31 in this connection?

Why was Peter selected to preach the gospel for the first time to the Gentiles?

What did it mean for him to have the keys of the kingdom of heaven?

In view of Peter's words in Acts 2: 39, why did it require so much to convince him that the Gentiles were subjects of the gospel of Christ?

The Meeting of Peter and Cornelius

How long did it take the men whom Cornelius sent for Peter to make the round trip?

What attitude did Cornelius manifest toward the apostle when the latter arrived?

What lesson should we learn from the incident now before us regarding preachers?

What are the principal facts which Luke recorded between this section of the lesson text and the next one?

The Results Which Followed Peter's Sermon

What was the evident purpose of the miraculous giving of the Holy Spirit to Cornelius and his household?

What important lessons do we learn from this and other miraculous impartations of the Spirit which are recorded in the Book of Acts?

What is signified by the expression "the water"?

Why are people baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus?

What important truth does the conversion of Cornelius illustrate?

Why can't a good moral man be saved without obeying the gospel?

Lesson IX—May 28, 1967

PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Lesson Text

Acts 11: 19-21; 13: 1-12

19 They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Ste'-phen travelled as far as Phoe-ni'-ci-a, and Cy'-prus, and An'-ti-och, speaking the word to none save only to Jews.

20 But there were some of them, men of Cy'-prus and Cy-re'-ne, who, when they were come to An'-ti-och, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Je'-sus.

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord.

1 Now there were at An'-ti-och, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers, Bar'-na-bas, and Sym'-e-ôn that was called Ni-ger, and Lu'-cius of Cy-re'-ne, and Man'-a-en the foster-brother of Her'-od the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Bar'-na-bas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Se-leu'-ci-a; ana from thence they sailed to Cy'-prus.

5 And when they were at Sal'-a-mis, they proclaimed the word of

God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John as their attendant.

6 And when they had gone through the whole island unto Pa'-phos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Je'-sus;

7 Who was with the proconsul, Ser-gi-us Pau'-lus, a man of understanding. The same called unto him Bar'-na-bas and Saul, and sought to hear the word of God.

8 But El'-y-mas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn aside the proconsul from the faith.

9 But Saul, who is also *called* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fastened his eyes on him,

10 And said, O full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."* (Acts 11: 26.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 13: 13-22.

Daily Bible Readings

May 22. M.....	Preaching in Antioch (Acts 11: 19-30)
May 23. T.....	Prominent Teachers in Antioch (Acts 13: 1-3)
May 24. W.....	Events in Cyprus (Acts 13: 4-12)
May 25. T.....	Work in Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 14: 14-43)
May 26. F.....	Opposition (Acts 13: 44-52)
May 27. S.....	Work in Iconium, Lystra, Derbe (Acts 14: 1-22)
May 28. S.....	Report to the Church (Acts 14: 23-28)

TIME.—A.D. 43, 47-49.

PLACES.—Antioch, Seleucia, and Cyprus.

PERSONS.—Barnabas, Saul, other teachers and prophets, Sergius Paulus, and Bar-Jesus.

Introduction

The establishment of the work of the Lord in Antioch of Syria marked the beginning of a new era in the progress of the church. Before that, the center of the work had been in Jerusalem; and that meant that the outlook of the brethren was thoroughly Jewish. Wherever the gospel was preached during the first eight or ten years of the church's existence, the message was addressed to the Jews or to Jewish proselytes. While the Jews as such had no dealings with Samaritans (John 4: 9), the fact remains that there was a blood-relationship between the two races, if it is true that the Samaritans were a mixed race, partly of Israelitish descent. While Josephus (Ant. 11: 8, 6) and other Jews deny this relationship, it appears to be strongly implied from 2 Kings 17: 24ff.

But whatever may be the truth regarding the origin of the Samaritans, it is quite evident that their reception into the church (Acts 8: 14-17) did not meet with the type of opposition which characterized the reception of Cornelius and his household (Acts 11: 1-18). The entire history of the attitude of the Jews toward

the Samaritans during the time of Christ and the apostles, as well as the closing part of the Old Testament period (of Ezra and Nehemiah), shows that the Jews regarded the Samaritans almost as idolaters, on account of their semi-heathen (if not outright, in the opinion of the Jews) origin.

But with the establishment of the church in Antioch of Syria, the emphasis began to shift from the Jewish point of view to the cosmopolitan character of the Lord's people. The great center of activity was in time moved to Antioch; and while Jerusalem still remained the so-called capital of the Jewish Christians and more or less the home base of the apostles (Acts 8: 1; 15: 1ff), Antioch became the radiating point for missionary activities. It was from that city that Paul made his three great missionary journeys; and it was from there that Paul, Barnabas, and Titus went to Jerusalem for the conference regarding the circumcision of Gentile Christians; and it was also there that Paul resisted Peter to the face, for his conduct toward the Gentile brethren. (See Acts 15; Gal. 2.)

The Golden Text

"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" The question as to the origin of the designation "Christian" has long been in dispute. The term itself occurs only three times in the entire New Testament. (Acts 11: 26, plural; 26: 28; 1 Pet. 4:

16.) It is clearly evident that the Lord's people themselves did not originate the name; they called themselves saints, believers, disciples, brethren, et cetera; and it is equally evident that the Jewish people did not bestow the appellation upon the disciples of Christ. (Acts 24: 5.) There are some Bible students who are of the opinion that the name was given in derision; but there is no basis in fact for this view. Meyer says that "there is nothing to support the view that the name was at first a title of ridicule."

Jehovah, some seven hundred years before the coming of Christ, promised that his people would be called by a new name, when the Gentiles should see his righteousness. "And the nations shall see thy

righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah shall name." (Isa. 62: 2.) It may well be that the calling of the disciples in Antioch *Christians* was the fulfillment of the prediction just quoted. In fact, it appears all but certain that Jehovah did give the name, when we look at the original record.

The Greek term for "were called" is *chrematizo*, which is derived from the noun *chrematismos*. The latter word is found only one time in the New Testament—Rom. 11: 4, and it means, according to Thayer, Arndt-Gingrich, and others, a *divine* statement or response. The verb which occurs in Acts 11: 26 is also found in the following passages, namely, Matt. 2: 12, 22 (warned); Luke 2: 26 (revealed); Acts 10: 22 (warned); Rom. 7: 3 (shall be called); Heb. 8: 5; 11: 7; 12: 25 (warned). If any one will read all of the passages just cited, he can easily see that the sub-

ject of the verb in each instance is a divine being or agency; and there is no reason for thinking that it is any different in Acts 11: 26, especially in view of the meaning of the noun form and Isaiah's prophecy. The following summary therefore seems justified: (1) God promised that a new name would be given to his people, *when* the Gentiles saw his

righteousness. (2) The term "Christian" is the only new name that was given when the Gentiles came into the church. (3) Antioch was an appropriate place for the name to be given, since it was the first city to have a great church composed of both Jews and Gentiles. (4) The original word for "called" implies a divine source or agency.

The Text Explained

The Beginning of the Work in Antioch

(Acts 11: 19-21)

They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as 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.

Beginning with chapter 8, as we saw in a previous lesson, Luke traced the work of Philip in Samaria, as well as the activities of Peter in the same country, before he and John returned to Jerusalem. The historian then gave an account of the conversion of the arch-persecutor of the church, Saul of Tarsus, and his movements until he returned to his home city. This was followed by a statement regarding the general condition of the church, after Saul's conversion, and of Peter's activities which finally led to the conversion of the first people from the Gentile world, along with his return to Jerusalem where he explained the latter to the satisfaction of the brethren there. These facts should be kept in mind, as we begin the study of this lesson.

In saying that "they therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen," Luke was beginning another thread of his history, from the same point from which he traced the events of Acts 8: 1-11: 18. He simply went back to Jerusalem, as it were, and started in another direction, going this time as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. But the preaching which these missionaries did was

only to the Jews. It is fair to assume that the preaching alluded to, in the general statement of the text now under consideration, was done during the same over-all period which was covered in the preceding chapters, that is, chapters 8 through 11: 18.

The term "tribulation" fittingly describes the terrible suffering which the disciples endured during the persecution which arose about Stephen. The word "tribulation," from the Latin *tribulum*, signifies a threshing instrument or roller with which the Roman farmer separated the grain from the husks. It is difficult for us to conceive of the torture which the early disciples had to suffer. The expression "scattered abroad" is a translation of a Greek verb which means to sow throughout, or figuratively, to distribute in foreign lands (Strong); and that indeed is what happened when the terrible persecution in Jerusalem took on momentum. (See Acts 8: 4.)

Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, can and should be located on the map. It is well to note that Antioch ranked next to Rome and Alexandria in size, and the city therefore furnished a great opportunity for missionary efforts. The preachers who first preached to the Greeks in Antioch were from Cyprus, not very far away, and Cyrene, in northern Africa and was the home of Simon who carried the cross of Jesus (Mark 15: 21), who might have been one of the preachers referred to in the text. Bible students are not agreed as to whether or not the "Greeks" in the text were Grecian Jews or Greeks, that is, Gentiles. But inasmuch as the express object of the narrative, as Vincent observes, was to describe the admission of Gentiles into the church, it appears that the reference was very likely to

them. Grecian Jews had been in the church since its beginning in Jerusalem (Acts 6: 1ff), and there would therefore have been nothing unusual about the missionaries' preaching to such people in Antioch. (Cf. the contrast expressed in verses 19, 20 of the lesson text now before us.) The Lord blessed the preaching to the Greeks, and the turning of "believers" to the Lord shows that they were not saved by faith only.

The Missionaries Set Apart and the Tour through Cyprus (Acts 13: 1-8)

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 whereunto I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

The thirteenth chapter of Acts is generally regarded as the beginning of the second half of the book, and it is easy to see that Saul, that is, Paul, gradually became the dominant character in the great drama of the spread of Christianity. Antioch, as already pointed out, had supplanted Jerusalem as the principal center of Christian activity; and the church in the Syrian city had, in a relatively short time, grown into the first great cosmopolitan body of believers. The church in Antioch was well supplied with gifted leaders, who were spoken of as "prophets and teachers." It has frequently been pointed out in these studies that a "prophet" was one who spoke for another, in this case, one who spoke for the Lord; and that means that they were inspired men, a thing not always true of teachers. All prophets were teachers, but not all teachers were prophets. In their book, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, Conybeare and Howson note that "it is sufficient to remark that the 'prophecy' of the New Testament does not necessarily imply a knowledge of things to come, but rather a gift of exhorting with a peculiar force of inspiration."

Barnabas and Saul have already been introduced in the Book of Acts. Symeon is apparently the same as Simeon or Simon (of. Acts 15: 14), and it is possible that he was the one who bore the cross of Jesus. "Niger" means dark or black, and may have referred to his complexion. Lucius may have been one of the missionaries mentioned in Acts 11: 20. Manaen's mother may have nourished both him and Herod, that is, the Herod who killed John the Baptist. The term "ministered" indicates the work which these men performed as prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch. There is no set times for fasting in the New Testament; but the following passages indicate that the practice had a place in the lives of Christians—Matt. 6: 16-18; 9: 14, 15. The passage now before us also emphasizes the Personality of the Holy Spirit—"Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John as their attendant. And when they had gone through the whole island unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus; who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding. The same called unto him Barnabas and Saul, and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn aside the proconsul from the faith.

It is easy to see that the Holy Spirit, rather than the church, was the source of authority for this great missionary effort. His direction, however, was probably given through one or more of the prophets. Seleucia was the seaport of Antioch, and was located some sixteen miles west of Antioch, and about five miles north of the Orontes river. Seleucia was built on level ground at the foot of Mount Pieria, and was said to have been one of the most important commercial harbors on the eastern Mediterranean during New Testament times.

Cyprus is a large island in the

eastern part of the Mediterranean, sixty miles from the Syrian coast, and forty-five miles from the coast of Asia Minor. The fact that Cyprus was the native home of Barnabas (Acts 4: 36), together with the large Jewish population which it had (of plural synagogues in Salamis), may have been deciding factors in its selection as the beginning point of this first great missionary journey, in which Paul had a prominent part. Salamis was on the southeast coast of the island. Nothing is said regarding the success of the missionaries there. Their attendant was John Mark, whose home was in Jerusalem. (Acts 12: 12, 25.) Nothing is said in the text about John's being set apart for the work, and it is very likely that he was asked by the missionaries to accompany them, or he may have volunteered to go; he was a relative of Barnabas. (Col. 4: 10.)

The next place which is mentioned in the itinerary of Barnabas and Saul is Paphos, on the southwestern coast of the island of Cyprus; but there is nothing said about any public preaching there. There is, however, an interesting account of the incident which involved the proconsul and a false prophet, who was also called a sorcerer. The marginal reading for "sorcerer" is *magus*, as in Matt. 2: 1, 7, 16, where the text has *wisemen*; but "Bar-Jesus" (son of Jesus or Joshua) was branded by Luke as a false prophet, or more literally, a pseudo-prophet, such as are described in Matt. 7: 15; 24: 11, 24; 2 Pet. 2: 1; 1 John 4: 1 (of. Acts 8: 9-11). Robertson says that "these Jewish mountebanks were numerous and had great influence with the uneducated. In Acts 19: 13 the seven sons of Sceva, Jewish exorcists, tried to imitate Paul. If one is surprised that a man like Sergius Paulus should fall under the influence of this fraud, he should recall what Juvenal says of the Emperor Tiberius 'sitting on the rock of Capri with his flock of Chaldaeans around him.'" Ramsay does not think that Sergius Paulus was dominated by the false prophet.

The efforts of Elymas to withstand Barnabas and Saul, and to keep the proconsul from learning the truth, reminds one of the conduct of the sorcerers (magicians) of Egypt, who endeavored to keep Pharaoh from

listening to Jehovah's message to him through Moses and Aaron. (See Ex. 7: 8-13; of. 2 Tim. 3: 8.) Their modern counterparts (principally denominational preachers) are continuing the work today. The New Testament is very clear regarding the Lord's plan for saving the lost (of. Matt. 28: .19; Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 37, 38), but the men referred to and their co-workers are doing everything within their power to persuade people that water baptism is not a condition of pardon for alien sinners. (Cf. Gal. 1: 6-9; 2 John 9; John 12: 48-50.) The apostle Paul, in the same Book of Galatians, reminded those brethren that they were baptized into Christ (3: 26, 27), and that is where salvation is obtained. (See 2 Tim. 2: 10; Acts 4: 12; of. Eph. 1: 3, 7.)

"Saul, Who Is Also Called Paul"

(Acts 13: 9-12)

But Saul, who is also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fastened his eyes on him, and said, O full of all guile and villainy, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

"Saul, otherwise Paul" is Ramsay's translation of "Saul, who is also called Paul"; and he explains the custom of a person's having two names in that day in a very interesting manner. The custom, according to Dr. Ramsay, originated, or at least came into general use, about the time that Greece spread her culture over the world, which Alexander the Great had conquered. He continues, "Then it was the fashion for every Syrian, or Cilician, or Cappadocian, who prided himself on his Greek education and his knowledge of the Greek language, to bear a Greek name; but at the same time he had his other name in the native language, by which he was known among his countrymen in general. His two names were the alternative,

not the complement, of each other; and the situation and surroundings of the moment, the *role* which he was playing for the time being, determined which name he was called by. In a Greek house he played the Greek, and bore the Greek name: in a company of natives, he was the native, and bore the native name. He did not require both to complete his legal designation, as a Roman required both *nomen* and *praenomen*. His Greek name, taken alone, was full legal designation in a Greek court."

The history of Saul's work in the church up to this point had been almost entirely confined to Jewish surroundings, that is, so far as the record is concerned; and he had been from the first subordinate to Barnabas, who may have been some older than he. Barnabas had introduced Paul to the apostles in Jerusalem, when the disciples were afraid of him (Acts 9: 26-30); and it was Barnabas who had brought him to Antioch (Acts 11: 22-26). In short, wherever Barnabas and Saul are mentioned together, prior to the time of this lesson, it is always in the order just indicated. But after the incident which is now before us, it is Paul and Barnabas, except in purely Jewish situations. (Cf. Acts 15: 12,

25.) But as the two men were about to go forth into other territories and preach to the Gentiles, Saul, who was probably better educated for the task, took the lead. The incident involving Sergius Paulus was therefore the first time that Saul's Greek name was brought before Luke's readers;

his Hebrew name had always been used up to this time.

In discussing the episode at Lystra, where Barnabas was called the chief god, Ramsay notes that some qualities which mark out Paul to us as the leader, marked him out to the people of Lycaonia as the agent and the subordinate. Ramsay continues, "The Western mind regards the leader as the active and energetic partner; but the Oriental mind considers the leader to be the person who sits still and does nothing, while his subordinates speak and work for him. Hence in the truly Oriental religions the chief god sits apart from the world, communicating with it through his messenger and subordinate. The more statuesque figure of Barnabas was therefore taken by the Orientals as the chief god, and the active orator, Paul, as his messenger, communicating his wishes to men." (Cf. Matt. 20: 24-28.)

The text now before us records the first instance of a direct appeal to the Graeco-Roman world; and Paul emerges as the dominant figure in the new undertaking. This probably accounts for the miraculous power which he, rather than Barnabas, was permitted to exercise. This was indeed a far-reaching conception in Luke's mind of historical developments. There is no indication in the text as to whether or not the proconsul translated his faith into action, and it would be useless for us to speculate regarding the question. Luke's obvious purpose was to record the momentous step which was being taken in preaching the gospel to the Gentile world.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What significance was attached to the establishment of the church in Antioch in Syria?

In what way was the conversion of the Samaritans related to the bringing in of the Gentiles?

What great change in emphasis followed the founding of the church in Antioch?

Tell something of the place which Antioch occupied in the missionary work of the church.

The Golden Text

What appears to have been the origin of the name "Christian" as it applies to God's people?

How does one go about assembling the scriptural evidence on this question?

Give a summary of the teaching of the Bible on this issue.

The Beginning of the Work in Antioch

Trace the facts in Luke's narrative which led up to the establishment of the church in Antioch.

How did the historian relate the two threads of his historical narrative?

What is the significance of the term "tribulation"?

To what places did some of the missionaries go and where were they located?

Who were the evangelists who first preached to the Greeks in Antioch?

Were these people actually Greeks or merely Grecian Jews? Give reasons for your answer.

In what way did the Lord regard the preaching to the Greeks?

What lesson do we learn here regarding salvation by faith only?

The Missionaries Set Apart and the Tour through Cyprus

What significance does chapter 13 have to the Book of Acts as a whole?

What prominence did Antioch enjoy at the time of this section of the lesson text?

What is known of the prophets and teachers who are mentioned as being in the church in Antioch?

What did the term "prophet" mean in New Testament times and how did the prophets differ from the teachers?

Under what circumstances did the Holy Spirit authorize the setting apart of Barnabas and Saul?

What course did the missionaries follow as they began their journey?

Where was Cyprus located and why was that place probably chosen for their first efforts?

Who was John and what was the probable reason for his going with Barnabas and Saul?

Where was Paphos and what important and interesting thing took place there?

Why didn't Elymas want the proconsul to hear the word of the Lord?

Who are his modern counterparts and what is the motive which prompts their action?

"Saul, Who Is Also Called Paul"

Why did people back in the days of this lesson have two names?

How were these names related to each other?

What had been the relationship of the two missionaries unto this time?

What was the probable reason for Paul's taking the lead from here on?

What was Luke's obvious reason for recording the events at Paphos?

Lesson X—June 4, 1967

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Lesson Text

Acts 15: 36-41; 16: 1-10

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-phy'l'-i-a, and went not with them to the work.

39 And there arose a sharp contention, so that they parted asunder one from the other, and Bar'-na-bas took Mark with him, and sailed away unto Cy'-prus:

40 But Paul chose Si'-las, and went forth, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.

41 And he went through Syr'-i-a and Ci-li'-ci-a, confirming the churches.

1 And he came also to Der'-be and to Lys'-tra: and behold, a certain disciple was there, named Tim'-o-thy, the son of a Jewess that believed; but his father was a Greek.

2 The same was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lys'-tra and I-co'-ni-um.

3 Him would Paul have to go forth

Golden Text.—"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" (Acts 15: 36.)

Devotional Heading.—Acts 16: 11-15.

with him; and he took and circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those parts: for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

4 And as they went on their way through the cities, they delivered them the decrees to keep which had been ordained of the apostles and elders that were at Je-ru'-sa-lem.

5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

6 And they went through the region of Phryg'-i-a and Ga-la'-ti-a, having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in A'-si-a;

7 And when they were come over against My'-si-a, they assayed to go into Bi-thyn'-i-a; and the Spirit of Je'-sus suffered them not;

8 And passing by My'-si-a, they came down to Tro'-as.

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There was a man of Mac-e-do'-ni-a standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Mac-e-do'-ni-a, and help us.

10 And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Mac-e-do'-ni-a, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel unto them.

Daily Bible Readings

May 29. M.....	A Second Trip Contemplated (Acts 15: 36-41)
May 30.....	T. Paul's Sense of Obligation (Rom. 1: 13-17)
May 31. W.....	Paul's Desire to Preach in New Fields (Rom. 15: 14-29)
June 1. T.....	Foundation Laid in Corinth (1 Cor. 3: 1-15)
June 2. F.....	Prayer for an Open Door (Col. 4: 2-6)
June 3. S.....	Boldness Desired (Eph. 6: 10-20)
June 4. S.....	A Conversion in Philippi (Acts 16: 11-15)

TIME.—A.D. 50-53.

PLACES.—Antioch, Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra.

PERSONS.—Paul, Barnabas, Mark, Silas, and Timothy.

Introduction

It will be helpful to a better understanding of the lesson we are now studying, if the intervening passages are read. If this is done, it will be seen that Paul and Barnabas left the island of Cyprus, crossed over to the mainland of Asia Minor, and then ascended to the highlands of Asia Minor, into what was then known as South Galatia, where the missionaries were successful in establishing churches in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. These were the churches to which Paul wrote his letter which we know as Galatians. The Roman province of Galatia included territories which were formerly parts of Pisidia, Phrygia, and Lycaonia, to mention three of them; and it was for that reason that Luke spoke of Antioch as being in Pisidia, and "the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe." Iconium, according to Ramsay, was regarded as a city of Phrygia. But when Paul wrote his letter to the churches which were located in these four cities, he addressed them, not as churches in Pisidia, Phrygia, and Lycaonia, but as the churches of Galatia.

After Paul and Barnabas had finished their first missionary journey, they returned to Antioch in Syria, and remained there for some time. Later on, some Judaizing teachers from Judaea came down to Antioch and stirred up a controversy over the question of circumcising Gentile Christians. After "no small dissension and questioning with them," the brethren in Antioch sent Paul, Barnabas, and certain others, including Titus, to Jerusalem to consult with the apostles about the matter. This resulted in what is known as "the Jerusalem conference." (See Acts 15; Gal. 2.) When a decision was reached, Paul and Barnabas,

along with two prophets, Judas and Silas, whom the Jerusalem brethren sent, returned to Antioch with their report.

We are not told how long Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, after they returned from the Jerusalem conference; but "after some days" Paul suggested to Barnabas that they revisit the places wherein they had proclaimed the gospel, and see how the churches which they had established were faring. Nothing is said about any specific reason for this journey, other than to see how the churches were getting along; but it is reasonable to assume that Paul was getting anxious about the newly organized churches, after the stormy events at Antioch and Jerusalem. He had seen how the Judaizing teachers had worked in these two cities; and it would be reasonable to suppose that these erroneous teachers would go wherever Gentiles had been converted to Christ. At any rate, Paul wanted to go back and see about the young churches; and inasmuch as Barnabas had had a part in establishing them, it was both proper and right that he be asked to make the trip with Paul.

Both Paul and Barnabas had seen the value of revisiting the newly established churches, when they had retraced their steps from Derbe back through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia; and their experience on that occasion had convinced them, if indeed they needed to be convinced, that the newly converted disciples of Christ needed further teaching and encouragement. Those were days of bitter persecution, and these teachers of God's word knew that the better the people are taught the truth, the stronger they will be to resist temptation to turn away from Christ. We can be sure that

Paul and Barnabas were duly concerned for the welfare of the churches which had been brought into being during their first missionary journey.

But the proposed second journey was not destined to begin, or to continue, like the first one; for before they were ready to start, they became aware of the fact that a severe strain on their personal relationships had developed. John Mark, as we saw last week, had started with them on the first journey; but for some unexplained reason he had left them at Perga, in Pamphylia, and had returned to Jerusalem. Barnabas wanted Mark to go on the second journey too, but Paul registered strenuous objections. There is no reason for thinking that Barnabas approve his cousin's action in aban-

doning the work, any more than Paul did; but the fleshly relationship would no doubt cause the former to overlook the defection quicker than Paul would. And too, the incident in Antioch when Peter visited there after the Jerusalem conference (Gal. 2: 11-13) probably did not strengthen the ties between Paul and Barnabas. To say the least of it, Barnabas did not manifest the strength of character on that occasion, which measured up to Paul's high standard. It is not surprising therefore, in the light of the circumstances just mentioned, to see the two missionaries choose new and different companions, and different fields of labor. This, however, does not suggest personal animosity, as we shall see later on in this study.

The Golden Text

This part of the lesson is found in the principal text, and it will be treated in its regular order.

The Text Explained

The Separation of Paul and Barnabas

(Acts 15: 36-41)

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: 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.

Several possible reasons for Mark's withdrawal from the missionary endeavor have been suggested by Bible students from time to time, but we are not told by Luke just what his motive was; but whatever it may have been, it certainly was not satisfactory to Paul, and he thereby lost his opportunity for further service with him, for the time being. In commenting on John Mark's action, Clovis G. Chappell

said, "He became John Mark the Quitter. But he is not the only quitter. Their name is legion to this hour. Some of them are in the church. When you became a member of the church years ago you were full of enthusiasm. You were ready for any good work. For a while you made a business of your religion. You considered the services of the church not as the responsibility of the preacher alone, but as a responsibility of yourself also. But little by little the fires died upon the altar of your soul. Today, though you are still in the church, you do not count. If everybody treated the prayer meeting as you treat it, there would not be another held to the end of time. If everybody treated the night service as you treat it, there would not be another church lighted for services until the old world becomes a cinder." This is certainly something that every member of the church ought to consider carefully and prayerfully. (Cf. Rev. 2: 4, 5.)

But Mark did not remain away from the Lord's work; and he was eventually restored to Paul's confidence and esteem. In his final letter to Timothy, which was possibly the last one he ever wrote, the aged apostle said, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is useful

to me for ministering." (2 Tim. 4: 11.) So the young man who turned back from the work in Pamphylia stands before us as an example of the recovery of character, and of the way in which one who has lost his self-respect may regain it. That his position was a difficult one may be seen when we observe that the influence of the great apostle Paul was against him. How, then, do we account for his recovery? There may have been many factors, such as the influence of Barnabas, who was related to him, and Peter his teacher (of. 1 Pet. 5: 13); but it is probable that the most effective agency was Paul himself. When Paul refused to endanger his enterprise by taking such a man with him, and when he frankly said so, Mark began to come to himself. He began to see himself as he really was, and was made to realize what a mistake he had made. There are times when the greatest disservice we can do our friends is to be too gentle and kind to tell them the truth. Many a man has been saved by having some sincere Paul or brave Nathan look him squarely in the eyes, and tell him exactly what is wrong.

There is no indication that the clash between Paul and Barnabas over Mark was characterized by any hard feelings for each other. The original word for "a sharp contention" is found only twice in the New Testament—here and in Heb. 10: 24 (provoke); and it is easy to see that the term is used in both a favorable and an unfavorable sense. The use of the word in the passage now before us means, according to Arndt-Ginrich, a sharp disagreement. Phillips renders the term "a sharp clash of opinion." Christian people can, indeed, disagree without being disagreeable; and when that is done there is usually no hard feelings among them. Dr. Howson thinks that it is very likely that Paul and Barnabas made a deliberate and amicable arrangement to divide the region of their first mission between them, Paul taking the continental portion, and Barnabas the insular part. (Cf. 1 Cor. 9: 6; Col. 4: 10.)

After Paul and Barnabas separated, the latter took Mark and sailed away unto Cyprus. This left Paul alone, and, not wishing to work by himself, he chose Silas to be his next

travelling companion, and received the endorsement of the brethren for their proposed journey. David Smith thinks that the fact that Paul "chose" Silas indicates that there were others whom he might have selected. Dr. Smith also calls attention to the preeminent fitness which Silas possessed for the work which Paul had in mind. This view is supported by the esteem in which the new companion was held in Jerusalem, and the service which he performed in Antioch. (Acts 15.) Silas was a Jew, but he was in full sympathy with the liberties which belonged to Gentile Christians. He was also a Roman citizen (Acts 16: 37), with the wide outlook which that relationship implied, along with the prestige and immunity which it insured wherever Roman law was in force. Silas was therefore in a position to disarm Jewish prejudice and to win Gentile confidence, as he and Paul went forth to the work before them. It is altogether probable that the separation of Paul and Barnabas was providential, since it resulted in Paul's having a companion who, like himself, was a Roman citizen; and would therefore, in the opinion of F. F. Bruce, spare Paul the embarrassment of claiming for himself civic privileges which his fellow-traveller, if he had not been a Roman citizen, could not share. And so, Paul and Silas "went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches."

A Second Trip through Asia Minor (Acts 16: 1-5)

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. And as they went on their way through the cities, they delivered them the decrees to keep which has been ordained of the apostles and elders that were at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

In the light of that which has already been said, and of that which happened afterwards, the separation of Paul and Barnabas regarding Mark instead of being unfortunate, it appears that a double advantage was achieved, namely, (1) it gave Paul an opportunity for a quicker visit to the Galatian churches, without taking the extra time which would have been required to go through Cyprus, if they followed the route of the first journey; and (2) he would also have the advantage of the testimony of Silas who had been selected by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem or reassure the Gentile brethren in Antioch.

And judging from that which had taken place in Antioch, which furnished the occasion for the Jerusalem conference, it was quite possible that the Judaizers had already begun their work of trying to bring the Gentiles into legal bondage in Galatia. And judging from what we shall see in the next section of the lesson text for today, it is very probable that Paul and Silas had thought that after traversing South Galatia from east to west, they could continue their westward journey from Antioch of Pisidia, along the great route through the populous valley of the Lycus and Meander rivers, where they could evangelize such centers as Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis, and then on to Ephesus, the brilliant capital of the province of Asia.

As Paul and Silas started on their journey from Antioch, they first passed through Syria and then into Cilicia. Both of these provinces were on the Mediterranean Sea. (See map.) The route which the two missionaries followed took them, in all probability, through Paul's home city of Tarsus, where a church had likely been founded. (Cf. Acts 9: 26-30.) When Paul and Silas left Tarsus, they evidently crossed over the Taurus mountains, via the Cilician Gates; and it probably took them some four or five days to reach Derbe, the farthest point in Paul's first missionary journey, before going on to Lystra, the place where Paul was stoned on the first journey.

It was at Lystra that Paul found Timothy who, along with his mother and grandmother, was converted

when Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel there; and, upon hearing the good reports of the brethren regarding him, Paul wanted him to join the missionary party, probably to take the place which John Mark had at the beginning of the first journey. Paul frequently referred to Timothy as his son in the gospel; and inasmuch as Lystra was apparently his home, it is reasonable to assume that he became a Christian when Paul first preached there. Timothy had been thoroughly trained in the Old Testament Scriptures (2 Tim. 3: 15); but for some reason he had not been circumcised.

It is very probable that Timothy had witnessed the stoning of Paul in Lystra (Acts 14: 19, 20), and he evidently knew about the apostle's other sufferings which he endured while he was in that section of the country. (See 2 Tim. 3: 10, 11; Acts 14: 21, 22.) All of these things must have made a deep and lasting impression upon Timothy's tender heart; and if 1 Tim. 1: 18 refers to the time of this lesson, it is very likely that Paul was influenced in his decision to have Timothy go with him on his missionary tour by the prophetic utterances of Silas or some other voice or voices which spoke for the Lord. (Cf. Acts 15: 32.) But whatever may have been the factors which led Paul to choose Timothy to assist in the evangelist work, 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.

Inasmuch as Paul's plan was to preach to the Jews first, it appears that he fully realized that the presence of Timothy, a half-Jew by birth and uncircumcised, would constitute an insurmountable barrier to success in reaching any of them with the gospel, unless the prospective missionary was circumcised. Paul, accordingly, "took and circumcised him because of the Jews in those parts: for they all knew that his father was a Greek." It was from this time and onward that Timothy was probably known as an evangelist (of.

2 Tim. 4: 5); and it was at this time that he became Paul's loyal companion, as he served with him in the furtherance of the gospel (of. Phil. 2: 19-22). The younger man was active in preaching the gospel, repre-

sent the apostle in some special assignments, and join with him in sending several of the letters which have come down to us. The apostle to the Gentiles never paid a greater tribute to any of his fellow-workers, than the one which is found in the passage just referred to.

The "decrees" which Paul and Silas delivered to the churches they visited were the decisions which were embodied in the letter which the apostles and elders sent to Antioch by Paul and Barnabas, and which were confirmed by the words of Judas and Silas. It was stated at the beginning of this lesson that the purpose of Paul in revisiting the churches which he and Barnabas had established was to "see how they fare"; and we can see from that which he and Silas did that the result of the visitation was twofold, namely, (1) the churches were strengthened, and (2) they increased in number daily. This was in keeping with the Lord's commission to his disciples; and it is the plan which should be followed by his people today.

When Plans Must Be Changed

(Acts 16: 6-10)

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.

Life is full of efforts and failures. Practically every responsible person starts out toward some desired goal, and for a while things seem to go well; but with most of us there comes a time in our experience when we reach a point, beyond which we cannot go. There we stand, and look upon our frustrated plans, which must be abandoned. Such an experience can lead one to despondency

and bitterness; but if he is sincerely trying to follow the Lord, he will simply realize that his plans must be changed.

One of the chief things which God requires in his people is the development of a pure and spotless character, and this often requires divine discipline; but if one is willing to be directed by the Lord in all that he does, he will soon come to realize that he can serve best in the field where the Lord leads him. And so, whatever our experiences in this life may be, we are taught that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8: 28). This is indeed the Divine answer to all the baffling experiences which come to us.

The lesson which we should get from this section of the lesson text is that it sets forth one of the most impressive examples on record of the necessity for a change in plans, together with the glorious results which followed. Paul and his companions had passed through central Asia Minor, and were forbidden to preach the gospel in the western province of Asia; and when they turned northward and came near Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia; but were not permitted to do so by the Lord. And so, passing by Mysia, they came down to the sea-coast city of Troas. (See map for all the places mentioned in this section of the lesson text.) It was at Troas that Paul had his vision of the man of Macedonia calling for help, which resulted in the conclusion that God was calling them to preach the gospel to the people of that country.

The narrative which we are considering at this time records an experience in the life of Paul, which is so simple and commonplace, that the average reader little suspects that the writer was dealing with one of the most significant events in human history, namely, the passing of Christianity from Asia to Europe, that is, so far as the record is concerned. But great as the result was, Paul had not planned to go to Europe at that time. His objective was Asia; and when that was overruled by the Lord, he next tried Bithynia, with the same result. And so, having tried both the left hand and the right, the only thing left open to

them was to go straight ahead; and it was there that they received God's message. Although wanting Asia and Bithynia but getting Troas, Paul was able to make this change in his plans one of the greatest opportunities of his life. This was due to the

fact that he had the spirit, attitude, and technique which were necessary to deal with inescapable problems. The first of the famous "we" passages of the Book of Acts indicates that Luke joined the missionary party at Troas. (See verse 10.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What are the historical facts of Luke's narrative which lead up to this lesson?
Under what circumstances did Paul's second missionary journey begin?
What were probably some of the reasons for his wanting to revisit the churches?
Discuss the separation of Paul and Barnabas and some of the results.
What important lessons should we learn from these things?

The Separation of Paul and Barnabas

What valuable lesson should we learn from the action of Mark in leaving the missionaries?

Why do so many people lose their first love for the Lord and his cause?

How do we know that Mark did not remain indifferent to his duty?

What were some of the probable factors which led to his restoration?

What is the best thing which can usually happen to people who go astray?

What reason can be assigned for the amicable separation of Paul and Barnabas?

Under what circumstances did Paul select a new companion for his missionary work?

What were some of the factors which made Silas a suitable co-worker?

A Second Trip through Asia Minor

What special advantages did the separation of Paul and Barnabas give Paul?

Why was Paul anxious to revisit the churches of Galatia?

Trace the probable route of Paul and Silas to Derbe and Lystra.

Whom did Paul find in Lystra and what special fitness did he have for the work?

When and under what circumstances was Timothy probably converted?

Why did Paul deem it necessary to circumcise Timothy before taking him on the journey?

What kind of a man did Timothy prove to be in the work which Paul had in mind for him?

What were the decrees which Paul and Silas delivered to the churches?

What were the results of their visit to the churches?

When Plans Must Be Changed

Why is it often necessary for plans to be changed and what effect does this sometimes have on those who are compelled to submit to the changes?

What is one of the chief things which God requires of his people?

What does the development of character usually involve?

What is the divine answer to all of life's baffling experiences?

What is one of the principal lessons which we should get from this section of the text?

Discuss the changes in the plans which the missionaries were compelled to make.

Why is the real reason for the change in their plans so often overlooked?

Why were they able to make the adjustment so easily and smoothly?

Lesson XI—June 11, 1967

A JAILER CONVERTED

Lesson Text

Acts 16: 19-34

19 But when her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, they laid hold on Paul and Si-las, and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers,

20 And when they had brought them unto the magistrates, they said, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

21 And set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive, or to observe, being Romans.

22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magis-

trates rent their garments off them, and commanded to beat them with rods.

23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

24 Who, having received such a charge, cast them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

25 But about midnight Paul and Si-las were praying and singing

hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison-house were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened: and every one's bands were loosed.

27 And the jailor, being roused out of sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

29 And he called for lights and

sprang in, and, trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Si'-las,

30 And brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Je'-sus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house.

32 And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately.

34 And he brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"In prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft."* (2 Cor. 11: 23.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 16: 16-18.

Daily Bible Readings

June 5. M.....	Conditions of Salvation (Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 38)
June 6. T.....	Gospel, God's Power to Save (Rom. 1: 13-17)
June 7. W.....	Gospel in Earthen Vessels (2 Cor. 4: 1-8)
June 8. T.....	What Pleases God (1 Cor. 1: 21-31)
June 9. F.....	Example of Conversion (Acts 8: 25-40)
June 10. S.....	Importance of the Preacher (Rom. 10: 9-21)
June 11. S.....	Reason for Paul's Imprisonment (Acts 16: 16-18)

TIME.—A.D. 50.

PLACE.—**Philippi.**

PERSONS.—Paul, Silas, the jailer, and others.

Introduction

It has frequently been pointed out in these studies that the Book of Acts is a book of conversions; and it is reasonable to suppose that this part of God's revelation to men contains that which he wants people to know about the subject. There is, of course, information in other parts of the New Testament on the subject of conversion, and even the principle of the process is set forth in the Old Testament (of. Psalm 119: 59, 60); but it is in the Book of Acts that one finds the most detailed account of the subject. Just before Jesus left his disciples to return to the Father, he gave that which is called the great commission; and every case of conversion which is recorded in the Book of Acts was worked out in accordance with the Lord's charge to his disciples. The Lord's commission to his people, therefore, should be carefully studied in connection with this lesson.

There is no better way of making

known any proposition, than by effective illustration. Not only does the writer of the Book of Acts give examples of conversions—conversions which took place under the preaching of inspired men; he gives a variety of such examples, which illustrate how the conversion of men and women took place under various and sundry conditions. The attending circumstances often differed widely; but it is a fact capable of being demonstrated that in every case those who were converted to the Lord did exactly that which is set forth in the Lord's commission to his disciples—no more, no less.

The term "convert" literally means *to turn*, and it follows that when one is converted to the Lord he turns to the Lord. (Cf. Acts 3: 19; 11: 21.) This view makes the process active, rather than passive; or, to state the same thing in another way, the sinner himself must do something, rather than simply having something

done to him. A comparison of the King James Version with the American Standard Version will illustrate this difference, namely, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3: 19a, KJV); "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out" (ASV). This same active principle is set forth by the psalmist in the following passage: "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not, to observe thy commandments." (Psalm 119: 59, 60.)

Every case of genuine conversion is a twofold process, namely, God's

part and man's part. This truth is clearly stated by Paul in these words: "For by *grace* [God's part] have ye been saved through *Saith* I man's parti." (Eph. 2: 8a.) There are three things accomplished in each case of conversion, or three specific changes made, namely, (1) a change of heart, (2) a change in life, and (3) a change in relationship. The plan of salvation, or the scheme of redemption, meets each of these needs, as, for example, faith changes the heart, repentance changes the life, and baptism changes the state or relationship—from without the body of Christ to within it. (Cf. Gal. 3: 20, 27.)

The Golden Text

"In prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft." It is not always easy to comprehend that which is implied in the universality of the gospel, and God's desire and effort to get it into the hearts of all men. With an auditor like the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), or Lydia (Acts 10), the task is relatively easy; but when it comes to reaching men like Felix (Acts 24), or the Philippian jailor, the man about whom we are to study today, the method of procedure is entirely different. It frequently requires sufferings and hardships on the part of God's faithful messengers, in order to reach some people; but we may be sure that God will always give them the necessary grace, to enable them to bear such hardships and sufferings. (Cf. 2 Cor. 12: 7-10.)

The overruling motive which inspired Paul in his labors and sufferings for the gospel's sake, was patterned after that which actuated Christ. "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.) When people have something to live for, and a goal to reach, they are willing to make any kind of per-

sonal sacrifice, and endure any kind of suffering, in order to accomplish their aim in life. "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." (2 Tim. 2: 10.) "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward." (Rom. 8: 18; of. 2 Cor. 4: 16-18.)

It is almost certain that no man of recorded history ever labored under more difficulties, and suffered more, than did the apostle Paul, as may be seen in part by reading the context from which the golden text for today's lesson is taken (2 Cor. 11: 23-28); and when we consider the fact that he continued his efforts for some years after that epistle was written (especially during the time which was covered by the epistles to Timothy and Titus), it is fair to assume that other trials were added to the ones which he mentioned. Some of the events which Paul referred to in the passage cited above are recorded history, but we know nothing about some of them beyond that which he himself has told us. The list of hardships which Paul set before the Corinthian brethren is more complete, than any which could be compiled from the record in Acts and his other epistles. The Jews were permitted to administer punishment to offenders by whipping them; but they were not allowed to give the victims more than forty stripes

(see Deut. 25: 1-3); and it seems that the Jews of Paul's day, and very probably earlier, decided to

limit the number of stripes which they administered to thirty-nine, so as to be on the safe side.

The Text Explained

Paul and Silas Arrested and Punished

(Acts 16: 19-24)

But when her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, they laid hold on Paul and Silas, and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers, and when they had brought them unto the magistrates, they said, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive, or to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent their garments off them, and commanded to beat them with rods. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: who, having received such a charge, cast them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

Following the conversion of Lydia and her household, Paul and his company continued to frequent the place where they first met the women in Philippi, or some other place of prayer; and on one occasion as they were going there, a certain maid having a spirit of divination met them, who brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. She continued to follow the missionaries for many days, and cried out, saying, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim unto you the way of salvation."

Although the words which the demon-possessed maiden spoke were entirely true, such testimony from such a source did not appeal to Paul. He simply did not want the impression left on the minds of the people of Philippi that there was any alliance between the missionaries of Christ and demons; and he, accordingly, commanded the demon, *in the name of Jesus Christ*, to come out of the maid: and it came out that very hour. This action on the part of Paul resulted in arousing the masters of the maiden into open and violent opposition to the apostle and his company, which led to their being unjustly punished and imprisoned. If

the magistrates had only taken the time to investigate, they would not have been guilty of mal-treating innocent men; but with the human race depraved as it is, it often happens that the would-be benefactor must bear a cross, as was pointed out in the discussion of the golden text, before his blessings reach the needy. The condition of the godly missionaries was distressing in the extreme; but there was no resentment in their hearts for their persecutors, as we shall see in the next section of the lesson text.

Songs in the Night and a Glorious Result

(Acts 16: 25-30)

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them; and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison-house were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened: and every one's bands were loosed. And the jailor, being roused out of sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. And he called for lights and sprang in, and trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

It would be useless to speculate on which songs Paul and Silas probably sang during the midnight hours of their imprisonment; but we do know that their prayers and songs reached the hearts of their fellow-prisoners.

"Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,

Feelings lie buried that grace can restore:

Touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness,

Chords that were broken will vibrate once more."

If the Lord's people, instead of so much complaining and criticizing, would spend more of their time

praying and singing praises unto God, it is likely that they would often meet with this request, namely, "Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of life;

Let me more of their beauty see,
wonderful words of life.

Words of life and beauty, teach me
faith and duty;

Beautiful words, wonderful words,
wonderful words of life."

As Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and while the prisoners were listening to them, a great earthquake suddenly shook the prison-house to its foundations; throwing open the doors, and loosing the bands of all those who were bound therein. This was a miracle, of course, but it set the stage, so to speak, for the conversion of the jailor in question. It should be observed, however, that it did not contribute directly to his salvation: he still had to do exactly that which is authorized by the Lord's commission to his disciples. When the jailor was aroused from his sleep and saw that the doors of the prison-house were all opened, he immediately supposed that all the prisoners had escaped; and, thinking that he would have to atone for that with his own life, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, before the authorities had time to execute him.

But before the jailor had time to act, Paul called out to him with a loud voice, and was successful in staying his hand. It sometimes happens that a prisoner confers a great blessing upon his jailor; and that was certainly true in the case now under consideration. Neither the magistrates nor the jailor had shown any mercy on Paul and Silas; but, as has already been observed, these messengers of Christ had no desire to retaliate. There was indeed, let it be repeated, no room in their hearts for such a feeling, as long as they were filled with prayer and praises unto God. And it should be carefully noted that there was nothing which cannot be imitated by the Lord's people today. (Cf. Matt. 5: 38-42; Rom. 12: 17-21.) Paul not only saved the jailor from a violent physical death; he also created an opportunity for preaching the gospel unto him.

The proponents of sprinkling and

pouring for baptism sometimes try to leave the impression that the conversion of the jailor took place in the prison cell, where he addressed his inquiry regarding salvation to Paul and Silas; but the text now before us plainly says that he brought them out, before asking the question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Furthermore, in an apparent effort to detract from the New Testament teaching with reference to the Lord's plan for saving the lost, the question is sometimes asked, What salvation was the jailor seeking? It should be noted (1) that it was not salvation from the earthquake; for its terrors had passed and he was safe from them. (2) He was not seeking salvation from the Roman government; for his prisoners were all in their places. (3) The context, as we shall see, plainly shows that he was seeking the salvation which involved his relation to God, or, which is the same thing, salvation from sin; for that is what Paul and Silas proclaimed unto him, and that is what he accepted and rejoiced in.

The Way of Salvation Made

Plain and Accepted

(Acts 16: 31-34)

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately. And he brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God.

Although the jailor's resolution to seek salvation was made in the midst of events which were both sudden and dramatic, it is interesting to observe that his conversion was carefully directed by the word of the Lord. This truth should help us to see the difference between the place of miracles in New Testament conversions, and that which is ordained by the word of the Lord. There were several miracles in connection with the conversion of Saul and Cornelius, but it is a recorded fact that both of these men had to hear the spoken word before they enjoyed the salvation which had

been provided for them. Instead of the Lord's telling Saul himself, when the latter asked him the question, "What shall I do, Lord?" he was told, "Arise, go into Damascus; and there it shall be *bold* thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do." (Acts 22: 10.) Cornelius was told, "Send to Joppa, and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house." (Acts 11: 13, 14.)

No one can read Paul's reply to the jailor's question in the light of the full context, and get the idea that the apostle meant to teach that salvation is by faith only. It is certain that Paul, in speaking the word of the Lord unto the jailor, explained just how a person is saved from sin. No one can believe on the Lord Jesus who does not know who he is, and what he did to bring about the salvation of the lost, as well as that which he said about the method of obtaining it. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 1-4; Mark 16: 15, 16.) The New Testament plainly teaches that salvation from sin can be found only in Christ (of. 2 Tim. 2: 10; Acts 4: 12); and when Paul preached the gospel to the Galatians, he told them that they "are all sons of God, through faith; that is, through *the* faith in the original I, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." (Gal. 3: 26, 27.) "The faith" is equivalent to the gospel. (Cf. Acts 6:7.)

In his letters to the churches, Paul frequently called attention to the fact that he always taught the same thing wherever he went (of. 1 Cor. 4: 17; 7: 17); and it is inconceivable that he taught the jailor the way of salvation, which was different from that which he taught the Galatians and others. In fact, in writing to the brethren in Galatia, Paul said, "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him who called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than

that which ye received, let him be anathema." (Gal. 1: 6-9.)

Thus, the question which the jailor asked, and the answer which Paul and Silas gave to him, present a splendid view of salvation; and we have the "word of the Lord" to tell us exactly what God's idea of the terms "saved" and "lost" are. And, too, just what it means to believe on the Lord Jesus, as well as how faith saves a person, Paul, we are sure, made clear to the jailor and his household in the sermon which he delivered to them. The preachers of the gospel did not stop, merely with telling them to "believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house"; for they spoke unto them the word of the Lord. And inasmuch as the jailor and his house are presented to the readers of the New Testament by the sacred historian as an example of how people are saved by faith, it is in order to ask, (1) How strong must faith be before it will save? and (2) What did the jailor and his house do to prove that they had faith in the Lord? The answers to these questions are found in the remainder of the text now before us.

When the jailor washed the stripes of Paul and Silas, he gave evidence of a change in his attitude toward them. He had, on the night before, thrust them into prison, with no thought for their comfort: but now, although he could not undo that which had been done to them, he could and did do something to relieve their pain. And after having done that, he was baptized, he and his house, immediately. The fact that he *took* them implies that they went to a place where sufficient water was available for the purposes stated, namely, for washing their stripes and baptism. After those things had been done, the jailor *brought* Paul and Silas up into his house, set food before them, and rejoiced with his family in their newly found salvation. The expression "having believed in God" shows that their faith was made perfect, when they demonstrated their penitent attitude toward the afflicted preachers of the gospel and had been baptized. (Cf. James 2: 14-26; Heb. 11: 7.)

It should be observed that the members of the jailor's household

did exactly that which he did, in order to be saved. They heard the word of the Lord, believed and obeyed it, and rejoiced in their salvation; all of which shows that they

were old enough to be responsible before God. The Greek word for "house" or "household" may include, not only members of one's immediate family, but servants as well.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is the Book of Acts primarily concerned with and why should it be carefully studied?

In what way is conversion related to the Lord's commission to his disciples?

What is the value of the principle of illustration with reference to conversion?

What is the basic meaning of the term "conversion"?

What two factors belong to every conversion?

What three basic changes result from conversion?

The Golden Text

Why is it often necessary for the servants of the Lord to suffer for the gospel's sake?

What was the overruling motive in Paul's labors and sufferings?

What light does the golden text throw on his devotion for the cause of Christ?

Paul and Silas Arrested and Punished

What were the events which immediately preceded this section of the lesson text?

Why did Paul object to the testimony of the maid who followed the missionaries?

What caused her masters to react so violently to Paul and Silas?

What serious mistake did the magistrates make?

Songs in the Night and a Glorious Result

How were Paul and Silas able to pray and sing under such circumstances?

How were they regarded by their fellow prisoners?

What effect is often possible by such action?

What important lesson should we learn from this?

What great miracle was performed at that time and what relation did it have to the question of conversion?

In what way did the jailor react to it?

What great blessing did Paul confer upon him?

Under what circumstances did the jailor learn the truth regarding salvation?

What salvation was he seeking? Give reasons for your answer.

The Way of Salvation Made Plain and Accepted

What was the guiding principle in the jailor's being led to accept the truth regarding his true condition?

Why is it so difficult for many people to distinguish between the miraculous and the word of the Lord?

What use was often made of the miraculous during New Testament times?

How do we know that Paul did not mean to teach that salvation is by faith only?

What is essential to one's believing on the Lord Jesus?

Where is salvation for people in this age of the world always to be found?

What New Testament evidence do we have regarding Paul's manner of teaching?

When does faith in the Lord Jesus save one? Give reasons for your answer.

What evidence did the jailor give that he did believe in the Lord?

Lesson XII—June 18, 1967

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Lesson Text

Acts 18: 23; 19: 8-10; 21: 7-16

23 And having spent some time *there*, he departed, and went through the region of Ga-la'-ti-a, and Phryg'-i-a, in order, establishing all the disciples.

8 And he entered into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading *as to* the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9 But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the

disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Ty-ran'-nus.

10 And this continued for the space of two years; so that all they that dwelt in A'-si-a heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

7 And when we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptol-e-ma'-is; and we saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8 And on the morrow we departed, and came unto Caes-a-re'-a: and entering into the house of Philip the

evangelist, who was one of the seven, we abode with him.

9 Now this man had four virgin daughters, who prophesied.

10 And as we tarried there some days, there came down from Ju-dae'-a a certain prophet, named Ag'-a-bus.

11 And coming to us, and taking Paul's girdle, he bound his own feet and hands, and said, Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Je-ru'-sa-lem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gen'-tiles.

12 And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Je-ru'-sa-lem.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men"* (Acts 20: 26.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 20: 17-27.

Daily Bible Readings

June 12. M.....	A Third Tour of Paul (Acts 18: 24-28)
June 13. T.....	Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19: 1-10)
June 14. W.....	Travels in Macedonia (Acts 20: 1-5)
June 15. T.....	Paul Preaches in Troas (Acts 20: 6-12)
June 16. F.....	Conference with the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20: 17-35)
June 17. S.....	Sad Parting (Acts 20: 36-38)
June 18. S.....	Written Exhortation to the Ephesians (Eph. 6: 10-20)

TIME.—Paul's third missionary journey began in A.D. 53.

PLACES.—Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, and from Tyre to Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Paul and those with him.

Introduction

The events between the stay of Paul and his company in Philippi and the lesson now before us should receive more than a passing notice. It is fair to assume that Paul and Silas returned to their prison cell, following the conversion of the jailor and their visit to his house. But the next morning the magistrates sent to let them go, and this was reported to the missionaries by the jailor. But Paul demanded and secured a public acknowledgement that they had been mistreated, before he would accept the offer of liberty. After leaving Philippi, their next preaching was done in Thessalonica, that is, so far as the record is concerned; but it appears that they were not permitted to remain there very long, but long enough to establish a congregation of young converts to Christ. (Read Acts 17: 1-10, and note verse 2.)

It is well to observe that Luke who joined the missionary party at Troas, and remained with them

13 Then Paul answered, What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Je-ru'-sa-lem for the name of the Lord Je'-sus.

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

15 And after these days we took up our baggage and went up to Je-ru'-sa-lem.

16 And there went with us also *certain* of the disciples from Caes-are'-a, bringing *with them* one Mna'-son of Cy'-prus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge.

while they were in Philippi, did not accompany them when they left that city. It has been thought by some that he was living in Philippi at that time, and was probably engaged in the practice of medicine there. Some years later, as Paul was closing his third missionary journey, and was on his way to Jerusalem with the money which had been collected for the poor saints in Jerusalem and adjacent territory, Luke joined him in Philippi, and remained with him, apparently, during his imprisonments in Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Rome; and it is entirely possible that he gave up his private practice of medicine at that time, and devoted himself to the aging apostle, as his private physician. (Cf. Acts 20: 6ff; Col. 4: 14.)

After Paul and Silas were compelled to leave Thessalonica because of persecution, their next stop was at Berea, where they again found people who were willing to listen to the

gospel message; but the Jews from Thessalonica were successful in arousing sufficient opposition to them, to cause the brethren to send Paul away, but Silas and Timothy were permitted to remain. Paul went on to Athens, but sent word back to his companions to come to him with all speed. A brief record of Paul's preaching in Athens is found in Acts

17. He was lonely in that great city, but he preferred that to the company of Silas and Timothy, if he could hear from his persecuted brethren by sending his helpers back to them. (See 1 Thess. 3: 1ff.) It is possible that Silas was; sent back to Berea, if indeed he left there when Timothy went on to Paul in Athens.)

Paul, after leaving Athens, went

on to Corinth, secured employment as a tentmaker, and did what he could in the way of preaching, until Silas and Timothy joined him there. (Acts 18: 5ff.) It was in Corinth that Paul wrote his first letters which have come down to us, namely First and Second Thessalonians. After a stay in Corinth of eighteen months (Acts 18: 11), Paul left that city to return to Antioch in Syria, with a brief stop in Ephesus on the way. "And having spent some time there [that is, in Antioch], he departed, and went through the region of Galatia, and Phrygia, in order, establishing all the disciples"; and thus began the apostle's third missionary journey.

The Golden Text

"Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men " The words just quoted are from Paul's address to the Ephesian elders, whom he called unto him at Miletus; so that he would not have to spend time in Ephesus, where he had lived and labored in the gospel for some three years. This was near the close of his third missionary journey, and the first part of the address is as follows:

"Ye yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, after what manner I was with you all the time, serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews; how I shrank not from declaring unto anything that was profitable, and teaching, you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I

know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God." (Acts 20: 18-27.)

The only way in which any one can be pure from the blood of all men is to do the best he can to proclaim the word of the Lord unto them; or, to state the same thing in another way, follow the example of Paul in this respect. This was the course which Ezekiel was told to follow; and it was the course which Paul urged upon Timothy. (Read Ezek. 33: 7-9; 2 Tim. 4: 1-5.) All men will face the word of the Lord in the judgment at the last day; and they will be judged accordingly. As Jesus was closing his public ministry, 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.)

The Text Explained

Paul Began His Third Missionary Journey Apparently Alone

(Acts 18: 23)

And having spent some time there, he departed, and went through the region of Galatia, and Phrygia, in order, establishing all the disciples.

When Paul began the first of his three great missionary journeys, his companion was Barnabas; and for a time it was Barnabas and Paul. But before they had finished their work in the first country to which they went, namely, Cyprus, the order was reversed; in fact, Luke refers to them as they left Paphos as Paul and his company. But regardless of the order in which the two missionaries were referred to, it is good to know that they worked together throughout the journey, and returned to their "home base," Antioch of Syria, together.

We have already observed that Paul and Barnabas were not able to agree on one of the major details when the time came for the second journey to begin; and the two men decided to go in separate directions, perhaps dividing the territory between themselves; and each one chose a new companion to go with him—Barnabas chose Mark and sailed away to Cyprus, while Paul selected Silas, and they took the route which led them through Syria and Cilicia, and on into Galatia. It does not appear probable that Silas remained with Paul throughout the time of this journey: we know that they were separated from some shorter or longer periods. (Cf. Acts 17: 14, 15; 18: 5.) We do not know how long Silas and Timothy remained with Paul in Corinth, but both men joined him in greetings to the brethren in Thessalonica, in both letters. On his way to Antioch, Paul was accompanied by Priscilla and Acquilla, as far as Ephesus; but the rest of the journey was made by Paul alone.

There is no mention of any companion who left Antioch with Paul, as he began his third journey, and it is very probable that he had none. And inasmuch as the same places were visited first, namely, the churches in Galatia and Phrygia (of. Acts 16: 1-6), it is very likely that Paul's third journey took him over

practically the same route that his second one did, that is, as far as Galatia and Phrygia. When Paul and Barnabas began their first journey, there were no churches for them to strengthen, that is, none in the territory where they went; but in both the second and third journeys, their first concern was the establishing of the churches. We ought to be able to get some valuable lessons from Paul's example in this respect. It is, of course, proper and right to establish, that is, bring churches into existence; but that is only a part of the work which the Lord authorized his disciples to do, as may be seen by reading Matthew's account of the great commission.

The Beginning of Paul's Work in Ephesus

(Acts 19: 8-10)

And he entered into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Ty-rannies. And this continued for the space of two years; so that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

When Paul left Corinth, in company with Priscilla and Aquila, on his way to Antioch from his second journey, he stopped off briefly in Ephesus, where he left his travelling companions, while he went on to Syria. Luke, in reporting this, says, "And Paul, having tarried after this | see Acts 18: 12-17) yet many days, took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila: having shorn his head in Cenchreae; for he had a vow. And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. And when they asked him to abide a longer time, he consented not; but taking his leave of them, and saying, I will return again unto you if God will, he set sail from Ephesus." (Acts 18: 18-21.)

Nothing is said in the New Testament regarding the actual founder of the church in Ephesus, but it seems reasonable to suppose that the honor actually belonged to Paul. It is quite probable that he left Priscilla and Aquila there to make what preparation they could for the work, while he hurried on to Antioch to the church from which he had been sent on his two previous journeys. The first mention of any "local" people who became members of the church were the ones whom Paul baptized, as recorded in Acts 19: 1-7. We do not know who had baptized them into John's baptism; but it is reasonable to suppose that it was Apollos. If so, then he, along with Priscilla and Aquila, had some part in establishing the church in Ephesus. The following paragraph should be read in connection with this lesson.

"Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John: and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more accurately. And when he was minded to pass over into Achaia, the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him: and when he was come, he helped them much that had believed through grace; for he powerfully confuted the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ." (Acts 18: 24-28.)

The "brethren" referred to in the passage just quoted were probably the twelve; but be that as it may, the first paragraph of chapter 19 tells of the first people who were baptized into Christ, as Paul began his third great missionary journey. Ephesus was the most important city in the Roman province of Asia, and it was, along with Syrian Antioch and Egyptian Alexandria, one of the three great cities of the eastern Mediterranean. *The New Bible Dictionary* says that "it was situated at the mouth of the Cayster River between the mountain ranges of Kores-

os and the sea. A magnificent road seventy feet wide and lined with columns ran down through the city to the fine harbour, which served both as a great export centre at the end of the Asiatic caravan-route and also as a natural landing-point from Rome. The city, now uninhabited, is still being excavated and is probably the most extensive and impressive ruin of Asia Minor."

That which has just been said should give us some idea of the great opportunity which was before Paul in Ephesus, when he reached that city on his third missionary journey; and where he remained for the next three years. (Cf. Acts 20: 31.) Although reference has already been made to the general area into which Paul had come at the time of this lesson, it might be well to take another, and a little more specific, glimpse of his new field of labor at this point in our study. The province was the western part of Asia Minor, on the Ægean and Mediterranean Seas. The term "Asia," as used in the New Testament, refers to the province known by that name, and not to Asia Minor nor to the continent of Asia. Vincent says that "Asia Minor" did not come into use until the fourth century of our era.

The International Standard Encyclopedia says that the province of Asia, as ruled by the Romans, included such older countries as Mysia, Lydia, Caria, and a part of Phrygia, as well as several independent coastal cities and islands. The province of Asia was formed by the Romans about 130 B. C., and its first capital was Pergamum; but by the time of Augustus, when it had become the richest province in the empire, the seat of government was transferred to Ephesus. All the cities of the seven churches of Rev. 2, 3 were in the province of Asia, as well as Colossae, Hierapolis (Col. 4: 13), Troas (Acts 20: 7), where churches were located. Robertson says that Ephesus was both larger and richer than Corinth (this may be disputed by some scholars), and in it was found the power of Rome, the splendor of Greek culture, and the full tide of Oriental superstition and magic. The temple of Diana (Artemis, margin) was there, as we learn from the latter part of Acts 19. This temple was one of the seven wonders of the world.

We have frequently observed in Luke's history of Christianity that Paul usually made an effort to teach the Jews first; and it is altogether probable that the synagogue into which he entered at the time of this lesson, was the same one in which he spoke when on his way from Corinth to Antioch in Syria. (See Acts 18: 19, 20.) And it should be noted that, however cordial the Jews were to begin with, they were not long in turning against Paul. (Cf. Acts 13: 14, 15, 42-46; 18: 4-6.) The preaching which the apostle was permitted to do in the synagogue, now in question, continued for the space of three months, which was perhaps the longest time he was ever permitted to teach in such a Jewish institution. The nature of Paul's preaching is described as "reasoning and persuading," that is, teaching or presenting arguments, and exhorting his hearers to accept "the things concerning the kingdom of God," which is, of course, the church.

But Paul's preaching did not always have the desired effect upon those who heard him. The record says that some of those who heard him were hardened and disobedient, which means that they became obstinate or stubborn, and would not allow themselves to be persuaded (see Thayer); or, as Robertson observes, they first refused to believe, and then refused to obey. But those Jews did not stop there: they also spoke evil of the Way, that is, of Christianity as a way of life. Their evident purpose in such speaking was to weaken Paul's influence with the people. If they could discredit that which he espoused, they would by the same token discredit him. This attitude which was displayed by the unbelieving Jews caused Paul to leave the synagogue, separate the disciples from them, and thereby draw a line between the synagogue and the church. And, having done that, he moved his teaching base into the school of Tyrannus. Nothing further is known of Tyrannus, who was probably a teacher of rhetoric or philosophy, or both; and there is also nothing said about the arrangements which opened the way for Paul's use of the school's facilities, that is, whether he rented them or was permitted to use them as an act

of kindness on the part of the school's management.

So far as the record goes, Paul actually stayed in Ephesus two years and three months (verses 8, 10); but, as has already been noted (Acts 20: 31), the apostle, when speaking to the Ephesian elders at a later date, said that his time there was three years. This either means that he followed the Jewish custom of referring to a part of a year as a whole year, or that he continued his work there for another nine months, possibly in the house of Aquila and Priscilla, or at some other place. (Cf. 1 Cor. 16: 19.) Acts 19: 21-23; 20:

1 seem to indicate that the apostle only stayed the two years and three months.

It appears that practically all of Paul's personal teaching, during his stay in Asia, was done in Ephesus; but the results of his labors became known throughout the entire province. It is very likely therefore that he was directly or indirectly responsible for the establishment of the "seven churches in Asia," along with those in other cities in the province. It seems quite certain from Col. 1: 6, 7; 4: 12, 13 that Paul worked through others, in this case Ephesus. It is also possible that Lydia (Acts 16: 14) had something to do with getting the work started in Thyatira. But whoever actually did the work in any given place, Paul seems to have been the moving influence in the endeavors. Robertson notes that forty years later, Pliny, in his famous letter to Trajan, said of Christianity, "For the contagion of this superstition has not only spread through cities, but also through villages and country places."

It was also during this stay in Ephesus that Paul, being greatly concerned regarding the church in Corinth, and in answer to some reports which had come to him, along with a letter from the church there, wrote the epistle, near the close of his three-year stay, which we know as First Corinthians. (Cf. 1 Cor. 16: 7-9.) We know from 1 Cor. 5: 9 that Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians which antedated our First Corinthians; and it is altogether probable that it also was written in Ephesus.

An Ominous Prediction As the Journey Was Ending

(Acts 21: 7-16)

And when we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais: and we saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day. And on the morrow we departed, and came unto Caesarea: and entering into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we abode with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters, who prophesied. And as we tarried there some days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus, and coming to us, and taking Paul's girdle, he bound his own feet and hands, and said, Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I

am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

The remainder of the recorded facts of Paul's third missionary journey are found in the narrative between this section of the lesson text, and the preceding one, which should be read at this time. The map should also be consulted. Paul's determination to go on to Jerusalem was based on a principle, namely, he had pledged himself to see to the collection which they were then taking to the poor saints in and around Jerusalem. (Cf. 1 Cor. 16: 1-4; Acts 24: 17-18.)

And after these days we took up our baggage and went up to Jerusalem. And there went with us also certain of the disciples from Caesarea, bringing with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge.

This is the only one of Paul's missionary journeys which did not end in Antioch.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Did you consider the events between today's lesson and the last one? Why?
Discuss these events in their chronological order.
How do we know that Luke joined the missionary party and where did it happen?
Why were the Jews so bitter against Paul and the message he proclaimed?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul speak the words of the golden text?
How alone may one be free from the blood of all men?
In what way will the word of God affect us at the last day?

Paul Began His Third Missionary Journey Apparently Alone

Review briefly the beginning of each of Paul's three missionary journeys.
Why did Paul apparently go alone on the last one?
What motive prompted each journey?

The Beginning of Paul's Work in Ephesus

Under what circumstances did Paul first go to Ephesus and why didn't he remain longer?

Who probably was the founder of the church in Ephesus?

Under what conditions were the first known people baptized into Christ?

What are some of the facts regarding Ephesus when Paul began his long ministry there?

Why did he probably choose that place as a center of his gospel work at the time of this lesson?

How long did he apparently continue his work there? Give reasons for your answer.

Where and under what circumstances did he begin his labors there?

What attitude did some of the Jews manifest toward Paul and the gospel message?

Why was it so difficult for the Jews, generally speaking, to accept the gospel of Christ?

What important event was manifested when Paul separated the disciples from the synagogue?

In what way did Luke characterize Paul's preaching and what did he mean by his statement?

What was the evident purpose of the Jews in speaking evil of the Way?

Where did he go after leaving the synagogue and for how long?

What appears to have been the extent of Paul's influence while he labored in Ephesus?

What churches did he probably have a part in establishing?

What important correspondence did Paul engage in while he was living in Ephesus?

An Ominous Prediction As the Journey
Was Ending

Briefly trace the journey of Paul between the previous section of the text and this one.

What happened in the home of Philip the evangelist?
Why did Paul insist on going to Jerusalem in the face of such grave dangers?
Under what circumstance did his third great missionary journey end?

Lesson XIII—June 25, 1967

PAUL, THE PRISONER FOR CHRIST

Lesson Text

Acts 20: 17-25; 24: 10-14; 25: 9-12

17 And from Mi-le'tus he sent to Eph'e-sus, and called to him the elders of the church.

18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them,

Ye yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in A'-si-a, after what manner I was with you all the time,

19 Serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews;

20 How I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house,

21 Testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Je'-sus Christ.

22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Je-ru'-sa-lem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

23 Save that the Holy Spirit testi-fieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

24 But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Je'-sus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more.

10 And when the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, Paul answered,

Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I cheerfully make my defence:

11 Seeing that thou canst take knowledge that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship at Je-ru'-sa-lem:

12 And neither in the temple did they find me disputing with any man or stirring up a crowd, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city.

13 Neither can they prove to thee the things whereof they now accuse me.

14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which arc written in the prophets;

9 But Fes'-tus, desiring to gain favor with the Jews, answered Paul and said, Wilt thou go up to Je-ru'-sa-lem, and there be judged of these things before me?

10 But Paul said, I am standing before Cae-sar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou also very well knowest.

11 If then I am a wrong-doer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if none of those things is true whereof these accuse me, no man can give me up unto them. I appeal unto Cae'-sar.

12 Then Fes'-tus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Thou hast appealed unto Cae'-sar: unto Cae'-sar shalt thou go.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And when we entered into Rome, Paul was suffered to abide by himself with the soldier that guarded him."* (Acts 28: 16.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Acts 28: 17-22.

Daily Bible Readings

June 19. M.....Paul Arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21: 27-40)

June 20. T.....Paul's Defense (Acts 22: 1-8, 19-25)

June 21.	W.....	Another Defense of Paul (Acts 23: 1-11)
June 22.	T.....	Paul Before Felix (Acts 24: 10-25)
June 23.	F.....	Paul Before Festus (Acts 25: 1-9)
June 24.	S.....	Paul Appeals to Caesar (Acts 25: 10-27)
June 25.	S.....	Paul Sent to Rome (Acts 27: 1-3; 28: 14-31)

TIME.—A.D. 57-59.

PLACES.—Miletus and Caesarea.

PERSONS.—Paul, the Ephesian elders, Felix, and Festus.

Introduction

Paul was on his way to Jerusalem from his third missionary journey, at the time he addressed the Ephesian elders at Miletus; and he and those with him were carrying the money which had been collected for the poor saints in and around the capital city of the Jews. Luke says that "Paul had determined to sail past Ephesus, that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost." (Acts 20: 16.) The apostle's three great missionary journeys had been completed; and, while he did not know it at the time, three imprisonments awaited him, namely, in Jerusalem, for a short time; and in Casarea and Rome, for two years in each city. He was arrested in Jerusalem, and was held in custody until his release from the Roman prison, some time after the close of the Book of Acts.

After Paul and his company reached the city of Jerusalem, they went in to see James, (The Lord's brother), who had with him at that time all the elders. (Acts 21: 17, 18.) When those brethren heard Paul's report of his ministry among the Gentiles, they recommended to him a course of action which they thought would pacify the Jewish brethren who had opposed the work among the Gentiles; but one has only to read the record in order to see that the plan did not have the desired effect. (See Acts 21: 17-26.) Thus, the attempt to placate those who were themselves in error not only did not accomplish the purpose which James and the elders had in mind; it actually became the occasion for the arrest and imprisonment of Paul. Luke's account of the situation follows:

"And when the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the multitude and

laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help; This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place; and moreover he brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath defiled this holy place. For they had before seen with him in the city Trophimus the Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple. And all the city was moved, and the people ran together; and they laid hold on Paul, and dragged him out of the temple: and straightway the doors were shut. And as they were seeking to kill him, tidings came to the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in confusion. And forthwith he took soldiers and centurions, and ran down upon them: and they, when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, left off beating Paul. Then the chief captain came near, and laid hold on him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and inquired who he was, and what he had done. And some shouted one thing, and some another, among the crowd: and when he could not know the certainty for the uproar, he commanded him to be brought into the castle. And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the crowd; for the multitude of people followed after, crying out, Away with him." (Acts 21: 27-36.)

It was around two years later when Governor Festus, who was himself trying to gain the favor of the Jews, whom he knew to be in error so far as Roman justice was concerned, got himself into the ridiculous position of having to send a prisoner to the emperor, without any specific charge against him. (See Acts 25: 27.) The Jewish brethren were passing through a period of transition at the time of this lesson, and that may account for the thinking and action of James and the eld-

ers, along with Paul who was willing to follow their suggestion; but when the time for the Jerusalem conference came, Paul flatly refused to make any kind of compromise with the brethren who were in error,

whom Paul called *false brethren*—"to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." (Head Gal. 2: 1-10.)

The Golden Text

"And when we entered into Rome, Paul was suffered to abide by himself with the soldier that guarded him." The words just quoted give us some idea of the manner in which Paul fared in his Roman prison. The closing words of the chapter from which the text is taken say, "And he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him." (Acts 28: 30, 31.) This meant, of course, that even in prison, Paul still had an opportunity of doing much to extend the borders of the kingdom. The comparative freedom which he enjoyed, even while detained by the Romans, was gratefully used by the great apostle to the Gentiles (of. Acts 24: 22, 23); and it was during his Roman imprisonment that he wrote four of the letters which have come down to us, namely, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians, probably in that order.

Inasmuch as Luke went to Jerusalem with Paul, and left Caesarea with him on the way to Rome, it is reasonable to assume that the beloved physician was near the aging apostle during the two years he was held in the Judæan city; and it was probably during that time that Luke gathered the material for his gospel record and the Book of Acts: and he very likely obtained most of the information from Paul himself. It is altogether possible, judging from the abrupt manner in which Luke closed

the Book of Acts, that he planned to write a third volume, perhaps covering the further activities of Paul; but if so, we have no information regarding such an addition to his two-volume set, already referred to. The only record we have, covering the years of Paul's work between his two Roman imprisonments, is that which is contained in the letters to Timothy and Titus.

Bible students never grow tired of reading Luke's account of Paul's entrance into Rome (See Acts 28: 11-15); and it is interesting to note that portions of the great Appian Road are still in use. Thus, if one wants to walk where Paul did, he can do so by following his footsteps there. Paul had already said to the Corinthian brethren, in one of his letters to them, that he had often been in prison; and it is a fact, worthy of emphasis, that he never complained of his lot under such circumstances. (Cf. Acts 16: 25.) This is another way of saying that he made the best use of his opportunities, wherever he was. (Cf. Phil. 4: 10-13.) But we rejoice to know that when the grand old apostle reached Rome, he was treated with the utmost leniency. He was permitted to rent a house, as already indicated, in which to dwell; and was allowed to live there at his own convenience, under the surveillance of a soldier who was responsible for his presence, when it was required. This unusual treatment of Paul may have been due, in part at least, to the centurion's good report of him. (Read Acts 27: 1-28: 10.)

The Text Explained

Paul's Attitude toward His Forthcoming Imprisonment

(Acts 20: 17-25)

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called to him the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them,

Ye yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, after

what manner I was with you all the time, serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews; how I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to

Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more.

Gospel preachers, who have spent many years in service as "local evangelists," will have no difficulty in imagining how Paul felt as he addressed his remarks to the men with whom, and among whom, he had worked in the great city of Ephesus. It would have been easy for the apostle to have stopped in that city, but he knew that, once he was on the familiar ground, and with the people in whom he had such great interest, time would slip by, and he probably would have difficulty in arranging a private meeting with the elders themselves. And so he, accordingly, deliberately sailed past Ephesus, and landed instead at Miletus, some thirty miles to the south; from which place he sent a request for the Ephesian elders to meet him there.

After reminding the brethren before him of the manner of life which he lived among them during his stay in Ephesus, Paul set before them some great thoughts, namely, (1) he had faithfully and unflinchingly declared unto them everything which could benefit them. It is sad to think of the preachers who will be held responsible in the last day for their failure to teach the whole truth to the people who were looking to them for spiritual guidance. When Paul wrote his final letter to Timothy, he said, "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.)

(2) *The blessing of uncertainty.*

Too few of us realize the significance of the thought which Paul expressed when he said, "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." If it were possible for us to be certain about the future, then there would be less urgency on our part to trust in God; or, we would no longer be able to say, "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith." (1 John 5: 4.) No one can please God who does not trust him for the future. (Cf. Heb. 11: 6.) *The Speaker's Bible*, in commenting on the idea now before us, makes this observation:

"What we ought to be asking from God if we are true followers of Christ, is, *not certainty, but certitude*. Certainty is a mood of the soul founded largely upon outward signs, or considerations of reason; but certitude is a mood of the soul which rests upon nothing less than the very nature of God—as just, as holy, as loving, as the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Certainty is a mood which is encouraged by events. Certitude is a mood which is secured and confirmed by communion with the Eternal Spirit to whom we at the beginning committed ourselves. Certainty we may never have here in this world. Certitude we may have, indeed we must and ought to have. Certainty desires to be sure of the end. Certitude is satisfied if it can be sure that the beginning was right, and if step by step we can lift up our hearts through Christ to God. This certitude is a state of the soul which we would all do well to seek."

(3) Paul's willingness to accept whatever would contribute to his faithfulness to God, and to the success of the mission which had been entrusted to him. "But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my

course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." (Cf. Phil. 3: 7-14.) Paul felt that the brethren before him would never see his face in the flesh again (of Acts 20: 37, 38); but it is possibly true that they did, as may be gathered from the epistles to Timothy and Titus.

Paul's Defense before Felix

(Acts 24: 10-14)

And when the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, Paul answered,

Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I cheerfully make my defence: seeing that thou canst take knowledge that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship at Jerusalem: and neither in the temple did they find me disputing with any man or stirring up a crowd, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city. Neither can they prove to thee the things whereof they now accuse me. But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets.

In saying that the governor beckoned unto Paul to speak, Luke was referring to the action of Felix, following the charges which were lodged against Paul by the high priest and certain elders, through their attorney Tertullus. (See Acts 24: 1-9.) These men made one general charge against Paul, namely, that of being a pestilent fellow; and under it three specific charges, as follows: (1) a mover of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world; (2) a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes; and (3) an attempt to profane the temple. Paul had no previous knowledge of the charges which the Jews planned to make against him, so far as the record goes; and he was therefore put to the necessity of replying to them without a moment's preparation, or a single witness to support his statements. But he did, of course, have the promise of the Lord (of Matt. 10: 16-20); and that was entirely sufficient.

Felix had probably been governor of Judaea for about five years, at the

time of this lesson, but Paul's statement "that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation" may imply that he had held a lesser judicial office, prior to his becoming governor. At any rate, Paul recognized his ability as a judge, and apparently went as far as he could with his complimentary remarks, as he began his defence. And as we examine Paul's remarks, it will be seen that he replied to the charges which were made against him, one by one. The apostle had passed through Caesarea on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 21: 8-16); and it was probably on the third day after reaching the city that he assumed the responsibility in connection with the vow of the four men, and purified himself in the temple (Acts 21: 17, 18, 26, 27.) Paul's part in those ceremonies was not terminated before the seventh day; and inasmuch as he had been in prison in Jerusalem and Caesarea six days (Acts 22: 30; 24: 1), there was not much time left for him to stir up an insurrection, at least in Jerusalem. This was Paul's reply, the first specific charge which had been placed against him by his accusers; and he knew that Felix could see that he was speaking the truth.

Paul then went on to show that the Jews in Jerusalem did not find him disputing with any man in the temple, or stirring up a crowd, either in the synagogues, or anywhere else in the city; and this was his answer to the general charge of being a pestilent fellow, and also a further refutation of the specific charge of being an insurrectionist, which was the only charge with reference to the Roman law. And having replied to the charges just referred to, Paul next pointed out that the charges which the Jews had made against him were nothing more than mere assertions, which would not be supported by any proof whatsoever.

The apostle's reply to the charge of being a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes was made in these words: "But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets." Thus, he made it plain to the governor that it was *they*, and not *he*, who called the religious movement, with which he

was identified, a sect. Paul's claim was that Christianity was the true fulfillment of the law and the prophets, and not merely a deviation from it. (Sec Gal. 3; Rom. 9.) The religion which Paul espoused involved no new object of worship, nor anything else that was contra to that which the Old Testament had foreshadowed (of. Rom. 10: 4), and he made it clear to Felix that he believed all things which his accusers professed to believe. Something of the impression which Paul made on the governor may be learned from the paragraph which immediately follows the apostle's full address to Felix.

Paul's Appeal to Caesar

(Acts 25: 9-12)

But Festus, desiring to gain favor with the Jews, answered Paul and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? But Paul said, I am standing before Caesar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews I have done no wrong, as thou also very well knowest. If then I am a wrong-doer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if none of those things is true whereof these accuse me, no man can give me up unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Thou hast appealed unto Caesar: unto Caesar shalt thou go.

Later on, when the governor explained Paul's case the visiting king Agrippa, he said, "And I, being perplexed how to inquire concerning these things, asked whether he would go to Jerusalem and there be judged of these matters." (Verse 20.) Thus, two different reasons were assigned for the governor's question to Paul regarding the transfer of the proceedings of his trial from Caesarea to Jerusalem, namely, (1) his desire to gain favor with the Jews, as stated by Luke; and (2) his own perplexity, as stated by himself. But there does not appear to be any contradiction; for Festus was perplexed, and he did want to conciliate the Jews. With all the facts we have regarding Festus, he seems to have been, on the whole, a prudent and an honorable man; and he might have proved a very successful ruler

under more favorable circumstances: he was simply charged with an impossible task. Conditions in Judaea had been deteriorating for some ten years, largely due to the maladministration of Felix; and it was too late for Festus to save the day. Furthermore, it was nothing but natural for him to want to pacify the Jews, when he learned of their resentment toward the conduct of Felix; but it was not right for him to do that at the expense of Paul's life.

But in all fairness to Festus, it should be noted that it is altogether possible that he did not know that the Jews were planning to kill Paul on the way from Caesarea to Jerusalem, should their request for the transfer be granted. But, in seeking to gain the favor of his unhappy subjects, Festus soon found himself involved in a characteristic web of intrigue. And too, his ignorance of both Judaism and Christianity did not help the situation; and there is no indication that he endeavored to improve himself in this respect. His ignorance, just referred to, along with his action in siding with Agrippa in ordering the Jews to tear down a wall which they had erected to obstruct the king's view into the temple from his dining-room, did not win him any favor with his subjects. (See Josephus, Ant. 20: 8, 11.) Festus died in despair, during the second year of his administration.

Paul's action in appealing to Caesar must have come as a great surprise to the governor, and it no doubt filled him with a great amount of chagrin. To have his first administrative act successfully challenged by a prisoner whom the Jews hated and were seeking to kill, would prejudice him in the eyes, not only of his unwilling subjects, but the imperial government as well. But Paul knew better than Festus what it would mean for him to go to Jerusalem under such circumstances; and Festus was aware of Paul's rights as a Roman citizen, and he, accordingly, asked him if he was willing to go to the Jewish metropolis, rather than ordering him to go. The right of appeal to the emperor was one of the most important privileges of Roman citizenship; and, as Hort notes, by the mere pronouncement of these potent words, "I appeal unto Caesar,"

Paul instantly removed his cause from the jurisdiction of the governor, before whom he stood, and transferred it to the supreme tribunal of the emperor at Home.

Festus, as already pointed out, knew the rights of a Roman citizen, and we are not therefore to understand that he conferred with the council, in order to decide whether or not to grant Paul's request. It is

possible that the governor's purpose in conferring with his advisors, was to make certain that Paul was indeed a Roman citizen; and that he had not in some way forfeited his right of appeal by some crime of the past. The apostle had some very good reasons for the action which he took; and after he was in the Roman prison, he could see the hand of God in it all. (Cf. Phil. 1: 12-14.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

How did Paul come to be in Miletus at the time he called the Ephesian elders to him?

Why didn't he visit Ephesus himself at that time?

What was one of the first things Paul did upon reaching Jerusalem?

How did the suggestion which James and the elders made to him turn out?

How long was Paul in custody in Jerusalem and Caesarea?

The Golden Text

What was the general condition of Paul's Roman imprisonment?

What use did he make of his comparative freedom and what lesson should we learn from it?

What relation did Paul and Luke probably sustain toward each other during the time of the apostle's imprisonment?

What lesson did Paul say that he learned from his various experiences?

Paul's Attitude toward His Forthcoming Imprisonment

What feelings must have characterized

Paul as he addressed the Ephesian elders?

What were some of the great thoughts to which he gave expression?

Why do so many professed Christians want to be certain of the future?

What should be their attitude, if they really want to please the Lord?

How did Paul feel about his forthcoming imprisonments?

Paul's Defense before Felix

Why did Felix beckon to Paul to speak?

What charges had the Jews made against him?

How did Paul begin his address?

Discuss each of Paul's answers to the charges which were made against him.

What was the apparent effect which he made on the governor?

Paul's Appeal to Caesar

Why did Festus want to gain favor with the Jew?

What kind of man and governor did Festus seem to be?

Why did Paul appeal to Caesar?

What effect did that probably have on the governor?

THIRD QUARTER

PERIOD OF CONQUEST—JOSHUA, JUDGES, FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

AIM.—To note the hand of God in the affairs of men in the long ago, and to learn the details of movements among the people of God which were to result in the formation of the government of the people of Israel.

Lesson I—July 2, 1967

THE DEATH OF MOSES

Lesson Text

Deut. 34: 1-12

1 And Mó'ses went up from the plains of Mó-ab unto mount Ne'bo, to the top of Pis'-gah, that is over against Jer'-i-cho. And Je-ho'-vah showed him all the land of Gil'-e-ad, unto Dan,

2 And all Naph'-ta-li, and the land of E'-phra-im and Ma-nas'-seh, and all the land of Ju'-dah, unto the hinder sea,

3 And the South, and the Plain of the valley of Jer'-i-cho the city of palm-trees, unto Zó'-ar.

4 And Je-ho'-vah said unto him, This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto I'-saac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.

5 So Mó'ses the servant of Je-ho'-vah died there in the land of Mó'-ab, according to the word of Je-ho'-vah.

6 And he buried him in the valley in the land of Mó'-ab over against Beth-pe'-or: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

7 And Mó'ses was a hundred and

twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

8 And the children of Is'-ra-el wept for Mó'ses in the plains of Mó'-ab thirty days: so the days of weeping in the mourning for Mó'ses were ended.

9 And Josh'-u-a the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Mó'ses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Is'-ra-el hearkened unto him, and did as Je-ho'-vah commanded Mó'ses.

10 And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Is'-ra-el like unto Mó'ses, whom Je-ho'-vah knew face to face,

11 In all the signs and the wonders, which Je-ho'-vah sent him to do in the land of E'-gypt, to Pha'-raoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land,

12 And in all the mighty hand, and in all the great terror, which Mó'ses wrought in the sight of all Is'-ra-el.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Precious in the sight of Jehovah is the death of his saints"*(Psalm 116: 15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Deut. 32: 48-52.

Daily Bible Readings

June 26. M.....	Moses, Israel's Deliverer (Ex. 3: 1-12)
June 27. T.....	Birth of Moses (Ex. 2: 1-10)
June 28. W.....	Moses' Flight to Midian (Ex. 2: 11-25)
June 29. T.....	Moses Before Pharaoh (Ex. 5: 1-9)
June 30. F.....	Moses Leads the People (Ex. 14: 21-31)
July 1. S.....	Song of Moses and Miriam (Ex. 15: 1-21)
July 2. S.....	Moses' Final Charge (Deut. 32: 44-47)

TIME.—1451 B.C.

PLACES.—Mount Nebo, Pisgah, and the valley of Moab.

PERSONS.¹—Jehovah, Moses, Joshua, and the people of Israel.

Introduction

Moses had led the children of Israel, through the great and terrible wilderness, for forty years, and they had never known any other leader; but the day came when he could no longer go before them: for "Moses my servant is dead." It would be useless to try to give an adequate estimation of the effect the passing of that great man had on the people who had followed him, even if that were possible: Moses was gone and could never lead them again. His fatal mistake at the waters of Meribah (Num. 20: 2-13) had led Jehovah to tell Moses that he would not be permitted to bring the children of Israel into the land which had been promised to them.

But the great leader of Israel did not allow this supreme disappointment to keep him from continuing his work on behalf of the people who had followed him so long, even though they, without him, would have the opportunity of living in the land to which he had been denied entrance. (Cf. Num. 27: 15-20.) As one reviews the history of Moses, he is impressed with the fact that his

life and character were almost solitary in their grandeur, dignity, and elevation. The extraordinary height to which he attained is described best in the words which Wordsworth used with reference to Milton:

Thy soul was like a star, and
dwelt apart.

But regardless of the greatness of Moses, his earthly life came to an end; and he could therefore lead Israel no longer.

But the work of God must go on; it is never halted by the death of any human leader, or at any rate it is not so inevitably. "Now it came to pass after the death of Moses the servant of Jehovah, that Jehovah spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I give to them, even to the children of Israel." (Josh. 1: 1, 2.) It is, of course, never easy for one to take the place of a great leader, but it can be successfully done with the help of the Lord. We shall see more about this in the next lesson.

The Golden Text

"Precious in the sight of Jehovah is the death of his saints" The passage just quoted is a part of a psalm which was devoted to thanksgiving for deliverance from death, and it is found in this context: "What shall I render unto Jehovah for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of Jehovah. I will pay my vows unto Jehovah, yea, in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of Jehovah is the death of his saints. O Jehovah, truly I am thy servant: I am thy servant, the son of thy handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of Jehovah. I will pay my vows unto Jehovah, yea, in the presence of all his people, in the courts of Jehovah's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye Jehovah." (Psalm 116: 12-19.)

Those who are familiar with the teaching of the Bible are aware of the fact that it was never God's in-

tention that man should die; but when the creature permitted the evil one to alienate him from his Creator, death became inevitable. But Jehovah was not willing to leave the man whom he had created to the inevitable; for he immediately set about to redeem him from the power of the seducer. (See Gen. 3: 15.) The struggle between right and wrong then began; but it was not until Jesus died for the sins of the world that victory was assured for those who were willing to become identified with him. The risen and glorified Christ has the keys of death and Hades (Rev. 1: 17, 18); and there is therefore nothing for the child of God to fear from that charnel house. Paul, in fact, went far enough to say, "Death is ours." (Cf. 1 Cor. 3: 21-23.)

But those who are to partake of the life of Christ must also partake of his suffering, which sometimes results in physical death; but even then they have nothing to fear, for

Jehovah places a high value on such sacrifices. This is the idea which is suggested by the term "precious." The word is rendered *rare* by Young, that is, highly valued or esteemed. (See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*.) God wants all men to be saved, and has made it possible for that to take place; but since Satan opposes every

effort which any one makes in that direction, suffering is almost certain to be the lot of the righteous (of. 2 Tim. 3: 12). But when death ends the earthly sojourn of the faithful child of God from whatever cause, the net result is a life which is of great value in the sight of the Lord; and it is for that reason that the death of his saints are precious in his sight.

The Text Explained

Jehovah's Final Words to Moses

(Deut. 34: 1-4)

And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And Jehovah showed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the hinder sea, and the South, and the Plain of the valley of Jericho the city of palm-trees, unto Zoar. And Jehovah said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.

It is obvious to any thoughtful student of the Bible that Moses himself did not write the closing chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy; but that in no way suggests that the chapter in question is not an inspired record. It may have been written by Joshua, Ezra, or some other man of the Scriptures; but there is every reason for believing that the writer was an inspired penman.

The children of Israel were encamped in the land of Moab, their last encampment before entering the land of Canaan, when Moses was told to go to the top of mount Nebo or Pisgah (both names were probably alternate terms for the same peak in the Abarim range, as may be gathered from Num. 27: 12; 33: 47, 48; Deut. 3: 27; 32: 49; 34: 1), he was to ascend the heights of no return. Although he was born in the flat lands of Egypt, he was familiar with the mountains; for much of his life had been spent among them. He had cared for the sheep of Jethro in the vicinity of Sinai; and it was from its lofty heights that he had received the law from Jehovah. His

brother Aaron had died on mount Hor, as he stood near him.

But as familiar as he was with both the plains and the mountains, he was, at the time of this lesson, ready to begin a journey which was different from any he had ever experienced before. The scene, as one endeavors to look upon it by faith, beggars description. He turned his back upon the people whom he had led for forty years for the last time, and began the lonely climb to the top of Pisgah. There is no indication that he had any regrets to cause him sorrow, but there are good reasons for thinking that he felt as Paul did, namely, that it was much better to go and be with the Lord. (Cf. Phil. 1: 21-23; 2 Tim. 4: 7, 8.)

When Moses reached the summit of mount Nebo, Jehovah showed him the land which he had promised to the people of Israel, through their fathers; and it would be difficult for one to have before him a better description of the territory which they were to inherit, than the one contained in the text now before us. Moses had spoken to the people about this land many times during the wilderness wanderings, but he had never seen the whole of it before. In speaking of this wonderful experience, William M. Taylor says, "At his feet, flowing along the edge of the plains of Moab, was the Jordan, hastening to lose itself in the waters of the Dead Sea; to the right, his eye took in the land of Gilead, until it ended far away in the north; to the left, the grassy fields of Beer-sheba shaded off into the brown barrenness of the Egyptian desert; while directly in front of him lay all the land of Judah, with the distant hills of Naphtali on the northern horizon, and the 'utmost sea' in the far west. 'From Jezreel, with its waving corn,

to Eschol, with its luxuriant vines; from Bashan, with its kine, to Carmel, with its rocks dropping honey; from Lebanon, with its rampart of snow, south again to the dim edge of the desert,' the prospect was before him. As he gazed upon it, the words fell to his ears, 'This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes;' and then, not in sternness, nor in anger, but in utmost love, like a mother lifting her boy into her arms, the Lord added, 'but thou shalt not go over thither'; and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the soul of Moses had passed within the veil, and was at home with God."

The great law-giver had heard the call of the unattainable, but that did not cause his faith to weaken, or, as has already been suggested, slacken his service with reference to the task which Jehovah has assigned to him. This unattainable goal had long been the cherished ideal of Moses, as one would gather from Heb. 11: 24-27 and other passages which contain the record of his life. He had sacrificed all that Egypt offered him, and had endured all the trials and hardships of the wilderness, in order to reach his goal; but it was denied him. And when God told him that he would never enter the land of Canaan, he passionately pled with him to revoke the decree, but the divine response was clear and decisive: "And Jehovah said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter." (Deut. 3: 26.)

But Moses, as already indicated, was not rebellious. It is true that he had sinned, but God forgave him; and was now ready to take his faithful servant to be at home with him for ever. It is a mistake to think that what happened in the case of Moses was peculiar to him. It is true that the call of the unattainable finds a picturesque embodiment in his life; but the call itself is one of the common experiences of civilized men. What life is there that does not at its close have to lay down many unfinished tasks, which have been dear to the heart? Furthermore, one does not have to wait until the end of life, in order to see the principle of the call of the unattainable at work. Many people are forced, by

the hard pressure of circumstances, into situations which are perpetual drudgery to them. For them the door of opportunity has long been closed, and they are compelled, by the unyielding demands of life into limited and greatly restricted activities. They have seen their cherished desires, but they are not permitted to reach them. The thing which counts, however, when the Lord's people are involved in such situations, is the attitude which they manifest. Can they still trust in Jehovah and do their best in his service?

The Death and Burial of Moses
(Deut. 34: 5-8)

So Moses the servant of Jehovah died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of Jehovah. And he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab over against Bethpeors: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping in the mourning for Moses were ended.

We know from the words of the golden text that the death of this law-giver and leader was precious in the eyes of Jehovah; and what was true of him can be true of any faithful child of God today. It has been appointed unto all men to die, but that does not have to mean eternal separation from the Lord. And so, in the words of William Cullen Bryant, So live that when thy summons

comes to join
The innumerable caravan that moves
To that mysterious realm, where
each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of
death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at
night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but sus-
tained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach
thy grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of
his couch
About him, and lies down to pleas-
ant dreams.

But even the dust of such a man as Moses is precious in the sight of the Lord; for the body of that hon-

ored saint was not left unburied for the vultures and beasts to prey upon, nor his bones to lie in the blazing sun while they were being bleached upon the mountain top. Not only did Jehovah bury his body in the valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-peor, but, as Thomas Fuller has quaintly said, he "buried also his grave"; for "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." And then, as Taylor adds, "What a death! What a burial! How peaceful the one, how unostentatious the other! He died 'by the word of the Lord,' or, as the word literally is, 'by the mouth of the Lord'; and we do not wonder that the Jewish Rabbis understand it to mean 'by the kiss of the Lord.' As the father kisses his boy as he lifts him to his knee, so death came to Moses as a token of his Lord's affection. And in that lonely burial, whose sublimity touches even the most cursory reader of the narrative, what a rebuke is addressed to those who seek to hide the solemnity of death beneath floral offerings and military processions, or who vainly attempt to perpetuate the memory of an uneventful life by monumental marble. In speaking of the burial of Moses, in contrast with the earthly pomp of others, the poet has said,

And had *he* not high honor?
The hill-side for his pall,
To lie in state while angels wait,
With stars for tapers tall;
And the dark rock-pines, like tossing
plumes,

Over his bier to wave;
And God's own hand, in that lonely
land,

To lay him in the grave.

Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, he was still a vigorous man when he passed from this life into the great beyond. He had lived well and demonstrated that hard work does not necessarily consume the physical man. The national period of mourning for Moses was thirty days. We do not know, of course, why Michael disputed with the devil regarding the body of Moses (Jude 9), but it has been suggested that it may have been with reference to his resurrection, so that, with Elijah, the great prophet Moses might stand in glorified humanity beside Jesus upon the Mount of Transfiguration. And if

that is true, it is interesting to observe that, not *through* the Jordan, but *over* it by way of heaven, he actually in time did pass into Canaan, and stood upon the dewy summit of mount Hermon.

The Inspired Appraisal of Moses' Life and Character

(Deut. 34: 9-12)

And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as Jehovah commanded Moses. And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom Jehovah knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders, which Jehovah sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all the mighty hand, and in all the great terror, which Moses wrought in the sight of all Israel.

The days of miracles characterized the work of the Lord at the time of this lesson, and that accounts for the miraculous endowment which was given to Joshua, by the laying on of the hands of Moses. There was much work to be done, which required the miraculous, before the children of Israel could become a settled nation in the land of promise. And too, Joshua needed wisdom from above in order to accomplish the great task of leading the people of Israel, as had been true of Moses. As we shall see in the lesson next week, Joshua needed something which would command the respect of the people, and cause them to obey him, just as in the case of Moses; and nothing could do that better, than for them to realize that the power and authority of Jehovah were with the new leader. The words of the text now before us says, "And the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as Jehovah commanded Moses."

There is a sense in which the history of God's people during the Old Testament period was the history of the prophets, who were the moving and significant agents of Jehovah; or, to say the same thing in another way, the prophets were God's spokesmen. "Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, except he reveal his secret unto his servants the

prophets. The lion hath roared; who will not fear? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken; who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3: 7, 8.) All of this adds up to the fact that the age of the prophets was the age of revelation; for it was through these men of God that he revealed his will and the plan of the ages.

The prophets of the Old Testament were men, who for clearness of insight, and purity of purpose and knowledge of God, stood above the masses of their contemporaries: and so it was of Moses, as may easily be seen by reading the inspired account of his life and works. He spoke in Jehovah's name to Pharaoh, and led the people out of Egyptian bondage at the direction of God. "Thus saith Jehovah" was an expression which was frequently on his lips. Prophetic teaching issued forth from him on numerous occasions; and Jehovah communicated with him, not merely by vision or dream, but face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend. In speaking of his relation with God and Israel, Hosea said of Moses, "And by a prophet Jehovah brought Israel up out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved." (Hos. 12: 13.)

The editor of *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, James Hastings, says of Moses, "In word and deed Moses showed himself an instrument of the Lord, unapproached by any other. He was the prophet without rival in respect of his intercourse with God and of what the Lord did and revealed by him. Of Moses it is said more frequently than of all other prophets together: 'God talked with him,' or

'God spake to him.' He is not only called 'Servant of the Lord'—and, indeed, most frequently of all the men of God in the Old Testament,—'Servant of God,' a designation used of him exclusively; but he is also called the greatest among the prophets on account of the intimacy and familiarity of the intercourse he enjoyed with God, and on account of the clear directness which in consequence distinguished the revelation given to him. Moreover, his mission consisted, not merely in being a channel of the divine word, but in a unique, creative work—it was Moses who, through the divine word, introduced the divine rule in Israel."

The Interpreter's Bible notes that the spiritual insights of Moses were more profound, and his knowledge of God far greater, than any of the prophets who came after him. The words written of him in the text now before us are a restrained and sober statement, the truth of which is more apparent to us today, as we consider the more than three thousand-year history which separates us from that man of God. Thus, the greatness of Moses lay not in his noble character and astounding human achievements; for it was he, under the direction of Jehovah, rather than Abraham or Jacob, who molded the people of Israel into a great nation. His love for them made him willing to die for their sake; and his devotion to their cause inspired them to undertake deeds which before had appeared to them as impossible. And too, Moses was the prophet nearest like Jesus. (Cf. Deut. 18: 18, 19; Acts 3: 22,23.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What peculiar relationship did Moses have with the children of Israel?
Under what circumstances did his death come?
What effect did his being told that he could not enter the land of promise have on his work?
Why did Moses appear to be a "solitary" man?
What was done to continue the leadership of Israel?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text written?
What does the Bible teach regarding the

attitude of God regarding the death of his people?
In what way should Christians feel toward death?
Why is the death of God's people precious in his sight?

Jehovah's Final Words to Moses

What is known regarding the authorship of the last chapter of Deuteronomy?
From where did Moses ascend the heights of Nebo and by what other name was that mount called?
Discuss the relationship of Moses with mountains.
What must have been the sight of Moses as he took his last earthly journey?
Discuss the view which Moses beheld after he reached the mountain's summit.
What was the attitude of that great man

of God toward the "call of the unattainable"?

What lesson should we learn from his experience in this respect?

The Death and Burial of Moses

What should be the attitude of the child of God as he goes on toward the hour of death?

How alone can one be prepared for death?

What does the Bible say regarding the death and burial of Moses?

What important lesson should we learn from these things?

How old was Moses when he died and what is said of his physical condition?

What was the feeling of Israel toward his passing?

What is said regarding a dispute over the body of Moses?

The Inspired Appraisal of Moses' Life and Character

Why was Joshua endowed with divine wisdom?

Why were miracles essential during the time of this lesson?

How did the people regard Joshua after the passing of Moses and why?

What place do the prophets have in the history of God's people?

What is the basic meaning of the term "prophet"?

Why were the prophets of Jehovah willing to speak his word even in the face of grave danger?

How does Moses rank among the prophets of the Old Testament?

What made him such a great man in this respect?

How does the divine appraisal of him appear to us?

In what respects was Jesus a prophet like Moses?

What effect should this have on us?

Lesson II—July 9, 1967

JOSHUA, MOSES' SUCCESSOR

Lesson Text

Josh. X: 1-9

1 Now it came to pass after the death of Mo'-ses the servant of Je-ho'-vah, that Je-ho'-vah spake unto Josh'-u-a the son of Nun, Mó'-ses' minister, saying,

2 Mó'-ses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Is'-ra-el.

3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, to you have I given it, as I spake unto Mó'-ses.

4 From the wilderness, and this Leb'-a-nón, even unto the great river, the river Eü-phra'-tes, all the land of the Hit'-tites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your border.

5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Mo'-ses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

6 Be strong and of good courage; for thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land which I swear unto their fathers to give them.

7 Only be strong and very courageous, to observe to do according to all the law, which Mó'-ses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest have good success whithersoever thou goest.

8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate thereon day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not affrighted, neither be thou dismayed: for Je-ho'-vah thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Only be strong and of good courage" (Josh. 1: 18.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Eph. 6: 1-10.

Daily Bible Readings

- July 3. M.....Joshua's Commission (Josh. 1: 1-9)
- July 4. T....."Be Strong and of Good Courage" (Deut. 31: 1-8)
- July 5. W.....God Appears to Moses and Joshua (Deut. 31: 14-23)
- July 6. T.....Joshua's Ancestry (1 Chron. 7: 20-27)
- July 7. F.....Joshua's Faithfulness (Num. 32: 6-12)
- July 8. S.....Joshua's Farewell Address (Josh. 23: 1-16)
- July 9. S.....Joshua's Death (Josh. 24: 29-31)

TIME.—1451 B.C.

PLACE.—The plains of Moab.

PERSONS.—Jehovah and Joshua.

Introduction

Because of his fatal mistake in failing to sanctify Jehovah in the sight of the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah, Moses was not permitted to lead them across the Jordan into the land of Canaan, as may be seen from the follow passage. "And Jehovah said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mountain of Abarim, and behold the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered; because ye rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the waters before their eyes. (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.)" (Num. 27: 12-14; of. 20: 1-13; Psalm 106: 32, 33; Deut. 32: 48-52; 34: 1-4.)

Moses, like many other great men, was born of lowly parents and in the midst of humble circumstances; but through the providence of God he reached a degree of greatness, which few men of earth have ever attained. (Cf. Deut. 34: 10-12.) The secret of his great success may be learned from the inspired record concerning him, especially Heb. 11: 24-27. But some of the most impressive words regarding him are found in the first of his farewell addresses to the people of Israel, shortly before his death. "And I besought Jehovah at that time, saying, O Lord Jehovah, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy strong hand: for what god is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy mighty acts? Let me go over, I pray thee, and see the good land that is beyond the Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But Jehovah was wroth with me for your sakes, and hearkened not unto me; and Jehovah said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter. Get thee up unto the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold with thine eyes: for thou shalt not

go over this Jordan. But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see. So we abode in the valley over against Beth-peor." (Deut. 3: 23-29.)

The decree of Jehovah just referred to made it essential that a new leader be selected to take the place of Moses. "And Moses spake unto Jehovah, saying, Let Jehovah, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, who may go out before them, and who may come in before them, and who may lead them out, and who may bring them in; that the congregation of Jehovah be not as sheep which have no shepherd. And Jehovah said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thy hand upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put of thine honor upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may obey. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah: at his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. And Moses did as Jehovah commanded him; and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: and he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as Jehovah spake by Moses." (Num. 27: 15-23.)

Joshua, the man who was selected to be the successor of Moses, had been the faithful minister to, or assistant of, the latter during practically all the time they had been in the wilderness; and the younger man had proved himself worthy of the confidence which had been placed in him, by both Jehovah and Moses, as well as the honor which was being bestowed upon him, as we shall see in the consideration of the lesson now before us.

The Golden Text

"Only be strong and of good courage." It will be both interesting and profitable for both the teacher and the students in the class to read the principal facts regarding the service which Joshua rendered as the minister of Moses; and if this is done, it will be relatively easy for one to see that Joshua was being prepared for the great responsibility which would be his when the time came for Moses to go the way of all the earth. (See, for example, Ex. 17: 8-16; 24: 13f; 32: 15-20; 33: 11; Num. 11: 26-30; 13: 1-14: 38.) Joshua, of course, did not know at the time he was ministering to Moses that he would succeed the great leader; but when the time came, he was ready for Jehovah to supply that which would be needed for the great task which lay ahead of him.

The practicability of the principle just referred to for the perpetuation of the eldership in the church today, as well as its scripturalness, is set forth in the New Testament. It is a well known fact that deacons are selected and appointed for the express purpose of serving the church; and when the need arises for additional elders, it is very probable that such deacons would be the best qualified men in the congregation for the responsibility of overseeing the flock. (See 1 Tim. 3: 1-13.) At any rate, faithful deacons do have the opportunity for preparing themselves for greater responsibilities, while performing the duties which have

been assigned to them. This is not to say that all deacons should, in time, be made elders; but it is an indisputable fact that such men, by dedicated service to the Lord and his church, can make themselves worthy of the highest order of leadership in the body of Christ.

It is also noteworthy that those who are appointed to the highest place of leadership in the cause of the Lord need strength and courage. It often happens that after their appointment, such men do not have the courage of their convictions, nor the strength necessary for vigorous and consecrated leadership. Those who must take the lead are called upon to meet the enemy on the outside, and then be prepared to deal with unrest and criticism from within. Either one of these situations requires strength and courage, if it is to be dealt with satisfactorily; but when both are present, a double amount of these ingredients is essential. It should be noted, however, that leadership in the Lord's church involves more than dealing with the opposition; those who have the oversight must be both able and ready for positive and constructive service: they must be prepared to lead those who are subject to them to their proper places. Or, to state the same thing in another way, they must be both able and ready to help people to become that which they are capable of being.

The Text Explained

The Occasion for the Change in Leadership (Josh. 1: 1, 2)

Now it came to pass after the death of Moses the servant of Jehovah, that Jehovah spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

The writer of Hebrews told his readers that there had been many priests in number, under the Jewish economy, but that they were hindered from continuing by reason of death (Heb. 7: 23); and that same principle, of course, was the occasion for

the change in leadership from Moses to Joshua. "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise," and begin where he left off! When death removes a great leader from the work which God has ordained for his people, we are often too ready to imagine that a situation has been created which cannot be adequately dealt with by another person. We forget that each age has its new demands; and that the resources for carrying on the work which the Lord authorizes are not easily exhausted. The Lord has always been able to raise up a man for any work which needs to be done. (Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 2.)

The fact is, the death of an out-

standing church leader should stimulate others to take up his work; for he best honors the dead who arises to continue his work with a strong faith that God will be with him, and a resolute heart. It is an axiomatic truth that what people do in their bereavement is not only momentous, but is an index to their character. One, for example, can sit down, and mope in ever-deepening melancholy; or he can take up his appointed work, and pursue it with the strength which God gives him. Ezekiel was confronted with such a situation, and here is the manner in which he dealt with it: "So I spake unto the people in the morning; and at evening my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded." (Ezek. 24: 18.)

God, of course, is interested in the work which he has ordained for his people to do, but he is also interested in the worker; and he always has a place of responsibility for any one who is willing to prepare himself for it. This was true in the case of Joshua, and it is also true with us today. The church is always in need of good men, and there is always a place for the man who is prepared and ready to serve. This is particularly true in the case of leadership.

But, as has already been pointed out, any successful leader in the work of the Lord must be strong and courageous. This was emphasized by Jehovah himself, as we shall see further on in this study. Joshua knew of the characteristic behavior of the people of Israel during their long journey in the wilderness; and now as God was ready to transfer the leadership from Moses to Joshua, he made it plain to the latter, repeatedly, that he needed a strong and resolute spirit to deal with those people, and conquer the land.

The Territory to Be Conquered and Possessed

(Josh. 1: 3-5)

Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, to you have I given it, as I spake unto Moses. From the wilderness, and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your border. There shall

not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

In commenting on the fact that Jehovah had given the land to his people, it should be noted that the whole land of Canaan was Israel's by deed of gift; but it still had to be claimed by them, and rescued from the people who then inhabited it. The cities belong to the Israelites, but they had to take them, and dwell in them. It should not be difficult for us to realize the significance of the issues we are now discussing; for the very same principles applies to us with reference to the spiritual things which have been vouchsafed to us. God, for example, has given unto us eternal life (of. 1 John 5: 10-13); but that life is not ours to keep for ever, until we demonstrate by a living and obedient faith, up to the moment in which we cease to be conscious, that we are worthy of a place in the home of our Father. (Cf. Rev. 3: 4.)

The boundaries of the promised land were very specific. The "wilderness" was the Arabian desert to the south; "this Lebanon" was the Lebanon mountain range to the north; the "river Euphrates" was the eastern border; While the "Mediterranean sea," toward the going down of the sun, was the western border. The Hittites apparently occupied the northern part of the territory just described; and they are mentioned probably because of their superior strength, being most likely the dominant tribe of the country. It must have been most encouraging for Joshua and the people to be assured of conquering such an enemy. It was not until the days of David and Solomon, however, that Israel actually possessed the full extent of the promised land. (Cf. 2 Sam. 8: 1-13; 1 Chron. 18: 3, 14; 1 Kings 4: 21. It is possible that Joshua (Josh. 21: 43-45; 23: 14) referred more particularly to the land of Canaan proper.

The promise which Jehovah made to Joshua at the time of this lesson was wonderful in every respect; for he was to take the lead in conquering a land with formidable enemies entrenched within it; and to undertake a task which was almost entirely new to all the people of Israel. It

should be noted, at this point, that this kind of promise does not lull a true servant of God into a lazy feeling of security, nor make him careless. On the contrary, it is the very thing which nerves him for sustained action. Joshua had the same assurance of God's presence that Moses enjoyed; and the same thing is always true of anyone who is called into the Lord's service. It is well to note that the promise which Jehovah made to Joshua is quoted in the New Testament, and is made to apply, in a wider sense, to Christian people everywhere and under all conditions. "Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear:

What shall man do unto me?" (Heb. 13: 5, 6.)

Jehovah's Charge to Joshua

(Josh. 1: 6-9)

Be strong and of good courage; for thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land which I swore unto their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, to observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest have good success whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate thereon day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not affrighted, neither be thou dismayed: for Jehovah thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

It is both interesting and profitable to observe the number of times Jehovah exhorts Joshua to be strong and of good courage. Hastings points out that this new leader had need of these traits of character, because of the nature of the work which he had before him. He was to lead the people through a series of brilliant and exciting military suc-

cesses; and then turn them to the most peaceful pursuits. He was to teach them to shed blood without pity, and harden them to the sight of destroying cities and towns; and then to enforce laws which were in many instances singularly humane. It has been said that the Romans conquered like savages, but ruled like philosophic statesmen; and it was that kind of transition which Israel had to accomplish. It was into the strong hand of Joshua that this delicate task was committed; and it was for that reason that he would need strength and courage all the days of his life.

If we are to make a practical use of the lesson now under consideration, we might inquire, What are the sources of strength and courage? In the case of Joshua, there were at least four; and it will be easy to see that the same courses are also open to us. (1) A *faithful past*. If one will take the time to read that which is said about Joshua in the books of Exodus and Numbers, he will see that this man of God was faithful in all that he was called upon to do. His service as the minister of Moses included (a) the battle with the Amalekites, Ex. 17: 8-16; (b) on mount Sinai with Moses, Ex. 24: 12, 13; 32: 15ff; (c) in the Tent of meeting, 33: 7-11; (d) in defense of Moses—this was evidently a case of mistaken judgment, which was corrected; and it is to his credit that it was not repeated, that is, so far as the record goes, Num. 11: 27-29; (e) as a spy in Canaan, Num. 13: 1-14; and (f) as Moses' successor, Num. 27: 15-23. Any man who is given a place of leadership in the church should be required to have a faithful past; for if this is not true, he will be vulnerable to the attacks which will be made upon him by those who are unfriendly to the cause Which he

(2) A *distinct call*. God, of course, does not call men directly today, as he did Joshua; but his call to his service through his word is just as real and distinct. When a man knows that God expects him to do a certain work (of. Matt. 25: 14-30), and is dedicated to him, he is invincible. This, however, does not imply that he is unconscious of his own deficiencies, insensible to the difficulties in the way, or invulnerable to

the shafts of ridicule and adverse criticism; but from all of these he looks steadily away to the declared purpose of God, and yields himself as a channel through which that purpose may operate.

(3) *The sense of God's presence.* (Head again Josh. 1: 5; Heb. 13: 5, 6; of. Matt. 28: 20; Dan. 3: 1ff; 6: 1ff.) Nothing could stand in the way of Joshua, as long as he was faithful to God (of. Josh. 7: 1ff); and the same thing will be true of those godly church leaders who put their trust in the Lord. (Cf. Phil. 4: 13.) God is as truly with his people today, as he was with Joshua when he commissioned him to lead the Israelites, following the death of Moses. (4) *The indwelling of God's word.* (Josh. 1: 7, 8; of. Col. 3: 16.) This, of course, is absolutely indispensable, and is the basis upon which the preceding sources of strength must stand. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 1-8.)

The expression "good success" should not be overlooked in this study. Do these words imply that there is a success which is not good? There is, of course, something which the world calls successful which is not good. Jesus says, "For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the Whole world, and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life." (Matt. 16: 26.) A striking illustration of this truth is found in Luke 12: 13-21. Good success therefore, as the Bible defines it, is that Which is pleasing to the Lord. (Cf. Prov. 3: 5, 6.)

The text now under consideration also mentions *prosperity*, and Jehovah gave Joshua some very definite instruction with reference to that subject, namely, an absolute reliance upon that which God has spoken: for then, said he, "Thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." The mere reading of the Scriptures is not enough; meditation is also essential. (Cf. Psalm 1: 2.) When one muses and reflects upon that which Jehovah has spoken, he not only will reach a better understanding of it, but will also be better able to retain it. The pondering of the divine message is a practice which we cannot afford to neglect. The marginal reading for "have good success" is *deal wisely*. (Cf. James 1: 5-8.)

The fact that Jehovah has spoken should be sufficient for every one, and it is for those who believe in him. No finer illustration of this can be found than that which has been recorded regarding the different attitudes Which were manifested by Joshua and Caleb, and the host of Israel, including the other ten spies, who refused to go into Canaan from Kadesh-barnea, thirty-eight years before the time of this lesson. Jehovah promised to be with them then (See Deut. 1: 19-32), but they did not believe it. (Cf. Heb. 3: 16-4: 7.) But how different it was with Joshua and Caleb! (See Num. 14: 20-25; 26: 65; 32: 11, 12.)

A look at the accomplishments of Joshua and the Israelites in Canaan will help us to get a good idea of just how successful they were. After Jehovah's charge to him, Joshua gave his charge to the people. Spies were sent to Jericho, and preparations were made to cross the Jordan. It appears that the miraculous parting of the waters of the river was twofold, namely, (1) to stamp the seal of God's approval upon Joshua, and (2) to encourage the people by assuring them that Jehovah was with them, and was fighting for them. The new leader was therefore put on a level with Moses, and the people of that generation were placed on a par with those who crossed the Red Sea after it had been divided.

Following the first encampment of Israel in the land of promise at Gilgal, the people circumsised those of their number who were born in the wilderness, and kept the passover. It was also at Gilgal that the manna ceased to be given to the people. Jericho was the first stronghold to be taken. That city was the key to the country, and its fall made a deep impression upon the inhabitants of the land. The plan of conquest included first the south part of the country, and then the northern part. In the first six years, six nations, with thirty-one kings, fell before Joshua and his conquering army, and among them the Anakim who had been such a terror to Israel, when they first spied out the country.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What was the occasion for the death of Moses?
Discuss the conditions under which Moses achieved the greatness which was his.
What plea did he make to Jehovah regarding himself?
What are the facts regarding the change in leadership at the time of this lesson?
Why was Joshua especially fitted for the task which the change brought to him?

The Golden Text

What were some of the principal services which Joshua had performed?
In what way is the principle which is seen in Joshua's case applicable to leadership today, especially in the church?
What is the principal work of deacons?
Why do leaders in the Lord's church always stand in need of strength and courage?
What two important phases of work are elders called upon to do?

The Occasion for the Change in Leadership

In what ways did Jehovah announce to Joshua the need for a change in leadership?
How do many people feel when a great leader is taken from them, especially in the church?
How should they feel about such matters? Give reasons for your answer.
What is the very best way to honor a fallen leader?
What is signified by God's interest in both the work and the worker in his kingdom?
What traits of character did Jehovah emphasize repeatedly as he communed with Joshua?

The Territory to Be Conquered and Possessed

What right did the people of Israel have in the land of Canaan?
Why is it necessary for people to have to fight for that which has been given to them?
What important lesson is there here for us?
Give the boundaries of the land which Jehovah gave to Israel.
When was all that territory actually in their possession?
Why was the promise which God made to Joshua so wonderful?
What effect should such promises have on the Lord's people?
What application did a New Testament writer make of the promise made to Joshua?

Jehovah's Charge to Joshua

How many times did God exhort Joshua to be strong and courageous at the time of this lesson?
What is the significance of the repeated exhortation?
If the question is viewed from the standpoint of practical experience, what were the sources of Joshua's strength and courage?
Why would a faithful past give him strength and courage?
In what sense does the Lord call people into his service today?
What assurance do we have that God is with us today as we serve him?
Why is it so essential to allow his word to dwell in our hearts?
What is true success and prosperity in God's sight?
How can we be certain that we are successful and prosperous in his service?
What is said regarding the success and prosperity of Joshua and the children of Israel?

Lesson III—July 16, 1967

CROSSING THE JORDAN

Lesson Text

Josh. 3: 5-17

5 And Josh'-u-a said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves; for to-morrow Je-ho'-vah will do wonders among you.

6 And Josh'-u-a spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people.

7 And Je-ho'-vah said unto Josh'-u-a, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Is'-ra-el, that they may know that, as I was with Mo'-ses, so I will be with thee.

8 And thou shalt command the

priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, ye shall stand still in the Jordan.

9 And Josh'-u-a said unto the children of Is'-ra-el, Come hither, and hear the words of Je-ho'-vah your God.

10 And Josh'-u-a said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Ca'-naan-ite, and the Hit'-tite, and the Hi'-vite, and the Per'-iz-zite, and the Gir'-ga-shite, and the Am'-or-ite, and the Jeb'-u-site.

11 Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into the Jordan.

12 Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Is'ra-el, for every tribe a man.

13 And it shall come to pass, when the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of Je-ho'-vah, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, even the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand in one heap.

14 And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over the Jordan, the priests that bare the ark of the covenant being before the people;

15 And when they that bare the

ark were come unto the Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (for the Jordan overfloweth all its banks all the time of harvest),

16 That the waters which came down from above stood, and rose up in one heap, a great way off, at Adam, the city that is beside Zar'-ethan; and those that went down toward the sea of the Ar'-a-bah, even the Salt Sea, were wholly cut off: and the people passed over right against Jer'-i-cho.

17 And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of Je-ho'-vah stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Is'-ra-el passed over on dry ground, until all the nation were passed clean over the Jordan.

Golden Text.—“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee” (Isa. 43: 2.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalm 114.

Daily Bible Readings

July 10. M.....	The Land of Canaan (Gen. 15: 18-21)
July 11. T.....	People of the Land (Deut. 7: 22-24)
July 12. W.....	Land of Opportunity (Num. 13: 25-33)
July 13. T.....	Number of People (Num. 26: 21-62)
July 14. F.....	Promise Conditional (Deut. 4: 26, 27)
July 15. S.....	Fall of Jericho (Josh. 6: 12-21)
July 16. S.....	Blessings Promised (Isa. 43: 1-7)

Time.—1451 B.C.

Place.—In and near the river Jordan.

Persons.—Jehovah, Joshua, and the people of Israel.

Introduction

If the children of Israel had been willing to enter the land of Canaan at their first opportunity, there would have been no Jordan river to cross; just as there would have been no river of death for the human race, had Adam and Eve and their descendants remained faithful to Jehovah. But in each case a barrier stood between the desired destination, when the time came to enter the promised inheritance, which had to be which had to be crossed. And so, in the providence of God, the physical river Jordan was made a type of the Jordan of death, which must be crossed by every person, with the exception of Enoch and Elijah, so far as the record goes, Who is privileged to enter the eternal city of rest. There will, of course, be people living when Jesus comes to claim his own who will not die (of. 1

Thess. 4: 13-18; 1 Cor. 15: 50-58); but there is no way for us to know who they will be.

It was approximately two years after the children of Israel left Egypt when they reached the southern border of Palestine; and it was then that Moses exhorted them to enter in and claim their possession. But they refused to do so, and asked that spies be sent in and explore the country before they went in, notwithstanding the promise which Jehovah had made to them. (Read Deut. 1: 19-46; Heb. 3: 16-4: 7.) We may, and often do, look back upon the Israelites and condemn their lack of faith, which in and of itself is good; but it might be a much more profitable exercise, so far as we are concerned, if we would ask ourselves, are we doing any better, or even as well? Life should be practi-

cal, not merely theoretical, which is to say that we should be concerned with the direction in which we are going.

One of the fundamental and remarkable facts concerning the Bible is the typical system which characterizes it. There may have been many reasons for this arrangement, but there are two which seem to be among the most important, namely,

(1) to illustrate and make plain the scheme of human redemption; and

(2) to secure future generations against the many impostures which have obscured the Lord's will, as age

after age rolled, and continues to roll, by. We may be sure therefore that any system of religion which lays claim to our faith is not of divine origin, unless it bears the stamp of God's omniscience, as seen in its typical co-relation. This principle is applicable in the lesson now before us, as has already been pointed out; and we should therefore look upon the crossing of the Jordan by the Israelites as a type of the Jordan of death which we must cross, if indeed the coming of the Lord is further delayed beyond our time. (Cf. Luke 21: 25-28.)

The Golden Text

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee" These words are taken from one of Jehovah's gracious promises to redeem Israel from their captivity. The following quotation will enable us to see something of their setting. "But now thou saith Jehovah that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am Jehovah thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." (Isa. 43: 1-3a.)

This is another example of the principle of the typology of the Bible, the deliverance of the Lord's people from their captors. And it should be observed at the very outset that the redemption, both then, and now, is based entirely upon the grace of God, which is to say that sinful man has not, in any sense, brought God under his obligation. It is only through the grace of God, rather than upon any merit of our own, that we can be redeemed from our captors. (Cf. Eph. 2: 8-10; Tit. 3: 5, 6.) It is true that we must believe that which God says, and manifest an obedient trust in his promises; but all of that begins *after* the grace of God comes into operation.

The figure of waters as a synonym for troubles and sorrow is often employed by the writers of the Bible, especially the Old Testament writers. For example, "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my

soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." (Psalm 69: 1, 2.) "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterfalls: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." (Psalm 42: 7.) It is also true that the figure is employed in a good sense, that is, in the sense of a blessing, as, for example, "In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams on the desert. And the glowing sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water." (Isa. 35: 6, 7.) But it is obvious that the words of the golden text are meant to indicate both trouble and danger. And so, in the words of the poet,

In the bitter waves of woe,
Beaten and tossed about
By the sullen winds that blow
From the desolate shores of doubt,
Where the anchors that faith has
cast
Are dragging in the gale,
I am holding, holding fast
To the things that cannot fail.

In the darkest night of the year,
When the stars have all gone out,
I know that I dare not fear,
That faith is better than doubt;
And fierce though the fiends may
fight,
And long though the angels hide,
I know that truth and right
Have the Universe on their side;
And that somewhere beyond the
stars
Is a Love that is better than Fate:
When the night unlocks her bars
I shall see him—and I will wait.

The Text Explained

Prepare for Great Things

(Josh. 3: 5, 6)

And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves; for to-morrow Jehovah will do wonders among you. And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people.

The people of Israel had left their camping place to which Moses had led them, and had reached the Jordan; "and they lodged there before they passed over." It appears that they remained there three days. "And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the midst of the camp; and they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of Jehovah your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore." (See Josh. 3: 2-4.)

The success of any great endeavor which requires divine assistance is always characterized by reverence and sanctification—reverence for God and sanctification of self. These traits of character are closely associated with each other; for it is only when one is consecrated to God can he have the proper regard for him. One, of course, can sanctify himself, only as he follows the Lord's instructions. If one will read the preceding chapter of Joshua, chapter 2, he will be able to see something of the state of mind which characterized Joshua; and that is the reason why he could be so optimistic about the whole adventure. The closing verse of that chapter says, "And they [that is the spies who had been sent to Jericho, and who had returned] said unto Joshua, Truly Jehovah hath delivered into our hands all the land; and moreover all the inhabitants of the land do melt away before us." Joshua had faith in God, and the things which were being done served only to increase and strengthen his faith.

Joshua's exhortation to the people to sanctify themselves was for the purpose of getting them ready for the wonders which they were to behold the next day. The psalmist wrote, "Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live; so will I observe thy word. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." (Psalm 119: 17, 18.) Joshua dared to be an optimist, not because he minimized the task which was before him, but because he realized the divine forces which he could call to his assistance. Or, to state the same thing in another way, he faced a crisis as all crises must be faced, and the result justified his attitude; but it was so only because he carefully prepared himself and the people according to the direction which God had given him for the accomplishment of the work which was before them.

It should also be observed that the ark of the covenant which, among other things, signified Jehovah's presence among them went before them. This ark was carried by the divinely appointed men for that service, namely, the priests of the tribe of Levi. (Cf. Deut. 31: 9; 2 Sam. 6: 1ff.) It does not matter how wise one may think he is, or how singular his motive may be, no human being has the right to expect success, if he endeavors to accomplish his work without the leadership of God in matters about which he has spoken. And so,

Take time to be holy,
Let him be thy guide;
And run not before him,
Whatever betide;
In joy or in sorrow,
Still follow thy Lord;
And, looking to Jesus,
Still trust in his word.

The God of All the Earth Can Be Trusted

(Josh. 3: 7-13)

And Jehovah said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, ye shall

stand still in the Jordan. And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of Jehovah your God. And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Hivite, and the Perizzite, and the Girgashite, and the Amorite, and the Jebusite. Behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into the Jordan. Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, for every tribe a man. And it shall come to pass, when the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of Jehovah, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, even the waters that come down from above; arid they shall stand in one heap.

The Jordan is the only large river in Palestine, and it is not large when compared with other great rivers of the world. Almost all of the river Jordan is below the level of the sea. A look at some of the peculiar physical characteristics of this river will help us to appreciate better the significance of the text now before us. The principal sources of the Jordan are three large streams, which are fed by the melting snows of mount Hermon, in the northern part of the country through which it flows. These streams all rise a few hundred feet above sea level; and after some miles of separate existence, they come together to form the Jordan which, after a short distance, empties into Lake Huleh, also identified by some as "the waters of Merom." This lake is three miles wide and four miles long, and is seven miles above the level of the Mediterranean sea, thirty miles to the west.

Leaving lake Huleh, the river, known as the upper Jordan, flows on ten and one half miles to the lake of Galilee, six hundred and eighty-two feet below sea level. Thus, in ten and one half miles, the river Jordan falls six hundred and eighty-nine feet. From the lake of Galilee, the river flows on to the Dead Sea which, in an air line, is about sixty-five miles; but the river's actual course, due to its sinuosity, is not less than two hundred miles. This

part of the river is called the lower Jordan, and its waters, when they come to rest in the Dead Sea, are twelve hundred and ninety-two feet below sea level. There are, according to Amos R. Wells, twenty-seven fierce rapids between the lake of Galilee and the Dead Sea. We shall see in the next section of the lesson text that the Jordan was overflowing its banks when the children of Israel were commanded to cross over it into the land of Canaan.

In describing the course of the Jordan from the sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, J. W. McGarvey says, "The whole of its course, from the lake of Galilee to the Dead Sea, is through a valley varying in width from four to fourteen miles, and hemmed in on either side by mountains that rise from fifteen hundred to three thousand feet, so that the valley of the Jordan is the lowest land on the surface of the globe, the Jordan is the lowest river, the Dead Sea the lowest water. . . .

"In order to understand how the river appeared when it was thus out of its banks, let me state that the valley, fourteen miles wide, lies about seventy-five feet higher than the bed of the river. As you walk across the valley toward the river, you come to a bluff, not very steep usually—in some places too steep for a horse to go down, in others a gradual slope—and you look down seventy-five feet into a river bottom, from a half to a mile wide. Now a river which falls as rapidly as the Jordan (falling nearly seven hundred feet in sixty miles), has a rapid current when it is low; but when it is so swollen that it leaves its crooked channel, and its waters rush in a direct line toward their resting place, we can see at once with what a terrific force it plunges along. And as the valley is full of small trees and underbrush, thick and rank of growth, you can see that, as the water would be tearing its way over the brush, and the tree tops, it would be a fearful sight to look at, and to think of marching across it would appear preposterous."

That which has just been said is enough to show that it required a great amount of faith on the part of Joshua and the people to undertake the crossing of that swollen stream;

but When people are willing to put their trust in God, nothing is too great for them to try. There are examples of this kind of faith all through the Bible. It is true that the Lord performed a miracle in many of these instances; but it is worthy of notice that the miracle came after faith was willing to make the effort. The case of Peter's request that he be permitted to walk upon the water, as he beheld Jesus doing, is a good illustration of the principle we are now considering. (See Matt. 14: 22-33.)

Peter and the other disciples were afraid before they recognized that it was Jesus walking upon the water; but when they heard his voice and saw that it was indeed their Master, Peter boldly made the request that he, too, be allowed to go to Jesus upon the waters. It should be kept in mind, however, that he had no desire to undertake the unusual and before that unheard of deed; but when he recognized Jesus he was not afraid to try. And it can be safely said that Jesus always inspires such faith in the hearts of those who really know and trust him. He delights in a daring and romantic faith, but not once, so far as the record goes, did he ever praise a prudent and conservative faith. (Cf. Matt. 9: 20-22; 14: 28.) The storm, gravitation, and human experience, were all against Peter; but Jesus encouraged him to take the unusual step. Instead of rejoicing at and encouraging such faith today, we are often among the critics of those who are willing to manifest great faith in the Lord. It is true that no miracle will be performed today, but God's people know that he is willing to give strength to those who trust him and follow his teaching.

Joshua, as we saw last week, was the new leader of Israel, and there was a need that he be magnified in their sight; so that they could learn to obey him as they had followed Moses. This is exactly what Jehovah told Joshua, as plainly stated in the section of the lesson text now under consideration. Three times in this brief passage Joshua referred to the greatness of Jehovah; and when people really believe that, they are willing to undertake anything which the Lord has authorized them to do. Sev-

en nations of wicked people were then occupying the land which Jehovah had promised to his people, and they were doubtless as fierce as they were thirty-eight years before; but Joshua still maintained his faith that Jehovah would drive them out. The subsequent history of the conquest justified that faith.

The Magnificent Triumph of Faith

(Josh. 3:14-17)

And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over the Jordan, the priests that bear the ark of the covenant being before the people; and when they that bear the ark were come unto the Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bear the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (for the Jordan overfloweth all its banks all the time of harvest), that the waters which came down from above stood, and rose up in one heap, a great way off, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those that went down toward the sea of the Arabah, even the Salt Sea, were wholly cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of Jehovah stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel passed over on dry ground, until all the nation were passed clean over the Jordan.

The statement "Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you" is found in the preceding section of the lesson text. This had been true since the people left the land of Egypt, except for the occasions when he withdrew his presence from them because of the sin and rebellion which characterized the older generation; but now this new generation, that is, the ones who were below twenty years of age when they left the land of bondage, and those who were born in the wilderness, were going to have the opportunity of seeing an unmistakable demonstration of the presence of Almighty God in their midst. And this was to continue throughout the conquest of Canaan, and throughout their history, that is, as long as they were faithful to Jehovah. (Cf. Josh. 7: 10-12.)

If we should put ourselves in the place of the people who crossed the Jordan, we might ask, How may we

know that Jehovah is among us? This is not a fanciful question, for it is asked, in thought or action at least, by untold numbers of professed Christians every day in our age of the world. The ark of Jehovah, which signified his presence, alone went before them, but that was sufficient; for the events of that day justified the conclusion that God indeed was among them. It appears that no enemy challenged their crossing, and that was probably due to the fact that they were busy gathering their crops, in the assurance

that no nation of people could cross the Jordan while the river was overflowing all of its banks. But man's extremity is God's opportunity, as John Hamilton (Lord Belhaven) expressed the matter; and we would be wonderfully blessed, if we would learn this lesson well for ourselves; because the identical promise has been made to all the followers of Christ throughout the entire Christian dispensation, by the Lord himself. (See Matt. 28: 20; of. Heb. 13: 5, 6.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why was it necessary for the children of Israel to cross the Jordan before entering Canaan?
What important lesson is there in this experience for us?
Of what has the river Jordan become a type?
Why is the typology of the Bible such a basic principle?

The Golden Text

What was the occasion for the words of this text?
What effect should the statement have had on the people of that day?
What meaning does the principle have for us today?
What is the basis of God's salvation in any age of the world?
What figurative use do waters have in the Scriptures, especially the Old Testament?
Show how people today may trust Jehovah for such promises?

Prepare for Great Things

Where were the people of Israel at the time of this lesson?
What kind of situation were they facing and what did the officers say about it?
What two characteristics are essential when God is leading the way and why?
In what way are these traits related to each other?
Why was Joshua optimistic about the outcome of the endeavor?
What are some of the blessings which come to people who are scripturally sanctified?

What was signified by the ark and what lesson should we learn from it?

The God of All the Earth Can Be Trusted

Discuss some of the physical characteristics of the river Jordan.
Why is it essential that these things be kept in mind, if this lesson is to be appreciated?
What impression did the overflowing Jordan probably make upon the people of Israel?
Why would it present such a fearful sight?
Why was faith on the part of the Israelites so essential at the time of this lesson?
Show that the same principle is set forth throughout the Bible.
How may we apply this principle to our own selves?
What kind of faith is the Lord always pleased with?
Why was the miracle in connection with the crossing of the Jordan so essential at that time?

The Magnificent Triumph of Faith

What was the significance of the presence of the living God among the people of Israel?
Why was this demonstration so necessary at the time of this lesson?
In what way does this principle affect us today?
What is the promise that the Lord has made to us in this respect?
Why, apparently, didn't the people in Canaan challenge Israel's crossing the Jordan?
In what sense is man's extremity God's opportunity?
Why is this lesson so important to us?
Why do so many professed children of God apparently place little stock in the Lord's promise to them?

Lesson IV—July 23, 1967

SIN OF ACHAN

Lesson Text

Josh. 6: 17-19; 7: 1, 16-21, 25, 26

17 And the city shall be devoted, even it and all that is therein, to Je-ho'-vah: only Ra'-hab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

18 But as for you, only keep yourselves from the devoted thing, lest when ye have devoted it, ye take of the devoted thing; so would ye make the camp of Is'-ra-el accursed, and trouble it.

19 But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are holy unto Je-ho'-vah: they shall come into the treasury of Je-ho'-vah.

1 But the children of Is'-ra-el committed a trespass in the devoted thing; for A'-chan, the son of Car'-mi, the son of Zab'-di, the son of Ze'-rah, of the tribe of Ju'-dah, took of the devoted thing; and the anger of Je-ho'-vah was kindled against the children of Is'-ra-el.

16 So Josh'-u-a rose up early in the morning, and brought Is'-ra-el near by their tribes; and the tribe of Ju'-dah was taken:

17 And he brought near the family of Ju'-dah; and he took the family of the Ze'-rah-ites: and he brought near the family of the Ze'-rah-ites man by man; and Zab'-di was taken:

18 And he brought near his house-

hold man by man; and A'-chan, the son of Car'-mi, the son of Zab'-di, the son of Ze'-rah, of the tribe of Ju'-dah, was taken.

19 And Josh'-u-a said unto A'-chan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.

20 And A'-chan answered Josh'-u-a, and said, Of a truth I have sinned against Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, and thus and thus have I done:

21 When I saw among the spoil a goodly Bab-y-lo'-nish mantle, and two hundred shek'-els of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shek'-els weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.

25 And Josh'-u-a said, Why hast thou troubled us? Je-ho'-vah shall trouble thee this day. And all Is'-ra-el stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire, and stoned them with stones.

26 And they raised over him a great heap of stones, unto this day; and Je-ho'-vah turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of A'-chor, unto this day.

Golden Text.—*And be sure your sin will find you out.*¹ (Num. 32: 23.)
Devotional Reading.—Josh. 7: 1-5.

Daily Bible Readings

July 17. M.....	Sun Stands Still (Josh. 10: 12-20)
July 18. T.....	Conquest of the Kings (Josh. 10: 28-33)
July 19. W.....	Successful Efforts (Josh. 11: 6-30)
July 20. T.....	Ai Attacked (Josh. 7: 1-3)
July 21. F.....	Defeat at Ai (Josh. 7: 4-9)
July 22. S.....	Sin in the Camp (Josh. 7: 16-20)
July 23. S.....	Achan Destroyed (Josh. 7: 22-26)†

TIME.—1451 B.C.

PLACE.—Jericho.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Joshua, Achan, and the people of Israel.

Introduction

Since the fall of Satan, sometime before the creation of Adam and

Eve, to express the matter after the manner of men, he has been the

archenemy of that that is good; and anytime Jehovah did a good deed and authorized a good work, the devil was there to oppose it. This is the prime reason which is given in the Scriptures for the Lord's people to keep as far away from the evil one as it is possible for them to do so. He is the enemy of all truth, and does not let any opportunity get away from him to beguile any of the Lord's people away from truth and righteousness. Satan therefore is not only the enemy of God, but also of every child of God; and he will do anything within his power to keep people from yielding themselves to the Lord.

The devil began his nefarious work, so far as the human race is concerned, when he inspired the serpent to beguile Eve in the garden of Eden; and if one will carefully observe the inspired record, he will see that he always began his iniquitous work near the beginning of any thing which Jehovah authorized his people to do. And so, we have an impressive record of first sins, both in the Old and New Testaments. Thus, the first sin which was committed in the world by a human being, was Eve's transgression (Gen.

3: 6); the first sin which was committed, so far as the record goes, after men began to worship at the altar, was Cain's (Gen. 4: 1-15); the first sin which was committed under

the law of Moses, was the one by Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10: 1-7); the first sin which was committed by the children of Israel, after they reached the land of Canaan, was the one which we are to study today (Josh., chapters 6, 7); the first sin which was committed by members of the church of the New Testament, was the one of which Ananias and Sapphira were guilty (Acts 5: 1-11).

And if one will take the time to read all the scriptures just cited, he will easily see that in every instance, beginning with Jehovah ordained for his people (of. Heb. 11: 4), the sin in question had to do with respect to an offering, or with something which should have been dedicated to the Lord in his own way. And what was true in the cases referred to is still true, in principle, today; and teaching and warnings are given regarding such matters in many parts of the New Testament. While Jesus was here among men, he said, "Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." (Luke 12: 15; of. 16: 9-13.) The apostle Paul exhorts, "Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: . . . and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience." (Col. 3: 5, 6; of. 1 John 5: 21.)

The Golden Text

"And be sure your sin will find you out" The words just quoted were spoken to the two and one half tribes of the children of Israel who asked for and received permission to settle in the land of Gilead, on the east side of the river Jordan. Their request was granted on condition that they would cross over the Jordan and help with the conquest; and then they could return to their families and their own possessions. And so Moses said to them, "But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against Jehovah; and be sure your sin will find you out." (Read Num. 32.)

Although the words of the golden text were introduced on a particular occasion, and with a limited meaning, it remains true that they express a general truth which is al-

ways applicable in the lives of the Lord's people in any age of the world, namely, our sins will not be done with us, when we are done with them. This is a very serious matter, and it should challenge the attention of every one whose attention is called to it. In considering the detection of sin, we should remember that every sin brings its punishment. This is a principle of the divine economy, and it is inflexible. (Cf. Heb. 2: 1-3; Gal. 6: 7, 8.) The text does not say *when* our sins will find us out; but it does say that, whether soon or late, detection is certain. Again, this does not mean that all the sins which one commits will be found out by men; but that the sinner himself will be found out.

A hypocrite, for example, may conduct himself in such a way as to

hide his hypocrisy completely; but as certain as the Bible is true his sin is always on his trail. In the words of J. H. Newman, A man goes on, for years, perhaps, and no one ever discovers his particular failings, nor does he know them himself; till at length he is brought into certain circumstances which bring them out. Hence, men turn out so very differently from What was expected; and we are seldom able to tell beforehand of another, and scarcely

ever dare we promise for ourselves, as regards the future. The proverb, for instance, says: Power tries a man; so do riches, so do various changes of life. We find that, after all, we do not know him, though we have been acquainted with him for years. We are disappointed, nay, sometimes startled, as if he had almost lost his identity; whereas, perchance, it is but the coming to light of sins committed long before we knew him.

The Text Explained

A Devoted City

(Josh. 6: 17-19)

And the city shall be devoted, even it and all that is therein, to Jehovah: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. But as far you, only keep yourselves from the devoted thing, lest when ye have devoted it, ye take of the devoted thing; so would ye make the camp of Israel accursed, and trouble it. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are holy unto Jehovah: they shall come into the treasury of Jehovah.

In saying that "the city shall be devoted," the idea is that it would be destroyed. Instead of the term "devoted," the King James Version has "accursed." The Hebrew word is *cherem*, while its Greek counterpart is *anathema*. (See the Septuagint Version; of. Gal. 1: 8, 9, where the term is transliterated.) The idea that a devoted object was destined for destruction is fully confirmed in verse 21: "And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, both young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword." (Cf. Lev. 27: 28, 29; Deut. 20: 16-18.)

The term "devoted" is also used in a good sense in the Bible. (See Lev. 27: 16-21, 28.) Thus, when anything was or is devoted to Jehovah in a good sense, the practical meaning is that it was or is consecrated to him for a worthy purpose. It is easy to see from that which has just been said that anything can be devoted to God for a sacred use, or for total destruction. Following the destruction of Jericho, Joshua, speaking for the Lord, pronounced a curse upon

the man who should rebuild the city. "And Joshua charged them with an oath at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before Jehovah, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: with the loss of his first-born shall he lay the foundation thereof, and with the loss of his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it." (Josh. 6: 26.)

It appears from the curse just referred to that it was the will of Jehovah that the city remain in perpetual desolation, as a memorial to his abhorrence of idolatry and its attendant vices; but it also seems that he left man to exercise the freedom of his own will regarding the matter, but not before a grim warning regarding the consequences of overriding his will. The city was rebuilt some five hundred and fifty years later; and the following statement shows how minutely Joshua's prophecy was fulfilled. "In his days [that is, in the days of Ahab, king of Israel] did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof with the loss of Abiram his first born, and set up the gates thereof with the loss of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of Jehovah, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun." (1 Kings 16: 34.)

The only people of Jericho who were allowed to live were Rahab the harlot, and those of her family. This was due to the kindness which she showed to the two spies whom Joshua had sent to "view the land, and Jericho." (Read Josh. 2: 1-24; 6: 22-25; of. Heb. 11: 31; James 2: 25.) Rahab was called a "harlot," but Bible students are not agreed as to the precise connotation. Josephus (Ant. 5: 1, 2) refers to her as an innkeeper, and from that some have in-

ferred that that was the meaning of "harlot," but she could have been a harlot who operated or ran an inn. It appears that the weight of authority supports the view that she was a lewd woman. It is possible that this same Rahab is referred to in Matt. 1: 5; and if so, she was the mother of Boaz who, in turn, was the husband of Ruth—Rahab and Ruth being two of the four Gentile women who are listed in the genealogy of Jesus.

The children of Israel were solemnly warned regarding the devoted things of Jericho, and it is interesting to note the play on the words "devoted" and "accursed." Both words are from the same Hebrew original, and the marginal reading for the latter, in the passage now under consideration, is *devoted*. We learn from other scriptures that the people of Israel were sometimes allowed to take the spoil of the cities they captured or destroyed for themselves (of. Josh. 8: 2; Deut. 20: 10-14); but for some reason Jericho was made an exception to that rule. Joshua warned the people that if they violated the Lord's command with reference to Jericho, that they would not only trouble the camp of Israel, but would also cause it to be devoted to destruction. (Cf. Deut. 13: 12-18.) It is also interesting to observe that under these solemn circumstances, Jehovah told the people, through Joshua, the exact items which were to go into the treasury of the Lord.

The Far-Reaching Influence of Sin (Josh. 7: 1)

But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the devoted thing; for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the devoted thing; and the anger of Jehovah was kindled against the children of Israel.

As the record now stands, it appears that only Achan, and perhaps his family, knew of the crime which he had committed; and yet the whole nation was held responsible for his deed. This principle is emphasized and illustrated over and over again throughout the Bible. Every one who is familiar with the Scriptures is aware of Cain's question, "Am I my brother's keeper,"

and the Lord's reply to him. (Read Gen. 4: 1-15.) Paul tells us that none dieth to himself" (see Rom. 14: 7); and Jesus makes it perfectly plain in the letters to the seven churches in Asia (Rev., chapters 2, 3) that responsibility for the welfare of others cannot be ignored. When the writer of Hebrews neared the close of that document, he exhorted, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you." (Heb. 13: 17.)

In answer to the question, "Where is thy brother?" James Hastings asks, Where is he morally and spiritually, so far as the influence, however slight it may have been, which I have exercised over him goes? To have laughed at the evil or profane joke; to have spoken the thoughtless, the foolish, the angry word; to have exhibited irritability or impatience—to say nothing of far more grievous stumbling blocks than these—must have had some influence over others. Who is there that has not, at some time or other, said and done something the effect of which was evil on some one else?—something which tended to deface in the soul of another the image of God; something which tended to lead the soul into temptation, if not into sin. What marvelous opportunities have been afforded us in life of helping others to resist temptation, and to stand firm! How have these opportunities been used? Have we used them at all? "Where is thy brother?" This question is a very searching one.

It can easily be seen from that which has already been said that sin works both ways, that is, the so called innocent are responsible for the offender's act; and the offender is responsible for bringing sin into the lives of others. If people, generally speaking, were truly conscious of these truths they would have a deeper interest in each other's welfare. They would not simply look at the sinner with an indifferent pity, but would realize that they, too, have a responsibility in seeing to it that the offense is properly atoned for. And this kind of attitude will, in turn, cause people to do what they can to prevent sin from becoming a

reality in the first place. The following story from R. W. Dale forcefully illustrates this truth.

"I remember, too, another young woman who came to me in great trouble, and told me that her father was drunk two or three times a week, that he insisted on having a large part of her earnings to spend it on drink, and that when he came home at night with drink in him he often beat her; life was becoming intolerable to her. She wanted to know whether it would be right for her to leave him. Her mother was dead; her father, if she left him, would be alone; was it her duty to stay? I told her that in my judgment his treatment of her had released her from the obligation, but I asked her whether it would be possible for her to be happy at night if she went elsewhere, whether she would not be always thinking that in his drunken fits her father might come to harm, and whether she could not regard the care of this unhappy man, with all the suffering and misery it brought upon her, as the special service to which Christ had appointed her. She looked up, hesitated for a moment, and then said, I will. I do not think she would have made a good model for an artist painting a saint. She did not live in a picturesque convent, but in a back court in Birmingham [England]. Her dress was not picturesque, but the somewhat unlovely dress of a poor working girl. Yet that seems to me to be the true imitation of Christ. Let me finish the story. She came to me three months later, and told me, with the light of joy on her face, that her father had never come home drunk since that night she had resolved to care for him for Christ's sake."

It might be added just here that the story just related also illustrates another great Bible principle, namely, that of cross-bearing; or, which is the same thing, making a sacrifice or suffering for Christ's sake, for the good of some one else. Cross-bearing is not compulsory on the part of the one so suffering, for he can refuse to touch it, so to speak; but it is something which Christ teaches him to do, and he cannot please him while refusing to act. (Cf. Luke 9: 23.)

Sin Discovered and Punished

(Josh. 7: 16-21, 25, 26)

So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel near by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken: and he brought near the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zerahites: and he brought near the family of the Zerahites man by man; and Zabdi was taken: and he brought near his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to Jehovah, the God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Of a truth I have sinned against Jehovah, the God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: when I saw among the spoil a goodly Babylonish mantle, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.

The first fifteen verses of the seventh chapter of Joshua should be read before attempting to deal with the section of the lesson text just quoted. After the destruction of Jericho, the people of Israel appeared to be greatly encouraged, and were ready to go on with the conquest, as their commander directed them. Ai, a name which cannot be pronounced without spelling it, and which cannot be spelled without pronouncing it, was the next city to be taken; and was only a short distance northwest of Jericho. Inasmuch as Ai was a fairly small place, the men of Israel felt that a relatively small force would be sufficient to take it. This estimate was based on the report of the spies who were sent to check on the situation; and it was decided that two or three thousand men would¹ be able to do the job.

Three thousand men were sent, but they fled from before the men of Ai, and lost about thirty-six men. This signal defeat brought consternation into the camp of Israel; "and the hearts of the people melted, and became as water." Joshua, along with the elders, fell upon his face

before the ark of Jehovah, until the evening; and they all covered their heads with dust to indicate their great humiliation. While in this state of dismay, Joshua prayed to Jehovah and uttered these words: "Alas, O Lord Jehovah, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over the Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to cause us to perish? would that we had been content and dwelt beyond the Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say, after that Israel hath turned their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and will compass us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do for thy great name? (See Josh. 7: 6-9.)

That indeed was a model prayer, and Jehovah responded to it by revealing the fact that Israel had sinned; and that they could no longer stand before their enemies. He further told Joshua that he would no longer be with them, unless the wrong was properly dealt with. There are many congregations among the Lord's people today which are similarly affected. Zeal and power have been lost, and they seem wholly unable to resist the onslaughts of the evil one; all because sin is in the camp, and they have not done anything about it. (Cf. Rev. 2: 1-7; 3: 1-6.) Jehovah told Joshua just what to do; and we have the teaching of the New Testament to guide us in dealing with such situations among us. (Cf. Rev. 2: 12-17; 3: 14-22; 1 Cor. 5: 1-13; 2 Thess. 3: 6-15.) Jehovah's regard for his name has a great appeal in prayer.

When it was discovered that Achan was the culprit, Joshua called upon him to give glory to Jehovah, and confess unto him his sin. Here is a lesson which should not be overlooked. We can give glory to God by confessing our sins, for the simple

reason that when he says that we have sinned and we confess it, we are admitting that he is right about it. The term "confess" literally means to say the same thing. For example, God says of Jesus, "This is my beloved Son," and when we confess him to be God's Son, we are saying the same thing. No man can hide his sin from God, and he will forgive sin, only as we confess it. "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." (1 John 1: 8, 9.) And too, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (1 John 1: 10.) Thus, when we refuse to confess, that is, admit or acknowledge, that we have sinned, we not only do not glorify God, but actually make him out to be a liar; for he said that we did sin. This is a most serious offense.

And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? Jehovah shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire, and stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones, unto this day; and Jehovah turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.

When Achan confessed his sin, he not only told what he had done, but also showed the development of sin and the manner in which it is committed. He saw; he coveted; he took. His was a deliberate and flagrant violation of God's specific command, and it was punishable only by death. Achan's family evidently shared his sin with him. It is far better to take steps to avert the fierce anger of God here, than hereafter. (Cf. Rev. 6: 12-17, which is a picture of the last great day.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Who is Satan and what is his attitude toward all that is good?
What are God's people told to do with reference to him?
How does Satan usually go about his work and what is known of its history?

At what point has Satan often made his attack and why is he so often successful?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Moses speak the words just quoted?
What great principle do they emphasize?
What may every sinner be certain about?
In what way is this lesson so often illustrated?

Why are we so often surprised by that which happens to others and even ourselves?

How then does sin so often find the sinner out?

A Devoted City

In what sense is the term "devoted" used in this section of the lesson text?

How does it compare with its counterpart in the New Testament?

In what other sense is the word used in the Bible? Give reasons for your answer.

What prophecy was spoken regarding the fallen Jericho?

When and under what circumstance was the city rebuilt and what principle is illustrated?

What exception was made in the destruction of the city and why?

What else is said in the Bible regarding Rahab?

What solemn warning was given to Israel regarding the destruction of all that was in Jericho?

The Far-Reaching Influence of Sin

Why was the entire nation of Israel held responsible for the sin of one man?

What important principle does that circumstance illustrate?

Cite several examples of this illustration.

In what way did the case of Cain emphasize this teaching?

Show how sin works both ways, that is, with both the sinner and those about him.

How would a full realization of this lesson affect our general attitude toward sin?

What is the essential meaning of cross-bearing?

How often have these lessons been brought to your attention?

Sin Discovered and Punished

Discuss the facts of the narrative which lead up to this section of the lesson text.

Why were the men of Israel so confident regarding the attack on Ai?

What is peculiar regarding the name "Ai"?

What effect did the defeat of Israel at Ai have upon the leaders of Israel?

Discuss Joshua's prayer at that time.

What lesson is there here for us?

How was the sinner discovered and how was he exhorted to give glory to God?

What is the basic meaning of the term "confess"?

In what way was Achan punished and what effect did that punishment have?

Lesson V—July 30, 1967

GOD'S GREAT PATIENCE WITH ISRAEL

Lesson Text

Judg. 2: 7-19

7 And the people served Je-ho'-vah all the days of Josh'-u-a, and all the days of the elders that out-lived Josh'-u-a, who had seen all the great work of Je-ho'-vah that he had wrought for Is'-ra-el.

8 And Josh'-u-a the son of Nun, the servant of Je-ho'-vah, died, being a hundred and ten years old.

9 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Tim'-nath-he'-res, in the hill-country of E'-phra-im, on the north of the mountain of Ga'-ash.

10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, that knew not Je-ho'-vah, nor yet the work which he had wrought for Is'-ra-el.

11 And the children of Is'-ra-el did that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah, and served the Ba'-al-im;

12 And they forsook Je-ho'-vah, the God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of E'-gypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the peoples that were round about

them, and bowed themselves down unto them: and they provoked Je-ho'-vah to anger.

13 And they forsook Je-ho'-vah, and served Ba'-al and the Ash'-ta-roth.

14 And the anger of Je-ho'-vah was kindled against Is'-ra-el, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that despoiled them; and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

15 Whithersoever they went out, the hand of Je-ho'-vah was against them for evil, as Je-ho'-vah had spoken, and as Je-ho'-vah had sworn unto them: and they were sore distressed.

16 And Je-ho'-vah raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those that despoiled them.

17 And yet they hearkened not unto their judges; for they played the harlot after other gods, and bowed themselves down unto them: they turned aside quickly out of the way

wherein their fathers walked, obeying the commandments of Je-ho'-vah; *but* they did not so.

18 And when Je-ho'-vah raised them up judges, then Je-ho'-vah was with the judge, and saved them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented Je-ho'-vah because of their groaning by

reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.

19 But it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they turned back, and dealt more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their doings, nor from their stubborn way.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel.”* (Judg. 2: 20.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Judg. 2: 1-6.

Daily Bible Readings

July 24. M.....	Period of the Judges (Judg. 2: 16-18; 7: 2-8)
July 25. T.....	Inhabitants of the Land (Judg. 1: 22-26)
July 26. W.....	Faithlessness of the People (Judg. 2: 6-22)
July 27. T.....	God's Plan Altered (Judg. 2: 1-5; 3: 1-6)
July 28. F.....	Warnings of Apostasy (Deut. 28: 1-14)
July 29. S.....	Goodness and Severity (Rom. 11: 22)
July 30. S.....	Consequences of Disobedience (Deut. 28: 58-68)

TIME.—1443 B.C. and the years immediately following.

PLACE.—Canaan.

PERSONS.—Jehovah and the people of Israel.

Introduction

The world in which we live is very wicked, and has been since sin entered into it; but it is also the world in which God's people live. Shortsighted people have often asked, Why doesn't God kill the devil and destroy all wickedness; but they overlook the fact that if he should do that, many potentially good people would never have the opportunity of turning to him. This truth is stated by the apostle Peter in these words, "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord 'is salvation." (2 Pet. 3: 15.) When the apostle Paul was having difficulties at the beginning of his long stay in Corinth, the Lord appeared to him in a vision and said, "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have much people in this city." (Acts 18: 9, 10.) And when that same apostle wrote his final letter to Timothy, he said this, "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." (2 Tim. 2: 10.)

The Lord's people in Corinth and the elect about whom Paul wrote were the people who were potentially his people, that is, people who would hear the gospel at a later

date, and who would render obedience to it, both in becoming Christians and in living the Christian life. This is why the Lord is longsuffering toward them, that is, patient with them. In writing to the Romans, Paul said, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom. 2: 4.) And Peter wrote, "But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3: 8, 9.)

Man was made in the image of God, and was the crowning act of his creation; and when the creature went astray, Jehovah immediately set in motion plans to rescue him from the evil one. In speaking to the serpent, God said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen. 3: 15.) The passage just quoted has been called the first gospel, or the first statement of the gospel plan of

salvation. It was based on the great love which God has for his people; and it was climaxed in that which is known as the golden text of the Bible, namely, "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; of. Rom. 5: 6-8; 2 Cor. 5: 18-21.) God is patient because he is righteous and good, and because he wills the best for any and all people who can in any way be led to him.

When people stop to think how some parents feel toward their wayward children, and how patient they are with them, it should not be difficult for them to understand something of the patience of God to-

ward his sinful people. Dwight L. Moody used to tell a beautiful story of an old mother in England, whose only daughter had gone astray and wandered down to London, and was living a life of sin and shame. After trying all other means, the mother had her picture made, and these words inscribed under it: "My child, come home." She placed several copies of this photograph and inscription in some of the haunts of vice, where the daughter saw it, and was led home by such an expression of unflinching love. Jesus Christ is the exact likeness of God, and he is ever crying to sinful mortals: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The Golden Text

"And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel." Before any one can have anything like a true idea of God—not a mere intellectual conception—he must be brought to realize the fundamental and intense antagonism to sin itself, and his infinite mercy and patience toward the sinners. In other words, God hates sin, but loves sinners and longs for their salvation. These two aspects of God's nature are not contradictory, but belong to those attributes which are referred to by the psalmist when he sang, "By terrible things thou wilt answer us in righteousness, O God of our salvation." (Psalm 65: 5.) The "terrible things" are the things which beget in people reverence and fear. In fact, the original word for "terrible" is exactly the same term from which we have "reverend" in Psalm 111: 9. The rendering of the term in Psalm 111: 9 in the *Revised Standard*, and other versions, is "Holy and *terrible* is his name!"

Anger is one of the divine attributes, and is a part of our native equipment. Jesus often manifested righteous indignation, usually spoken of as anger, and the apostle Paul exhorts that we be angry, but not to sin. His statement is, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." (Eph. 4: 26.) Wrath is involved in anger, but it must not be permitted to linger long

in the heart of a Christian; for if it does it will most likely get out of control, and lead him into sin. Luther is reported to have said that he preached well and prayed better when he was angry, but his reference, of course, was to righteous indignation.

We should never lose sight of the fact that justice and mercy are ever present with Jehovah. He longs for the salvation of every one, as we have already observed; but he will not allow sin to go unpunished. Therefore, it is to the advantage of the sinner when he is confronted with the anger of God; for he will know that he must either repent or perish. God's anger, then, is meant for our good, if we are willing to realize it; and we may be sure that his wrath will not continue for ever, if we are willing to forsake our sins. In the words of the psalmist, "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." (Psalm 130: 4.) This is another reason why God does not destroy sinful man, before he has a chance to repent. And so, Habakkuk prayed,

"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.)

The Text Explained

The Passing of an Era of Faithfulness (Judges 2: 7-10)

And the people served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of Jehovah that he had wrought for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Jehovah, died, being a hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill-country of Ephraim, on the north of the mountain of Gaash. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, that knew not Jehovah, nor yet the work which he had wrought for Israel.

The passage just quoted contains a wonderful tribute to the loyalty of Joshua to Jehovah, along with the elders who served with him. We can get some idea of the manner in which Joshua taught the people, and the support which he gave his teaching by his personal example of faithfulness and dedication to Jehovah, from the closing part of the book which bears his name. "Now therefore fear Jehovah, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt; and serve ye Jehovah. And if it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." (Josh. 24: 14, 15.)

The response of the people to Joshua's plea is found in the verses which immediately follow the passage just quoted. They pledged undivided loyalty to Jehovah, and based their determination to serve him on the facts of his goodness to them. Both Joshua and the elders who served with him were men of dedication and devotion; and it is not surprising to see the people whom they taught and led manifest a like attitude in their own lives.

This should be a great lesson to church leaders and teachers today. If they will manifest a personal loyalty

and devotion to the Lord, and will see to it that his word is faithfully taught, the results will be similar to those in the days of Joshua. Both teaching and example are essential, if the results are to be satisfactory. If either is omitted, neglect and disobedience are sure to follow. These matters cannot be too strongly impressed upon us today; and if we will keep in mind such passages as Rom. 15: 4 and 1 Cor. 10: 6, 11, it will be easy for us to see something of why we should study the Old Testament frequently.

It can be truly said that Joshua was one of the great characters of the Old Testament period; and, as someone has observed, there are few characters in Bible history which are brought before us in such detail, and about which there are so few blemishes recorded, as that of Joshua. He stands out from the pages of Holy Writ as the type of a great soldier, to whom great causes were committed, and by whom great things were done. His work was the conquest and distribution of the land which Jehovah had promised to his people; and in the performance of his duties, Joshua not only manifested the valor of a warrior, but the justice, gentleness, forbearance, humility, the disinterestedness of an exemplary ruler, leading his people to victory, and giving to each his inheritance. It was his utter indifference to all selfish considerations and to human opinion, and his complete and constant submission to the revealed will of God, that enabled him to accomplish with triumph his God-appointed task.

The People's Bible Encyclopedia notes that it is difficult to form an estimate of Joshua's character, because the man is overshadowed by the very greatness of the events in which he was placed. And yet this is not a dishonor to him, but a glory; for a lesser man would have been heard and seen more. His life, although recorded with fulness of detail, shows no stain. By faithfully serving as a youth, he was taught to command as a man. As a citizen, he was patriotic in the highest degree; as a warrior, he was both fearless and blameless, as a judge, he was calm and impartial. Joshua was

quite equal to every emergency under which he was called upon to act—valiant without temerity, active without precipitation. No care, no advantage, no duty, was neglected by him. He always looked for and obeyed divine instruction with the simplicity of a child, and wielded the great power which was given to him with calmness, unostentation, and without swerving, to the accomplishment of a high, unselfish purpose. He earned, by manly vigor, a quiet, honored old age, and retained his faith and loyalty, and exclaiming almost in his dying breath, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Pages 601, 602.)

Joshua was the same age as Joseph, his great ancestor, when they died; and their burial places were not far apart, as may be seen by consulting the map. And if we will keep the facts we have just considered in mind as we continue the study of this lesson, it will be easy for us to see why the people of Israel deserved the wrath of Jehovah. The terrible sins which characterized their lives would never have been committed, if they had continued to follow the lead of the faithful men who went before them. But when people allow themselves to forget the Lord, there is no way to estimate the lengths to which they will go in following the evil one; unless something is done to bring them back to God. It is indeed difficult to understand how normal people can forget the God who has so greatly blessed them; but that is the history of the human race. Jeremiah expressed the matter in these words: "Hath a nation changed its gods, which yet are no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith Jehovah. For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (Jer. 2: 11-13.)

The Occasion for Jehovah's Anger

(Judges 2: 11-15)

And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and served the Baalim; and they forsook Jehovah, the God of

their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the peoples that were round about them, and bowed themselves down unto them: and they provoked Jehovah to anger. And they forsook Jehovah, and served Baal and the Ashtaroth. And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of the spoilers that despoiled them; and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of Jehovah was against them for evil, as Jehovah had spoken, and as Jehovah had sworn unto them: and they were sore distressed.

The passage just quoted describes the degenerate condition of the people who forgot Jehovah, and forsook him. This has always been true of those people who refused to have God in their knowledge, as may be seen by reading the first chapter of Romans, beginning with verse 18. There is nothing truly good away from God, and it must follow, as the night the day, that evil will be the lot of those who forsake him. The "Baalim" was the plural of Baal, and the passage now before us indicates that the people served the various "Baals" which were among the different tribes of the heathen around them. It appears that Baal was the original sun god, and was known as the principal bearer of physical life, and the generating or propagating power of nature. We are, accordingly, told that every cultivated district where this god was recognized and accepted had its local Baal, who fertilized the land by his springs; and to whom, as divine landlord, tribute was due.

Frequently, throughout the history of the Israelites, the charge is made that they forsook the God who brought them up out of the land of Egypt. Egypt, as all Bible readers know, was the country where the people of the Lord suffered the most grievous oppression, and were subjected to the most degrading servitude, for many years; and were, of course, entirely unable to gain their freedom by their own efforts. But God saved them by a great deliverance; and only the most thoughtless and ungrateful could ever forget the

stupendous power, justice, and mercy, which were so signally manifested in their behalf. Furthermore, in forsaking Jehovah, the Israelites turned their backs upon the only true God, and devoted themselves to idols, which could neither see, speak, nor hear; and which could do nothing to provide for their needs.

But are many people today, even among the Lord's people, doing any better? We have been rescued from a far worse situation than that which existed in Egypt; our salvation is from sin and the power of the devil. But how often do we forsake the God of our salvation, and devote ourselves, our time, our means, and our efforts to the service of that which not only does not please God, but which will certainly bring eternal death, if it is continued! Is there any wonder that Jehovah was, and is, provoked to anger with his faithless and unappreciative people?

Just as Baal was the chief god of the Phoenicians and the Canaanites, so Ashtaroth (plural, Ashtareth) was the principal goddess of those countries. This goddess was spoken of by Jeremiah as the "queen of heaven." (See Jer. 7: 18; 44: 15-19; of. 2 Kings 17: 16.) When the people of Israel turned from Jehovah to the gods of the land, they had no one to help them, and found themselves at the mercy of their enemies. Jehovah had made this perfectly plain to them, when he warned them not to go after other gods; but then, as now, many people did not, and do not, believe that which he says.

The gods of those days have largely perished from the earth, but there are others which claim our devotion. Let us therefore ask ourselves in all seriousness, Do we really serve Jehovah, or do we flirt with and honor the gods of our day? We have seen how foolish Israel was, but are we doing any better? Some of the modern gods which oppose Jehovah, and claim our attention are (1) *One's own self*. Selfishness is one of the greatest hindrances to Christianity known to men; and its denial is the first condition of discipleship. (Cf. Matt. 16: 24.) And so, do we make an honest effort to please the Lord (of. Matt. 6: 33), or do we seek to please ourselves, when we should be thinking of him? (2) *Mammon*, Matt. 6: 24. Do we neglect the

work of the Lord for the sake of money? or, having it in our possession, do we use it in a way that will please him? (Cf. Luke 16: 1-13.) Today a man might be so low in the social scale as to make us shun him almost completely; but if he should suddenly become wealthy, we would immediately be happy to be associated with him! (Read James 2: 1-7.) It is not difficult for us to judge ourselves. (3) *Worldly pleasures*, Rom. 12: 2. The Lord's attitude toward these matters may be seen by reading such passages as 1 John 2: 15-17; James 4: 4; 1: 13-15; 1 Tim. 5: 6.

God's Love Rebuffed by Ungratefulness

(Judges 2: 16-19)

And Jehovah raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those that despoiled them. And yet they hearkened not unto their judges; for they played the harlot after other gods, and bowed themselves down unto them: they turned aside quickly out of the way wherein their fathers walked, obeying the commandments of Jehovah; but they did not so. And when Jehovah raised them up judges, then Jehovah was with the judge, and saved them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented Jehovah because of their groaning by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. But it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they turned back, and dealt more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their doings, nor from their stubborn way.

We can learn something of the feeling which God has for his people from such passages as Hos. 11: 8, 9; Isa. 63: 8, 9; Jer. 31: 3; Luke 15: 11-24. The names of many of the judges whom God raised up are listed in the inspired record, and one can easily learn about them and what they did. The next two lessons will deal with two of them.

Jehovah's people were frequently spoken of as having been espoused to him, and when they forsook him for other gods, they were guilty of spiritual adultery. The judges were God's agents or spokesmen; and when they acted as he authorized

them to act, the people were under direct obligation to obey them. This principle is just as true today, as it was then; and Christians can be just as guilty of spiritual adultery, as the people of Israel were. "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ." (2 Cor. 11: 2.) "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.)

Regardless of who may be in charge of the work of the Lord here upon the earth, Jehovah himself is always supreme; and when those who are scripturally appointed are faithful to their task, he is with them. This should be a matter of great encouragement to elders, preachers, and others who teach and

direct the work of the church, as well as a reminder of our great responsibility. In saying that God repented, we are not to understand that he repented as men repent (of

1 Sam. 15: 29); instead, he simply changed his purpose toward his people, as they changed their attitude toward him. God never ceases to love his people, as long as there is any hope for their redemption.

The judges were probably appointed for life, or at least for the duration of the time they were needed; and they were often successful in leading the people back to God. It is wonderful to have a second chance; but it is terrible for one, after he has had another chance, to turn back into sin. (Cf. 2 Pet. 2: 20-22.) It is always sad to see people who are so hardened in sin, as to make it practically impossible for them to turn back to God. (Cf. Heb. 6: 4-6.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What mistaken idea do many people have regarding God's attitude toward the wicked world?
What is his real attitude toward it?
What is meant by saying that some are potentially God's people?
When was the first statement of the gospel made?
How has God manifested his love for his people?

The Golden Text

Discuss God's attitude toward sin and the sinner.
Is it ever right for the Lord's people to be angry? Give reasons for your answer.
Discuss the place of justice and mercy in the economy of God.
In what way can God's anger be a blessing to us?
Why then doesn't he destroy wickedness?

The Passing of an Era of Faithfulness

What are some of the great things which are said about the life and character of Joshua?
In what way did he demonstrate his devotion to Jehovah?
Tell something of his success in keeping the people faithful to the Lord.
What is the value of this lesson to us?
Why is it difficult to form an accurate estimate of the life and work of Joshua?
Why were the people of this lesson so deserving of the wrath of Jehovah?

How do they compare with the people of succeeding generations?

The Occasion for Jehovah's Anger

What is said about the degenerate condition of the people of this lesson?
How do you account for their great departure for the way of the Lord?
In what way may people forsake the Lord?
Why is such a departure such a great sin?
How do you account for the Lord's people becoming idolaters?
Why is it worse for people today to forsake the Lord than it was in Israel's day?
Who were the Baalim and the Ashtaroth?
What are some of the gods which people follow today?

God's Love Rebuffed by Ungratefulness

How does the Lord feel about his people who are attached to the world?
What close relationship do they sustain toward him?
What is the meaning of spiritual adultery, and how do people become guilty of it?
Why, apparently, don't the Lord's people think more seriously about such matters?
How are the faithful leaders of the Lord's work regarded by him?
What effect should the realization of this truth have upon us today?
In what sense does Jehovah repent?
Apparently how long did the judges serve?
What do the Scriptures teach regarding those who lapse back into sin after a second chance?
Why can't some hardened sinners repent?

Lesson VI—August 6, 1967

THE ARMY OF GIDEON

Lesson Text

Judg. 7: 1-8

1 Then Jer-ub-ba'al, who is Gid'e-on, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and encamped beside the spring of Ha'rod: and the camp of Mid'i-an was on the north side of them, by the hill of Mó-reh, in the valley.

2 And Je-ho'-vah said unto Gid'e-on, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Mid'i-an-ites into their hand, lest Is'-ra-el vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

3 Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and trembling, let him return and depart from mount Gil'e-ad. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

4 And Je-ho'-vah said unto Gid'e-on, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This

shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.

5 So he brought down the people unto the water: and Je-ho'-vah said unto Gid'e-on, Every one that lappedeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappedeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that bowed down upon his knees to drink.

6 And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

7 And Je-ho'-vah said unto Gid'e-on, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Mid'i-an-ites into thy hand; and let all the people go every man unto his place.

8 So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets; and he sent all the men of Is'-ra-el every man unto his tent, but retained the three hundred men: and the camp of Mid'i-an was beneath him in the valley.

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

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Judg. 7: 9-25.

Daily Bible Readings

July 31. M.....	Hardship and Oppression (Judg. 6: 1-10)
August 1. T.....	Visit of an Angel (Judg. 6: 11-18)
August 2. W.....	Gideon Worships (Judg. 6: 19-24)
August 3. T.....	Gideon's Faithfulness (Judg. 6: 25-32)
August 4. F.....	A Sign to Gideon (Judg. 6: 36-40)
August 5. S.....	Gideon's Three Hundred (Judg. 7: 1-25)
August 6. S.....	Gideon, a Judge (Judg. 8: 22-28)

TIME.—1245 B.C.

PLACE.—The plain of Jezreel, in southern Galilee.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Gideon, and the army which was with him.

Introduction

Those who read and study the Book of Judges are impressed with the manner in which Jehovah dealt with his people, and especially the way in which he saved them from their enemies. Sometimes this was accomplished by one man, by a relatively few soldiers, or by a fairly

large army; but never with a force which equalled the strength of the enemy. The deliverance of the Lord's people from those who oppressed them was not always the end in view; on the contrary, the principal aim was to teach them to put their trust in Jehovah.

The background of our lesson for today is the same old story of Israel's disobedience. Their rebellion against Jehovah's will and way had characterized them from the time they came out of the land of Egypt; and the misery and distress which came upon them was the result of their transgressions. If the entire account of the God's deliverance of Israel by the hand of Gideon and the three hundred men who were with him is read in the light of the preceding victory through Deborah and Barak, and especially the closing verse, it will be seen that it is fair to assume that God's people enjoyed forty years of rest from their enemies, before the Midianites oppressed them. It appears that the people of Israel remained in favor of God, as long as they had a faithful leader (of. Judges 2: 7); but when they were left without such a leader,

they were soon brought under the influence of the gods of the people about them.

It is difficult to understand how the people of Israel could see a victory like the ones which were achieved by the judges whom God raised up for them, and then quickly forget God and turn away from him; but that is exactly what they did. "And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and played the harlot after the Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god. And the children of Israel remembered not Jehovah their God, who had delivered them out of the hand of all their enemies on every side; neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had showed unto Israel." (Judges 8: 33-35.)

The Golden Text

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts" The statement which serves as the golden text for today was made by the angel, as he explained the vision of the candlestick and the two olive-trees to Zechariah, which he had just showed him, and which contained a message for Zerubbabel, who rebuilt the temple after the children of Israel had returned from the Babylonian captivity. (Read Zech. 4: 1-6.) The last two verses of the passage just cited read as follows: "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."

When the people of Israel reached Jerusalem from the land of their captivity, they began their work of rebuilding the temple immediately; and soon the foundation was laid with great rejoicing, in anticipation of a speedy completion of the entire superstructure. But this joyful prospect did not continue long; for when Zerubbabel and his helpers realized the magnitude of the task which was before them, the smallness of their resources, and the greatness of the number which opposed them, they

became discouraged and ceased from their labors for a period of about sixteen years. It was at the expiration of that period of inactivity that the Lord's message through Zechariah came to Zerubbabel. And then after making it plain to Zerubbabel that the work would be accomplished, not by might, nor by power, but by God's Spirit, the prophetic message continued, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the top stone with shouting 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?" (See Zech. 4: 7-10.)

No opposition, however great, which stands before the Lord's people, who are charged with a specific duty, can stop their advance, so long as it is his will for them to move forward. This proposition was true during the time of miracles (of. the Red Sea and the river Jordan before Israel, and the mountain before Zerubbabel), and it is still true today. (Cf. Luke 17: 5, 6; Matt. 21: 21, 22; 1 John 5: 14, 15.) This is exactly what happened in the case of Gideon and the three hundred; 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. God no longer performs miracles through his people, as he did in Bible times; but he still has all the resources of nature and

providence through which he can work for his glory and the good of his people. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28, 31, 32; Matt. 28: 20.) What we need today is more faith in God, and a willingness to be directed by that which he has revealed in his word.

The Text Explained

The Encampment of the Two Annies

(Judges 7: 1)

Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and encamped beside the spring of Harod: and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

Gideon acquired the name of Jerubbaal in the following manner: After he was sure that the Lord had appeared to him, and that he was being commissioned to deliver his people from their enemies, he was told to break down his father's altar which had been erected to Baal, cut down the Asherah, take the wood therefrom, and offer his father's second bullock as a burnt-offering. "And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was broken down, and the Asherah was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die, because he hath broken down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the Asherah that was by it. And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye contend for Baal? or will ye save him? he that will contend for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: but if he be a god, let him contend for himself, because one hath broken down his altar. Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal contend against him, because he hath broken down his altar." (Read Judges 6: 25-32.)

The two opposing armies were encamped in the famous valley of Jezreel, otherwise known as the plains of Esdraelon, where some of the notable battles of Bible history were fought. (See map.) The army of the

Midianites was without number, while that of Gideon was only thirty-two thousand men. But before Gideon leads his men into battle, he must learn the lesson which is contained in the golden text for today. It has already been pointed out that Jehovah never saved his people by a human force which was greater than that of the enemy; and he saw to it that his people always understood that principle. One would hardly expect the people to think that thirty-two thousand footmen could overcome the unnumbered hosts of the opposition (of. Luke 14: 31, 32); but it has often happened that a much smaller army was successful in its conflict with a much larger force (of. the Greeks vs. the Persians), and it would be an easy matter for the Israelites to think that they, and not the Lord, had accomplished their task, especially in their deprived state.

The Reduction of Israel's Army Ordered

(Judges 7: 2, 3)

And Jehovah said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whomsoever is fearful and trembling, let him return and depart from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

The plan which was followed by Jehovah was, as *The Interpreter's Bible* notes, strength through subtraction; and it involves a principle which is emphasized throughout the entire Bible. Wendell Phillips observes that one on God's side is a majority; and when people come to realize that truth, their only concern should be to make certain that the Lord is their leader. When Jesus selected the men by whom he pro-

posed to remake the world, he did not seek out the great and wise of the earth, but the lowly and the despised; and even they were greatly limited, so to speak, for when speaking of the great role in which they were cast, Paul said, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves." (2 Cor. 4: 7.)

The practical meaning of the passage just quoted is that the gospel which was committed to the apostles was so great, as to make it evident that no human being could originate such glorious truth. (Cf. Isa. 55: 8, 9.) The power of the gospel so transcends the human agent, through whom it was made known to the peoples of the earth, as to make it certain that the preacher was but a medium through whom the divine power was working, and that he was performing duties which would be wholly impossible for him to accomplish, without aid from on high. The apostles, as the original preachers of the truth, set in motion a mighty work which, in a brief period of some thirty years, enabled the entire world at that time to hear the truth which makes men free. (Cf. Col. 1: 23.)

In speaking of the divine method of emphasizing the source of the strength which overcomes the evil one, Paul says, "For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory before God. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Cor. 1: 26-31; of. Jer. 9: 23, 24; Eph. 2: 8, 9.)

The Process of Elimination at Work

(Judges 7: 4-8)

And Jehovah said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee? This shall not go with thee; the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water: and Jehovah said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And Jehovah said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thy hand; and let all the people go every man unto his place. So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets; and he sent all the men of Israel every man unto his tent, but retained the three hundred men; and the camp of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

The fact that only thirty-two thousand men responded to the call of Gideon to go against the enemy gives us some idea of the terrible condition which characterized Israel at the time of this lesson; and the further fact that of that number twenty-two thousand, or approximately two thirds were fearful and trembling is an added indication of the low state of their moral and spiritual stamina. And if Jehovah had given people with that kind of attitude the victory by a sizable army, they would not have hesitated to claim the deliverance as a result of their own strength, even though they knew' that such was not the case. The battle, however, was the Lord's, and he, accordingly, determined the size of the army, as well as the equipment which the men would carry. This may have tried the faith of Gideon, When he beheld the host of Midian and their allies (of. Judges 7: 12; 8: 10); but if it did, he made no complaint, so far as the record goes. (Cf. Heb. 11: 32.)

Even ten thousand men were too many, and the number, as we have already seen, had to be greatly reduced; but we must not forget that the reduction was according to the Lord's will and method, rather than that of Gideon. God can discern character when man cannot; for Jehovah seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart. (See 1 Sam. 16: 7.) Spiritual traits and tendencies' which are hidden from us are clearly seen by the Lord. This should be a valuable lesson to us. If often happens that we try to prevent people who might be considered for responsible places in the work of the church from doing that which they want to do; but it is sometimes well to let them have their own way for the time being, so that their attitude and spiritual condition may be known before the appointment is made. This is especially true of prospective elders, deacons, and Bible school teachers.

The "water" to which Gideon brought the ten thousand men who remained with him, after the twenty-two thousand who were fearful and trembling went home, was apparently the "spring of Harod," probably so named because of the incident of this lesson, inasmuch as the marginal reading is trembling. (Verse 3.) It appears that the men who lapped water like a dog simply took water in one hand, held it near the mouth, and lapped it with the tongue; and it is very probable that they kept their eyes opened to whatever was around them. The other men evidently bowed down on their knees, and drank directly from the stream. George Adam Smith, in his *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, gives some idea as to why this test was imposed upon the ten thousand men in question. His words are:

"The stream, which makes it possible for the occupiers to hold also the well against an enemy on the plain, forbids them to be careless in their use of the water; for they drink in the face of that enemy, and the reeds and shrubs which mark its course afford ample cover for the hostile ambushes. Those Israelites, therefore, who bowed themselves down on their knees, drinking headlong, did not appreciate their posi-

tion or the foe; whereas those who merely crouched, lapping up the water with one hand, while they held their weapons in the other and kept their faces to the enemy, were aware of their danger, and had their hearts ready against all surprise. The test in fact was a test of attitude, which, after all, both in physical and moral warfare, has proved of greater value than strength or skill—attitude toward the foe and appreciation of his presence." (Page 397.)

In speaking of the three hundred men who lapped their water like a dog, Samuel Cox notes that they were the veterans of the little army, men who had seen war before and knew its perils, and felt how much even a moment's carelessness might cost them. And these were the men, marked out by their own wariness and self-control, by whom God meant to save Israel from their foes. Jehovah's way was wise both from the military standpoint, and from the moral point of view. God repeatedly refers to himself as a jealous God, and makes it plain that he will not share glory with any one else. Or, to state the same thing in another way, the credit for all achievements must go to him; he will not share it with any rival god or man. He wanted his people then to know that their salvation was wrought by him; and the same principle applies to us today.

Dr. Cox then goes on to say that this is the moral of Gideon's story, namely, that God wants to rule over us, only that he may save us; or, to put it in another way, God wants us to know that it is he who makes our salvation possible; and that he will go on blessing and saving us to the end. Just as the three hundred were taught the necessity of self-control and watchfulness, so we must learn that these traits of character are required at every moment, along the whole range of our habits, and through the whole course of our lives. Our counsel to you, then, is to hold yourselves well in hand. Be masters of yourselves, of all your appetites, and of all your desires. (Cf. James 1: 13-15.) Sip the water of life, like the three hundred, and do not fling yourselves on your knees to it, and drink as if your only business in life was to satisfy completely your desire for pleasure or gain. (See

Luke 12: 15-21.) And finally, learn from the three hundred to keep a high and noble aim steadfastly before you, an aim which must be pursued, if need be, at the cost of appetite and desire; and let that aim be the highest of all, namely, the love and service of God.

The real value of this lesson to us will be apparent, only if we remember that it was a victory of faith. The battle was to be won against overwhelming numbers; and the Lord needed men in whom the spirit was dominant, and who could hold the flesh in habitual and ironclad control. (Cf. Rom. 8: 5-8.) And so, as J. Baldwin Brown points out, the lessons of the narrative are these: (1) It is the little things in life which give an insight into our characters—even little things on insignificant occasions. It is easy to be caught up in the excitement of the battle; but if one watches the same person at home or in the quieter hours of his life, he will be able to see the real man. (2) There in One who is always watching us, even when we are thinking about it the least; and recording, as it were, the facts of our character, and forecasting our destiny. (3) Keep your knee for God alone. The men of the lesson bent their knees to satisfy the desire for water to quench their physical thirst; but we have the privilege of kneeling before God; and if it is properly done, it will cure us of all other kneeling to which we may be tempted.

The test to which Jehovah put the ten thousand men resulted in a further revelation of the moral and spiritual condition of the people of Israel, even among those who were not afraid to remain with Gideon. The absence of physical fear does not always mean that such a person is the kind who meets the Lord's approval. And, as is usually the case, those who do please him are in the minority. But there are also many who are afraid to be with the minority who are acceptable to the Lord; but it stands to reason that if the minority is doing God's will, there is

no need for any one to be afraid. Peloubet asks, "Do we belong to 'all the rest'?" Are we the big majority who lead easy lives, never raising our hands to lift the world's heavy burdens, or whose souls are never heavy with the sorrows of others? No one is compelled to be in either group, for he has the power to make his own choice. So, what shall it be? Are we striving to do God's will, and making every effort to see to it that we are not struck by the sniping fire of the enemy; or are we simply satisfying our own desires, while remaining totally unaware of the dangers which are about us?

When Jehovah told Gideon that he would give him the victory through the three hundred who had lapped like a dog, and would deliver the Midianites into his hand through them, that was a clear demonstration that the real victor was Jehovah, and that the salvation depended entirely upon him. Jonathan, the son of Saul, once said to his armor-bearer, "There is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few." (1 Sam. 14: 6.) God can, of course, accomplish his purpose without human aid at all, if it is his will, or with a single man, as in the case of Samson, or with many, as in the cases of some of the other judges; but whatever the situation, it is always God who makes possible the outcome of the conflict. Even in the case of human leadership, it frequently happens that more depends upon the general, than upon the size of the army. Napoleon once said, "There is a moment in every great war when the bravest troops feel inclined to run; it is the want of confidence in their own courage. The supreme art in generalship is to know when that moment will come and to provide for it. At Areola, I won the battle with twenty-five horsemen. I anticipated the moment of fright and flight, and I had twenty-five men ready of cool nerve and decision; and just at the appropriate moment I turned the twenty-five into the host, and the battle was won."

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?
Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What general impression does the Book

of Judges make on the careful student and reader?

What was God's primary purpose in saving his people from tyranny by the judges?

Why were the people subjected to despotism in the first place?
How could God's people so easily forget him?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of the golden text spoken?
Why were the words of the prophet so badly needed at that time?
Why do the people of the Lord now become discouraged so easily?
In what way has the Lord provided for their encouragement?
What great lesson should we learn from the words of Zechariah to Zerubbabel?

The Encampment of the Two Armies

In what way did Gideon come to be called Jerubbabai?
What do you think of his father's reasoning on that occasion?
In what part of the country were the two opposing armies of this lesson encamped?

The Reduction of Israel's Army Ordered

What was the over-all plan followed in this reduction and the reason for it?
Discuss the application of that principle throughout the entire Bible.
Why is God's power made perfect in weakness?
What should be the aim of the Lord's people in this respect?

What is known of the success of the early church, in keeping with the principle now before us?
In what way did Paul state the principle as it respects the church of this dispensation?

The Process of Elimination at Work

What is implied by the fact that only thirty-two thousand Israelites responded to Gideon's call?
Why did Jehovah want the army of his people further reduced?
Why were the men permitted to choose their own way of drinking water?
What important lesson is there in this for us?
Why should those who are being considered for responsible places in the church be allowed to follow their own ways for the time being?
At what place did the Israelites probably drink the water?
Why was it important that they watch as well as drink?
What trait of character did the three hundred manifest?
What is the moral of the narrative?
What are some of the principal lessons we should learn from the story?
What further revelation did Jehovah's test on that occasion bring to light?
Why is leadership so important in winning a victory, both militarily and spiritually?

Lesson VII—August 13, 1967

THE CALL OF SAMUEL

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 3: 1-13, 19, 20

1 And the child Sam'-u-el ministered unto Je-ho'-vah before E'-li. And the word of Je-ho'-vah was precious in those days; there was no frequent vision.

2 And it came to pass at that time, when E'-li was laid down in his place (now his eyes had begun to wax dim, so that he could not see),

3 And the lamp of God was not yet gone out, and Sam'-u-el was laid down *to sleep*, in the temple of Je-ho'-vah, where the ark of God was;

4 That Je-ho'-vah called Sam'-u-el: and he said, Here am I.

5 And he ran unto E'-li, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.

6 And Je-ho'-vah called yet again, Sam'-u-el. And Sam'-u-el arose and went to E'-li, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.

7 Now Sam'-u-el did not yet know Je-ho'-vah, neither was the word of

Je-ho'-vah yet revealed unto him.

8 And Je-ho'-vah called Sam'-u-el again the third time. And he arose and went to E'-li, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And E'-li perceived that Je-ho'-vah had called the child.

9 Therefore E'-li said unto Sam'-u-el, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Je-ho'-vah; for thy servant heareth. So Sam'-u-el went and lay down in his place.

10 And Je-ho'-vah came, and stood, and called as at other times, Sam'-u-el, Sam'-u-el. Then Sam'-u-el said, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

11 And Je-ho'-vah said to Sam'-u-el, Behold, I will do a thing in Is'-ra-el, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

12 In that day I will perform against E'-li all that I have spoken concerning his house, from the beginning even unto the end.

13 For I have told him that I will

judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons did bring a curse upon themselves, and he restrained them not.

19 And Sam -u-el grew, and Je-

ho'-vah was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

20 And all Is'-ra-el from Dan even to Be'-er-she'-ba knew that Sam'-u-el was established to be a prophet of Je-ho'-vah.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Speak, Jehovah; for thy servant heareth.*” (1 Sam. 3: 9.)
DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Sam. 1: 1-28.

Daily Bible Readings

August 7. M.	Samuel's Birth (1 Sam. 1: 12-20)
August 8. T.	Samuel Dedicated to God (1 Sam. 1: 21-28)
August 9. W.	Samuel's Vision and Call (1 Sam. 3: 1-10)
August 10. T.	Samuel, a Good Man (1 Sam. 3: 11-21)
August 11. F.	Israel in Defeat (1 Sam. 4: 1-11)
August 12. S.	Affliction of the Philistines (1 Sam. 5: 1-12)
August 13. S.	Ark Returned (1 Sam. 7: 1-4)

TIME.—About 1142 B.C.

PLACE.—Shiloh.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Eli, and Samuel.

Introduction

Samuel was truly one of the great men of the Bible, and he will always occupy a lofty place in the Sacred Record. For one thing, it appears that he came the nearest to being like Jesus in the three great areas of his life, namely, prophet, priest, and king. It is a recorded fact that no man ever typified Jesus in all of those respects, but, granting that Samuel was a priest, he was prophet, priest, and judge. A judge was a ruler in an important sense, but he was not a king. Moses belonged to the priestly tribe and family, but it was not his to function as a priest, as that term is ordinarily understood; and while he was a ruler over God's people, he was never regarded as a king. It is well to remember, though, that Moses was the prophet who, more than any one else, typified Christ in that respect. (Cf. Deut. 18: 15-19; Acts 3: 22,23.)

And then too, Samuel may be regarded as the first of that long line of prophets which continued, apparently unbroken, or at least not for long, until Malachi. There were, of course, other prophets before Samuel, but it does not appear that they were engaged in a continuous ministry, as were those who began with and followed Samuel. In the words of *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible* (Hastings). "But Samuel, to Israel as a second Moses, was the first of that long, unbroken line of heaven-sent teachers, men of

divinely inspired insight and foresight, who from his time to the time of Malachi had so important a part to play alongside of the kingship—to guide, to restrain, and sometimes to oppose the throne, and to touch at many points the national life—rousing the listless from their apathy, denouncing the profane, ministering comfort to the depressed, awakening hope, and especially Messianic hope, among the faithful in Israel."

The life of Samuel touched the lives of so many other notable people in Israel, as to make it virtually impossible to study his life and character independently of theirs. This is particularly true of Hannah, Eli, Saul, and David. Samuel was given to Jehovah by his consecrated mother at an early age; and he was brought up at the feet of Eli in the house of the Lord, during a time when the spiritual condition of the people of the Lord was at a very low ebb. Israel, since soon after the days of Joshua, had been more or less under the direction of judges, of whom Samuel was the last; and this implies, of course, that his was a time of transition—from judges to a king. The affairs of Israel at the time of this lesson were under the direction of the well-meaning but weak Eli; and they had been allowed to drift into lamentable conditions. Eli's sons were serving as priests, but they were extremely wicked;

and it should not be surprising to learn that the center of worship became very corrupt. Israel therefore was ripe for the catastrophe which followed in the wake of the war

with the Philistines. This was the background against which Samuel was called and prepared for the work which God had raised him up to accomplish.

The Golden Text

This part of the lesson is in the principal text, and it will be considered in its proper place.

The Text Explained

The Night Jehovah First Spoke to Samuel

(1 Sam. 3: 1-9)

And the child Samuel ministered unto Jehovah before Eli. And the word of Jehovah was precious in those days; there was no frequent vision. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place (now his eyes had begun to wax dim, so that he could not see), and the lamp of God was not yet gone out, and Samuel was laid down to sleep, in the temple of Jehovah, where the ark of God was; that Jehovah called Samuel: and he said, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And Jehovah called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know Jehovah, neither was the word of Jehovah yet revealed unto him. And Jehovah called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And Eli perceived that Jehovah had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Jehovah; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The Bible does not tell us how old Samuel was at the time of this lesson, but Josephus (Ant. 5: 10, 4) says that he was twelve years old. That was the age when Jewish leaders regarded a Jewish boy as being a "son of the law," and therefore personally responsible for obedience thereto. (Cf. Luke 2: 42.) Samuel must have been well trained for the work which was before him; for his mother and Eli had been his teachers all of his life thus far. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 14-17.) This is a lesson

which parents and church leaders should learn well; for one never knows what great opportunities may be possible for the young person who has been properly instructed in the way of truth and righteousness.

The word of Jehovah was precious in those days, evidently because it was seldom heard, that is, there were no prophets who made known the divine will to the people. The pious Israelites of that day must have realized the truthfulness of the statement which was expressed in a proverb many years later. "Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." (Prov. 29: 18.) The condition now under consideration apparently confirms the earlier notation to the effect that prophets were not plentiful during the time between Moses and Samuel. It also might be noted that it was some four hundred years between the last of the Old Testament prophets and the time when the divine silence was broken by John the Baptist in the wilderness of Judaea; and that evidently accounts for the fact that the people of his day were eagerly listening for any word which would give them any indication that Jehovah was again speaking to them through his messengers. (Cf. Luke 3: 15.) If people today were denied access to the word of the Lord, as some people have been and are, they would be more aware of the significance of the expression "And the word of Jehovah was precious in those days; there was no frequent vision."

Those who are familiar with the inspired record are aware of the fact that men have heard the call of God in various and sundry ways. (Cf. Isa. 6: 1-8; Jer. 1: 1-10; Ezek. 1: 4-28; Acts 26: 12-19.) Miraculous calls to the service of God have long since ceased, but that does not mean that the Lord does not any longer call

men into his service. It is a well known truth that God has all the resources of nature and providence at his command, and it often happens that some word of encouragement and some incident in the life of a person may prove to be the turning point in his attitude toward the Lord; and he may from that time devote his entire time, efforts, and resources to that which he believes to be right. (Cf. the experience of Martin Luther and the incidents which caused him to turn his attention from the preparation for law practice to religion.)

Although a young person at the time of his call from Jehovah, Samuel was, nevertheless, prepared in mind and spirit to heed it. It is true that he did not personally know Jehovah at that time, but it is significant that when Eli told him to say, "Speak, Jehovah; for thy servant heareth," he had no question about it; for the record says that he did as he was told to do. Saul of Tarsus did not know the identity of the one who spoke to him on the Damascus road, but he was willing to make inquiry; and as soon as he learned that it was the Lord, he had no further hesitation. *The Interpreter's Bible* points out that a part of the process in any identification of the call of God is a response to it. That was true of the call of the Lord to the people of Beroea, which came to them through the gospel message (see Acts 17: 10-12); and it is true of any one today who hears a similar call. (Cf. 2 Thess. 2: 13, 14.)

One of the reasons why so many people today do not recognize the call of the Lord to them is because they are not prepared to hear it; their perception has been dulled. Jesus explained this condition, when he said, "Therefore speak I to them in parables; because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith,

By hearing ye shall hear, and shall
in no wise understand;
And seeing ye shall see, and shall
in no wise perceive:
For this people's heart is waxed
gross,
And their ears are dull of hearing,
And their eyes they have closed;

Lest haply they should perceive
with their eyes,
And hear with their ears,
And understand with their heart,
And should turn again,
And I should heal them.

But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not." (Matt. 13: 13-17.)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, in speaking of the same general principle, says, though with a less picturesque metaphor,

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with
God;
And only he who sees takes off his
shoes—
The rest sit round it and pluck
blackberries.

Indeed, every call of God is lost, so far as men are concerned, unless some one responds to it.

A Terrible Judgment Made Known to Samuel

(1 Sam. 3: 10-13)

And Jehovah came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel said, Speak; for thy servant heareth. And Jehovah said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from the beginning even unto the end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons did bring a curse upon themselves, and he restrained them not.

Samuel must have loved Eli, and the revelation which was made to him must have touched his tender heart, as nothing had ever done before. Eli was one of the tragic figures of the Old Testament period. He was, seemingly at least, personally a good man, and it appears that his administration, both as high priest and judge, was characterized by justice and righteousness; but he failed miserably in dealing with his sons, who were priests under him. This proved to be his besetting sin, as is

plainly indicated in the text now under consideration; and in the verse which immediately follows this section of the lesson text, Jehovah said, "And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated with sacrifice nor offering for ever." That was a terrible pronouncement, but such is the wages of sin. (Cf. Rom. 6: 23; James 1: 13-15.)

The chapter which precedes the lesson text for today records the facts regarding the sins of Eli's sons, and the manner in which he dealt with them. Beginning in verse 12, we read: "Now the sons of Eli were base men; they knew not Jehovah."

The term "base" literally means worthless or extremely wicked. Instead of using base, the King James Version has "sons of Belial," that is, *sons of worthlessness*. (Cf. Deut. 13: 13; Judges 19: 22; 20: 13.) These men were not only careless and irreligious, but also loose in their conduct, and vicious and scandalous in their habits; and notwithstanding the fact that they were professing priests, they had no interest in the religion which belonged to the altar of Jehovah. They not only had thrown off all restraints, but had also gone to the extreme of reckless and open profligacy. (Cf. 1 Sam. 2: 13-17.)

In saying that they knew not Jehovah, the idea is not that they did not have any information regarding him, but rather that they refused to have God in their knowledge. Paul describes the same abandoned condition in the first chapter of Romans, "Because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. . . . And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting." (See Rom. 1: 18-32.) It is a deplorable thing for people to refuse to have God in their knowledge, but that is what often happens, even among those who profess to be the Lord's people who will not read and study his word; and that situation easily accounts for some of the things which they say and do. May the Lord help us to realize the seriousness of this!

That which is said regarding the

sons of Eli is in direct contrast with the character and conduct of Samuel. "But Samuel ministered before Jehovah." Both Samuel and the sons of Eli were under the influence of the same parent, and they served under the same high priest. They performed their work in the same tabernacle, but how different were their lives! It is also important to note, as this section of the lesson text plainly states, that it was Samuel through whom Jehovah made known to Eli the fate of his family; and that may account for the break in the historical account of Eli's sons, and that is, that being the reason why the statement regarding Samuel was injected into the narrative. (See 1 Sam. 2: 18-21, and of the paragraphs before and after that passage.)

When we read the full account of Samuel's life, it will be plain to us that it was during his youth that the preparation for his life's work was made. If it is true that he was only twelve years old at the time of this lesson, then he was made a seer, that is a prophet (of. 1 Sam. 9: 9) when he was but a child (of. Jer. 1: 4-10); but God was with him. Samuel heard and saw enough that terrible night, when Jehovah first appeared to him, to make him an old man and a prophet before morning. It appears probable from the text (see 1 Sam. 3: 15-18) that Samuel did not sleep any after he received the message from Jehovah, and it is certain that he realized, for the first time, what the end would be for the sons of Eli, whose wickedness he had been horrified to see and hear.

We may pass over the call which came to Samuel as just another narrative in the Bible, but when we stop and try to grasp something of its significance, it certainly takes on a meaning from which we cannot escape. No wonder they called such a person a *Seer!* Although just a child, Samuel saw that the wages of sin is death. He saw the end which was coming to Eli, who doubtless was looked upon as his father in the Lord; and it is no wonder that he hesitated to tell him what he had heard that terrible night. All of these things must have worked powerfully together to make that young boy the pure, prayerful, and holy child he was before Jehovah, and

which he continued to be throughout the remainder of his life here upon the earth. His purity of heart and his devotion to the holy things of the house of the Lord prepared Samuel early in life to be a truly great seer; and the things he saw, both in heaven and on earth, both in God and man, only perfected in his days that which had been so early and so well begun. In answer to the question, What is a *Seer*? we are told that he is "one who *Sees*, whose eye pierces beyond this life into the infinite and even attempts to penetrate the very purposes of God.

That to the height of his great argument

He may assert Eternal Providence
And justify the ways of God to man.

He is the eagle who can face the sun, unblinded. He is above and beyond philosophy through excess of insight, not of mere ecstasy. He has been 'caught up into the third heaven, where he has heard things unspeakable,' but he has come back to earth with the glow of the third heaven about him and can lift us toward it, though not to it. Wordsworth well describes the Seer when he writes of

that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,
Until the breath of the corporeal frame

And even the motion of our human blood

Almost suspended, we are laid asleep

In body, and *become a living soul*:
While with an eye made quiet by the power

Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,

We see into the life of things "

(The Greater Men and Women of the Bible.)

Samuel Established As a Prophet

(1 Sam. 3: 19, 20)

And Samuel grew, and Jehovah was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of Jehovah.

It has been repeatedly pointed out in these studies that a prophet is one who speaks for another, and that a prophet of God is one who speaks

for God. We have already seen in this lesson that Jehovah called Samuel and revealed his message unto him; and we know from the record of his life that he was always faithful to the trust which had been placed in him. We like to think of the trustworthiness of those ancient men of God, but the principle is the same with us. When Paul wrote his final letter to Timothy, he told him that which he would have told any of us, if he had been writing to us instead of his son in the gospel (of. 2 Tim. 2: 2). His words are:

"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 hearken 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, fulfill 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.)

The words which we speak may be living and active (Heb. 4: 12), or they may be idle and worthless (Matt. 12: 36); and if we speak for God, that is, if we speak that which he has revealed, then we may be sure that they will accomplish that which he pleases (Isa. 55: 10, 11). But if we content ourselves with speaking that which does not say to men that which God wants them to hear, then our words are certain to fall to the ground. The words of God are always active, for he watches over them; and while the speaker may be called on to suffer for his faithfulness in proclaiming that work, he will not be really harmed. "Wherefore whatsoever ye have said in the darkness shall be heard in the

light; and what ye have spoken in the ear in the inner chambers shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to

cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." (Luke 12: 3-5.)

Dan and Beer-sheba were the northern and southern extremities of the land of Israel, respectively; and the reference to them means that all of the Lord's people knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of Jehovah.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why was Samuel one of the great prophets of the Bible?
How did he compare with Moses?
What unique place did he occupy in Old Testament history?
Why is it impossible to study the life of Samuel alone?
How did he come to be in the house of the Lord?

The Night Jehovah First Spoke to Samuel
Under what circumstances did this first message come to Samuel?
How old was he probably at the time of this lesson?
What made him especially prepared to receive the word of the Lord then?
What great lesson is there in this for us?
Why was the word of the Lord precious in those days?
Why is it that we do not appreciate the word of the Lord more in our day?
What was the mood of pious Israelites when John the Baptist began his preaching and why?
Discuss some of the ways in which men have heard the call of the Lord.
Does he call people today? Give reasons for your answer.
If so, what are some of the ways in which it is done?
What was the attitude of Samuel when he first heard the voice of Jehovah?
How may people today make effective the call of the Lord?

What lesson may we learn from Paul in this respect?
Why do so many people fail to recognize the call of the Lord?

A Terrible Judgment Made Known to Samuel

What must have been the effect of God's message regarding Eli on the young heart of Samuel?
What kind of man was Eli?
Wherein had he tragically failed?
What does the record say about the sons of Eli?
What was meant by saying that they did not know Jehovah?
In what way is the same principle applicable to people today? Give reasons for your answer.
How do you account for the difference between the sons of Eli and Samuel?
Why was it especially fitting to refer to Samuel as a "seer"?
How did the experience of that night evidently affect his after-life?
What are the basic characteristics of a Seer?

Samuel Established As a Prophet

What is the Bible meaning of a prophet?
How did the responsibility of the Old Testament prophets compare with our responsibility today?
What is the nature of the words which men may speak?
What always happens when people speak the word of Jehovah?
How widespread was the knowledge of Samuel's prophetic career?

Lesson VIII—August 20, 1967

SAMUEL, THE JUDGE

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 7: 3-17

3 And Sam'-u-el spake unto all the house of Is'-ra-el, saying, If ye do return unto Je-ho'-vah with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ash'-ta-roth from among you, and direct your hearts unto Je-ho'-vah, and serve him only; and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Phi-lis'-tines.

4 Then the children of Is'-ra-el did put away the Ba'-al-im and the Ash'-ta-roth, and served Je-ho'-vah only.

5 And Sam'-u-el said, Gather all Is'-ra-el to Miz'-pah, and I will pray for you unto Je-ho'-vah.

6 And they gathered together to Miz'-pah, and drew water, and poured it out before Je-ho'-vah, and fasted on that day, and said there, we have sinned against Je-ho'-vah. And Sam'-u-el judged the children of Is'-ra-el in Miz'-pah.

7 And when the Phi-lis'-tines heard that the children of Is'-ra-el

were gathered together to Miz'-pah, the lords of the Phi-lis'-tines went up against Is'-ra-el. And when the children of Is'-ra-el heard it, they were afraid of the Phi-lis'-tines.

8 And the children of Is'-ra-el said to Sam'-u-el, Cease not to cry unto Je-ho'-vah our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Phi-lis'-tines.

9 And Sam'-u-el took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a whole burnt-offering unto Je-ho'-vah: and Sam'-u-el cried unto Je-ho'-vah for Is'-ra-el; and Je-ho'-vah answered him.

10 And as Sam'-u-el was offering up the burnt-offering, the Phi-lis'-tines drew near to battle against Is'-ra-el; but Je-ho'-vah thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Phi-lis'-tines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten down before Is'-ra-el.

11 And the men of Is'-ra-el went out of Miz'-pah, and pursued the Phi-lis'-tines, and smote them, until they came under Beth'-car.

12 Then Sam'-u-el took a stone, and set it between Miz'-pah and Shen, and called the name of it Eb'-en-e'-zer, saying, Hitherto hath Je-ho'-vah helped us.

13 So the Phi-lis'-tines were subdued, and they came no more within the border of Is'-ra-el: and the hand of Je-ho'-vah was against the Phi-lis'-tines all the days of Sam'-u-el.

14 And the cities which the Phi-lis'-tines had taken from Is'-ra-el were restored to Is'-ra-el, from Ek'-ron even unto Gath; and the border thereof did Is'-ra-el deliver out of the hand of the Phi-lis'-tines. And there was peace between Is'-ra-el and the Am'-or-ites.

15 And Sam'-u-el judged Is'-ra-el all the days of his life.

16 And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth'-el, and Gil'-gal, and Miz'-pah; and he judged Is'-ra-el in all those places.

17 And his return was to Ra'-mah, for there was his house; and there he judged Is'-ra-el: and he built there an altar unto Je-ho'-vah.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Hitherto hath Jehovah helped us"* (1 Sam. 7: 12.)
 DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Sam. 7: 1, 2.

Daily Bible Readings

August 14. M.....	Israel at Ebenezer (1 Sam. 7: 11-14)
August 15. T.....	Judges Raised Up (Judg. 2: 11-23)
August 16. W.....	Deliverance under Ehud (Judg. 3: 15-30)
August 17. T.....	Barak and Deborah (Judg. 4: 1-10)
August 18. F.....	Samson and the Philistines (Judg. 15: 9-20)
August 19. S.....	"When the Judges Judged" (Ruth 1: 1-22)
August 20. S.....	Samuel at Mizpah (1 Sam. 7: 1-10)

TIME.—1120 B.C.

PLACE.—Mizpah.

PERSONS.—Samuel and the people of Israel.

Introduction

Inasmuch as Samuel was the last of the judges of Israel, it might be well to say a few things about that period. If one reads the King James Version and then the American Standard Version, he may find himself in a somewhat state of confusion regarding the statement which Paul made concerning the period of the judges. The two versions, in the order named, read as follows: "And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided the land to them by lot. And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the proph-

et." "And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land for an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years: and after these things he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet." (Acts 13: 19, 20.)

In commenting on the passage in the American Standard Version, McGarvey says, "The next statement (2), 'and after these things he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet,' cannot mean that he gave them judges after the four hundred and fifty years, seeing that this period includes both the time of the

judges, and the reigns of Saul and David. The words are not, after this time, but 'after these things (*meta tauta*);' and they may therefore be construed as referring to the *events* preceding the figures given. The last of the events is the destruction of the seven nations, that is, the breaking down of their national power by Joshua; and it is true that after these things he gave them judges, for it is at this very point, according to the Book of Judges, that these rulers began to have sway."

Judges 2:10 says, following the death of Joshua, "And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, that knew not Jehovah, nor yet the work which he had wrought for Israel." This was in contrast with the faithfulness of the people who lived contemporarily with Joshua and the elders who outlived him. But when this new generation arose which knew not Jehovah, they departed from the paths of righteousness, and became steeped in the sins of the people about them. The history of the period of the judges is more or less summed up in the passage just quoted, and in a further statement in Judges 17: 7, namely, "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." (Cf. Judges 18: 1ff; 19:ff.) The implication is that each tribe tried to solve its own problems, and took whatever measures it thought best to secure and maintain an adequate situation. This course of action naturally led to all sorts of separate interests, with the result that the regard for the general welfare of the nation as a whole was gradually forgotten; and this further weakened their stand before their enemies.

With this kind of a situation prevailing, the people were left an easy prey to idolatrous influences; and in their weakened condition, they appeared incapable of grasping the idea of a divine and invisible king. The visible gods of the land were be-

fore them, and the people of Israel fell to worshipping them; and because of these sins, they were given into the hands of the nations whose gods they served. The career of conquest which had earlier characterized them was accordingly checked, as the heathen conquerors oppressed them; but they were not entirely forsaken by God. He raised up for them judges, also called saviours, who delivered them from their enemies; and the land had rest for a time. But sooner or later the people returned to their idolatrous ways, and were again subjected to the nations whose gods became their gods.

We are not to think of the judges as consecutive rulers, in the sense that the kings were; but were men, and in one case a woman, who were raised up as the need arose. They were called "judges" in the Old Testament sense of defenders of a cause. (Cf. Ex. 2: 14.) When a national crisis arose, Jehovah often raised up leaders whose business it was to liberate their people. It has already been pointed out that they were also called "saviours." (See Judges 3: 9; of. 2: 16.) It is said of Deborah that the people came to her for judgment (Judges 4: 4, 5), and it appears that Samuel, the last of the judges, was the civil head of all the people of Israel.

The period of the judges has been called Israel's iron age—a cruel, barbarous, and bloody epoch, made so because of the sins of the people. The nature of the office has been compared to that of a Roman dictator, with this exception: the dictator generally laid down his power when the crisis was over; but the judge, in some instances at least, remained invested with his power for life. Sometimes these judges began their careers with military exploits, but not always so, as may be seen in the cases of Deborah, Eli, and Samuel. The origin of their authority, in the final analysis, always rested with God. (Cf. Judges 2: 16; Acts 13: 20.)

The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson, being found as it is in the principal text, will be discussed in its proper place.

The Text Explained

Israel's Repentance and Victory over the Philistines

(1 Sam. 7: 3-11)

And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto Jehovah with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you, and direct your hearts unto Jehovah, and serve him only; and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away the Baalim and the Ashtaroth, and served Jehovah only.

The conflict between Israel and the Philistines began in the first part of chapter 4. The latter not only defeated the Israelites, but also captured the ark of Jehovah, and slew both of the sons of Eli. Eli himself died of shock, and possibly of a broken neck. The ark was returned to the people of Israel after seven months, but the Philistines continued to hold sway over the Israelites for some twenty years. (Read 1 Sam. 4: 1-7: 2.) Not anything is known of Samuel during those twenty years, except that which is said in 1 Sam. 3: 21-4: 1a, namely, "And Jehovah appeared again in Shiloh; for Jehovah revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Jehovah. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel." This apparently was at the beginning of the twenty year period just referred to.

As Samuel emerged from the years of silence, he appeared in the role of a prophet, priest, and judge. He told the people that if they wanted freedom from their enemies, they would have to put away their false gods, return to Jehovah, and serve him with all their hearts. The Baalim and the Ashtaroth are both plural terms, and they included all their male and female deities, respectively. All true reformation, now as then, must begin with a separation from all that displeases God, and with a resolution to serve him faithfully.

And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray for you unto Jehovah. And they gathered together to Mizpah, and drew water, and poured it out before Jehovah, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against Jehovah. And Samuel judged the chil-

dren of Israel in Mizpah. And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto Jehovah our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a whole burnt-offering unto Jehovah; and Samuel cried unto Jehovah for Israel; and Jehovah answered him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel; but Jehovah thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten down before Israel. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car.

It can be seen from the map that Mizpah was some distance from the land of the Philistines; but inasmuch as the Philistines had subjugated the Israelites, it is altogether possible that the former had garrisons in those parts of the territory which were occupied by the Lord's people. One would naturally gather from verses 10, 11 that the Israelites were armed, although it appears that their principal purpose in going to Mizpah was religious. Samuel told the people that he would pray for them there; and they gave evidence of their sincerity by fasting and confessing their sins unto Jehovah.

Thus a great national reformation was brought about through the influence of Samuel. When people reach the point where their servitude to that which opposes Jehovah becomes a burden to them, it is not difficult to get them to listen to instruction which will lead them back to God; and when they have been correctly taught, they are ready to put into practice that which is required of them. In addition to his role as a prophet, Samuel also became the judge of Israel. He also functioned as a priest, as may be seen by his offering the burnt-offering, referred to in the text. (Cf. 1 Sam. 16: 1-5.)

The Philistines no doubt rightly concluded that the gathering of Israel to Mizpah was for the purpose of raising their morale and spiritual patriotism, in preparation for throwing off the yoke of foreign bondage; and they apparently intended to crush it then and there. But the Philistines did not take into consideration the fact that when Israel returned to God, he would also return to them. (Cf. 1 Sam. 6: 6.) And too, the Philistines did not know that Samuel, the devoted servant of Jehovah, was praying for his people. Intercessory prayer has always been regarded with favor by the Lord, and especially when those who are involved are his people. One has only to read the history of Samuel's life, in order to see how often he took advantage of the privilege of prayer. The people of Israel frequently requested that he pray for them; and on one occasion he said, "Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against Jehovah in ceasing to pray for you: but I will instruct you in the good and the right way." (1 Sam. 12: 23; of James 5: 16.)

There are some commentators who assert that Samuel was not a priest, but the section of the text now before us, along with such passages as 1 Sam. 10: 8; 13: 8-14 plainly indicate that he did offer acceptable sacrifice to Jehovah. The prayer and sacrifice of Samuel were answered by such a tremendous thunderstorm that the Philistines became panic-stricken, and fled in disorder. The people of Israel recognized the hand of God in it, and pursued after the enemy who, only a short time before, they had feared so greatly, and administered to them such a defeat, as to prevent a further attack. The location of Beth-car is not known, but the unusual expression "under Beth-car" suggests that it was on an elevation, with a road at its base.

Jehovah has demonstrated over and over again his willingness to hear the prayers, and accept the sacrifices of his people; but how often do they neglect to offer them! So many of us are like the rebellious Israelites, in that we do not think seriously of the Lord, until we are in need of his help in some particular instance. But that kind of an attitude does not please him, and it will

not result in the proper growth of the soul.

A Monument to the Help of Jehovah

(1 Sam. 7: 12-14)

Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpah and Shem, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath Jehovah helped us. So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more within the border of Israel: and the hand of Jehovah was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the borders thereof did Israel deliver out of the hand of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

The marginal reading of "Eben-ezer" is *the stone of help*; and the idea which Samuel apparently had in mind was that God had helped them up to that time, that is, the time of the lesson. In commenting on the statement, *The Great Texts of the Bible* says that the characteristic feature of the inscription lies in the word "hitherto." It was no doubt a testimony to special help obtained in time of trouble—a grateful recognition of that help; and it was an enduring monument to perpetuate the memory of it. But it was more than that, much more. The term "hitherto" denotes a series, a chain of similar mercies, an unbroken succession of divine interpositions and divine deliverances. The special purpose of this inscription was to link the present deliverance with all the past, and to form a testimony to the enduring faithfulness and mercy of a covenant-keeping God.

Someone has asked, But wasn't there something strange about the name given to the stone which Samuel set up? Could he have forgotten the tragic day when Israel was so disastrously defeated by the Philistines, twenty years before, so that all they could think of then was Ichabod, which signified that the glory had departed from Israel? (Read 1 Sam. 4: 19-22.) But we should remember that it was not Samuel who used that name, but the wife of Phinehas, the son of Eli. She was with child when the news came that the ark of God was taken, and that her

husband, brother-in-law, and father-in-law were dead; and being in great distress, the birth pains came upon her, and a son was born; and all she could think of as she was dying was that the glory had departed from Israel, and it was for that reason that she called her newly born son Ichabod, the marginal reading of which is, *There is no glory.*

It is certain that Samuel knew all about that, and he also knew that God, even in those distressful days, was helping them. He was helping them to know themselves, to know their sins, and the bitter fruit and woeful punishment which sinners must endure. He was helping them to achieve the great end to which he had called them, namely, to keep alive the true knowledge of God, the practice of his worship, and the realization of the promises which they were heir to, and especially the one which told of the coming of the Messiah. And so, that word "hitherto" bespoke a mighty faith; and it included the parts of the whole—the disaster as well as the victory. The defeat which eventually had a part in bringing them back to God involved tender kindness and precious help. God helps us by grievous losses, by disappointments and defeats; for whatever brings us closer to him, and which makes us realize that our best interest lies in knowing and loving him, is helpful beyond our ability to understand. And when people do right, God can make even his enemies to be at peace with him. (Cf. Prov. 16: 7.)

Samuel's Judgeship and Judicial Circuit

(1 Sam. 7: 15-17)

And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpah; and he judged Israel in all those places. And his return was to Ramah, for there was his house; and there he judged Israel: and he built there an altar unto Jehovah.

Adam Clarke says that Samuel lived to be a hundred years old, and that he was about forty years old when he became a judge; and if that is true, then he was a judge for sixty years, which included practically all of Saul's reign. It is true that he died before Saul did, as is evident

from the transactions with the witch of Endor; but that was probably only a short time after his passing. Samuel was also the prophet of that time; and he not only declared the will of God, but also frequently directed both the civil and military affairs of the nation. Samuel, in fact, appears to have been the real governor of the people, while Saul was regarded more or less as the general of the armies.

Samuel, as has been pointed out frequently, was the last in the line of the judges, and it appears to be certain that no other judge exercised the influence which he did. The record plainly indicates that the people stood in greater awe of him, than they did of the king; and even the king himself was rebuked by Samuel more than once. (See 1 Sam. 13: 11ff.; 15: 10ff.) The place and work of this great man have been admirably summed up by James Hastings in the following paragraphs.

"The time of Samuel was a critical period in the life of Israel, because it was a time of transition. It was a period marked by change, both in religion and in the affairs of state. The age of the judges was drawing to an end, and the demand for a king was making itself heard. Such times of transition, when old things are passing away, and the new era has not fully come, are difficult and perilous times in the life of any nation. This is true because they carry with them something of the mystery and of the painfulness that belong to all processes of birth. Therefore, any leading personality who endeavors to sum up and guide such uncertain tendencies will almost certainly be involved in misunderstanding or neglect, or both.

"That which has just been said was true of Samuel, and he has been referred to as the first martyr of the order of the prophets. He stood between the past and the future, the living and the dead. Brought up in reverence for the days of old, he attempted to be the mediator, in an epoch full of changes, between the old and the new; with the result that he found himself among those of whom it has been said that they are attacked from both sides—charged with not going far enough, and with going too far; with saying too little, and with saying too much. Men who

belong to this class cannot be comprehended at a glance like Moses or Elijah or Isaiah, and are therefore thrust aside, and yet who are the 'silent healers who bind up the wounds of their age in spite of itself'; and who are 'the reconcilers who turn the hearts of the children to the fathers, and of the fathers to the children.' The real power of such men lies in the fact that, while they are driven more or less to take active parts in the affairs of their country, they are or may be—as Samuel was—men of deep religious feeling, who see him who is invisible, and try to shape their policies, amid the hard, intractable affairs of this world, in accordance with the will of God."

In the words of A. H. Strong, The darkest part of the night is just before the dawn. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Lord lifts up a standard against him. God, no matter what the conditions may be, never leaves himself without witness. Somewhere, in the most godless times, can be found those who love and serve God. Elijah may think that he is alone, and that no one else can be found who stands for truth and righteousness among a nation of idolaters; but God shows him that he still has seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed their knee to Baal. And God made this very same Elijah the beginning of a second line of prophets, that holds on through Elijah and Ezekiel, even to Malachi and John the Baptist. At the very

time that the army of the king of Syria is stricken with blindness, supernatural vision is granted to Eli-sha's servant, and the young man's eyes are opened; and he sees, and behold! the mountain is full of horses and chariots of fire round about his master. And so, in every dark day in the history of his people, God enables some chosen servant to see that to which the common people are blind. Wordsworth's lines to Milton could have been written of Samuel:

Thy soul was like a Star, and
dwelt apart;

Thou hadst a voice whose sound
was like the sea:

Pure as the naked heavens, majes-
tic, free,

So didst thou travel on life's com-
mon way,

In cheerful godliness; and yet thy
heart

The lowliest duties on herself did
lay.

It is possible that Samuel voluntarily set up the various places of judgement for the convenience of the people. There would, of course, be many problems and controversies which would need his attention; and the wise counselor and reverent judge could solve the problems of all who feared the Lord. Shiloh had probably been destroyed, and if so, that accounts for his building the altar at his home in Ramah. (Cf. Deut. 12: 1-14.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Approximately how long did the period of the judges continue?

Who was the first of the judges, and, in your opinion, the best known among them?

Why were the judges needed in the first place?

Why was it so easy for the people of Israel to fall into the idolatry of the land?

What was the basic idea behind the judges and their principal duties?

How would you describe the over-all period of the judges?

Israel's Repentance and Victory Over the Philistines

What is said regarding the beginning of the conflict between Israel and the Philistines?

What were some of the initial results of the struggle?

What is meant by the "period of silence?"

In what way was Samuel related to that period?

In what role did he emerge from the period of silence?

What was the first thing he called upon the Israelites to do?

Why is it essential that people give evidence of their repentance?

What is the fundamental meaning of repentance?

How alone can a true reformation be brought about?

Approximately where was Mizpah located?

Why were the people gathered there?

Why, apparently, did the Philistines make their attack upon Israel at that time?

What basic miscalculation did they make?

What is known regarding the prayer-life of Samuel?

What evidence do we have that Samuel was a priest?

What was Jehovah's response to the sacrifice and prayer of Samuel?

What is said regarding the victory for Israel at that time?
 What lesson should we learn here regarding our relation with the Lord?
 A Monument to the Help of Jehovah
 What is the meaning of the word "Ebenezer?"
 What was Samuel's idea behind his setting up the stone?
 What relevance does its meaning have for us?
 How do we know that Samuel did not overlook the experience surrounding "Ichabod?"
 Why does the help of the Lord include defeat as well as victory?

Samuel's Judgeship and Judicial Circuit
 Approximately how long did Samuel serve as a judge?
 What were some of the outstanding events during the period of his judgeship?
 How, apparently, was he regarded by the people, generally speaking?
 In what way did the king evidently look upon him?
 What is meant by saying that the time of Samuel was a period of transition?
 What are some of the great problems for the leader during such a period?
 Tell something about how Samuel fared during that time?
 What can you say regarding the over-all greatness of Samuel?

Lesson IX—August 27, 1967

ISRAEL DEMANDS A KING

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 8: 1-10

1 And it came to pass, when Sam'-u-el was old, that he made his sons judges over Is'-ra-el.

2 Now the name of his first-born was Jo'-el; and the name of his second, A-bi'-jah: they were judges in Be'-er-she'-ba.

3 And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted justice.

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

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

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

unto Je-ho'-vah.

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

8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of E'-gypt even unto this day, in that they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit thou shalt protest solemnly unto them, and shalt show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—"It is better to take refuge in Jehovah than to put confidence in princes" (Psalm 118: 9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 118: 1-9.

Daily Bible Readings

- August 21. M..... Samuel, a Judge in Israel (1 Sam. 7: 15-17)
- August 22. T..... Samuel and His Sons (1 Sam. 8: 1-3)
- August 23. W..... Elders Demand a King (1 Sam. 8: 4-9)
- August 24. T..... Samuel Warns the People (1 Sam. 8: 10-17)
- August 25. F..... Israel Refuses Samuel's Advice (1 Sam. 8: 18-22)
- August 26. S..... Selection of Saul (1 Sam. 9: 1-27)
- August 27. S..... Samuel Anoints Saul (1 Sam. 10: 1-8)

TIME.—1102 B.C.

PLACE.—Ramah.

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

Introduction

It was pointed out in the lesson last week that Samuel lived in a period of transition. The thinking of

the people was undergoing a change, and whatever happened in the way of outward circumstances, the reac-

tion of the people to it was basically the result of their thinking. This was plainly illustrated by that which took place after Samuel appointed his sons judges. If the leaders of the people of Israel had never thought of a king for their own nation, and had not dwelt on the idea until the concept was firmly fixed in their minds, they would not have asked for a king at that time. Instead, they would have called for more righteous judges.

This is a lesson which needs to be emphasized today; for the principle involved in it is just as applicable to our time, as it was in the days of Samuel. When people entertain ideas on any subject for any appreciable length of time, the result will eventually be seen in their outward action. It is always true that "as he thinketh within himself, so is he." (See Prov. 23: 7a.) And if the thinking of the people is away from God's order, the outcome is certain to be a departure from his will. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55: 8, 9.) Man's thoughts and ways

never run parallel with God's thoughts and ways; and the only possible way for human thoughts and ways to be pleasing to God, is for them to be patterned after that which is revealed in the Bible. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17; 1 Cor. 4: 6; 2 John 9.)

The firm conviction had grown up among the people of Israel, at the time of this lesson, and especially among the leaders, that if they were to succeed with their national affairs, they would have to have a more closely knit national organization. In short, they would have to cease to emphasize their local tribes, and concentrate on a consolidated leadership. Or, to state the same thing in another way, they would have to become a military nation; and to accomplish that, they, like the nations about them, would have to have a monarchy. This principle is just as true now, as it was then. One has only to look at the manner in which many brethren are conducting their work, in order to see the application. The word of God, as already indicated by the scriptures cited in the preceding paragraph, is all we need to guide us; it is not essential that we imitate the "nations" about us.

The Golden Text

"It is better to take refuge in Jehovah than to put confidence in princes" The first nine verses of the psalm from which this text is taken constitute the devotional reading for today, and it will be well to have them before us at this time. "Oh give thanks unto Jehovah; for he is good; for his lovingkindness endureth for ever. Let Israel now say, that his lovingkindness endureth for ever. Let the house of Aaron now say, that his lovingkindness endureth for ever. Let them now that fear Jehovah say, that his lovingkindness endureth for ever. Out of my distress I called upon Jehovah: Jehovah answered me and set me in a large place. Jehovah is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? Jehovah is on my side among them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me. It is better to take refuge in Jehovah than to put confidence in man. It is better to

take refuge in Jehovah than to put confidence in princes."

It is easy to see that the psalmist was emphasizing that it is better to put one's confidence in Jehovah, than it is to trust the noblest of men. We do not know who wrote the psalm from which the golden text is taken, but if it was written by David, he could certainly speak from experience; for he had trusted in men who were looked upon as princes. If God is on our side, as the psalm plainly says, and as the Bible clearly teaches (of. Heb. 13: 5, 6; 1 Cor. 10: 13; Rom. 8: 31-39), then why should any child of God even consider the possibility that even the best of men can do more for him, than God has promised to do? Even princes are but men, and the best of men are poor creatures in the sight of God. Many troubles come upon us which are completely beyond the help of the greatest and best of men, such as fatal illness and death; and there is

were grave offenses, and were very closely related to each other. The love and desire for money led them to take bribes and pervert justice; or, to state the same thing in another way, their love and desire for money led them to give to the man who had the means to pay for it that which he wanted; with the result that the wicked rich were favored above the righteous poor. How often have men who have been placed in responsible positions, and who were thought to have been good men, acted on the same principle in our day!

People who read these Old Testament records may wonder why Samuel was not punished for the sins of his sons, as Eli was for the misconduct of his sons. This was probably due to several factors. In the first place, the sins of Samuel's sons seem to have been far less heinous in their character, than the unblushing and daring profanity of Eli's sons; and it is altogether possible that Samuel, due to the distance between him and his sons, did not know of their evil conduct. The record plainly says that Eli knew what his sons were doing, and that he did not restrain them. And too, it is fair to assume from that which is said further on about the righteous character of Samuel himself, that he would not have tolerated the sinful practices of his sons, when once they were brought to his attention. (Cf. 1 Sam. 12:1-5.)

Implications Contained in the Request

(1 Sam. 8: 4-9)

Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah; and they said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto Jehovah. And Jehovah said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, in that they have forsaken me, and

serve other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit thou shalt protest solemnly unto them, and shalt show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

It would be natural for any one to conclude that the leaders of Israel would have been justified in protesting the evil conduct of Samuel's sons, and requesting some kind of relief, if they had contented themselves with that; but when they used the occasion to ask for something which they wanted, and which was completely unrelated to the corruption of the under-judges, and totally contrary to God's revealed will for them, their sin was evident. The motive which prompted their request, and which revealed something of the condition of their heart, was revealed by these words—"like all the nations." They had been looking at the nations, instead of God. When Peter requested the Lord to allow him to walk upon the water, he was successful in his endeavor as long as he kept his eyes upon the Lord; but when he looked upon the wind and the waves, he immediately began to sink. Likewise, Achan was not led into sin, until he continued to look upon and covet the desire of his heart. (See Matt. 14: 22-33; Josh. 7: 20, 21.) The lust for something other than and different from that which God provides for his people, is that which brings them into sin. (Cf. James 1: 13-14.)

The men of Israel were asking for something which they did not understand. They were wise in diagnosing their present trouble, but they were in no position to pass on the merits of a complete change in the form of government—from a theocracy, which was authorized by God himself, to a monarchy, to be like the peoples about them. Furthermore, there is no indication that the nations about them changed their form of government, because of the corruption of some of their former officials; but that was what the elders of Israel wanted Samuel to think was their motive for the change. But it is obvious that the Israelites were not primarily concerned with a desire for righteous judges; they simply wanted to imitate that which they admired in others, and seized upon the situation which was

brought about by the wickedness of the sons of Samuel, and used it as the occasion to ask for it. The desire to keep up with the world has often been the downfall of God's people.

It might be well to remark just here that some people seem to have difficulty in distinguishing between a departure from that which is written, and in making use of modern means in accomplishing that which the Lord's people are authorized to do. For example, the radio, picture shows, and television are daily influencing the lives of millions of people. The technique of advertising through the press, on the billboard and screen, and over radio and television, has developed to the extent that the lives of multiplied millions of people have been changed. Witness cigarette smoking and liquor drinking on the part of women and girls.

All of the things just mentioned have produced a different attitude on the part of the people in general; and when it comes to a good work like preaching the gospel, it should be obvious to any thoughtful person that no congregation or individual gospel preacher is going to make use of the potential which is available, while ignoring the modern means of reaching the public, as indicated above. The gospel must be made to appeal to people with the present-day attitude, that is, to people who are affected by the influences already referred to. The gospel itself has not changed, and it will not change, and neither will the church in its basic conception; but if people are to be reached by the gospel and brought into the church, then adequate modern means must be employed.

The fact, however, that adequate modern methods of reaching the people today with the gospel must be sought out and put into use, does not mean that something must be done which is contrary to the spirit and teaching of the New Testament; but it does mean that the use of modern means of reaching the people must be employed. In addition to the pulpit, those who are engaged in evangelism must take hold of the very things which have been used to educate people in the wrong way, that is, they must use the radio, television, printed page, et cetera, and

try to educate them in the right way. The battle must be pressed on every side, and by every legitimate means.

But there was nothing about the proposal which the elders of the Israelites made to Samuel that pleased him. It certainly did not please him personally; no man who is sincerely trying to do right and who is certain that he has the Lord's approval, enjoys having his role called in question; and it is painful to be bluntly told that one's children are gross sinners. However, a man like Samuel could and would do something about the latter, as may be inferred from 1 Sam. 12: 2. If Samuel did not actually remove his sons from office, he at least informed the people that they were with them, and could be dealt with appropriately. It is well to note that no further charge was made against Samuel's sons.

While personal and family considerations no doubt affected Samuel's views regarding the request for a king, his principal dissatisfaction very likely arose from the revolutionary character of the proposed change—a change which amounted to a formal renunciation of the Divine government. It is possible, of course, that the people did not deliberately intend to reject God as their ultimate leader yet their action in requesting a visible monarch did, in effect, relegate their unseen king to an obscure position; and that, in God's sight, was equivalent to rejecting him outright. Jehovah will never accept second place in any one's devotions.

But whatever may have been Samuel's reasons for being displeased with the request which the elders of Israel made of him, he took the matter to God in prayer before committing himself with reference to the question, one way or another. This was a matter which involved the will of God; and Samuel had too much faith in and respect for Jehovah, to permit himself to act before ascertaining his will. This attitude on the part of Samuel made the way easier for him; for he knew that Jehovah approved of that which he did. This should be a valuable lesson to all of us. Paul says, "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanks-

giving 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.)

When people who profess to be the Lord's people reject the leaders whom he ordains, they are, in effect, rejecting him; and this is a truth which should be emphasized again and again. In speaking of the elders in the church, the writer of Hebrews says, 'Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you.'" (Heb. 13: 17.) Jehovah, in the case now under consideration, took notice of the indignity to which Samuel was being subjected; and he encouraged his faithful servant by telling him that it was, in reality, he who was being rejected. This should certainly encourage us to bear with patience any shameful practices or indignities which are thrust upon us. Our main consideration should be to see that we ourselves are doing the best we can to please the Lord. (Cf. Psalm 69: 6-9.)

The reference to the continuous sinful practices of Israel, from Egypt to the time of this lesson, was apparently made for the encouragement of Samuel; and in it Jehovah reminded his aged servant that the rebellious attitude on the part of his people was nothing new. If Jehovah were not a merciful God, Israel would have been destroyed long before they asked for a king. (Cf. Num. 14: 11, 12; Deut. 9: 7, 8; Psalm 106: 21-23.) It frequently happens that Jehovah will permit people to have their own way, when they are determined upon a course of action; but we must not overlook the fact that he does not take advantage of their ignorance regarding what the future has in store for them. Instead, he graciously warns them what to expect. This principle is just as true now, as it was then; for no one can read the Bible, without being informed re-

garding the end of any course of action.

God's Message Delivered to the People

(1 Sam. 8: 10)

And Samuel told all the words of Jehovah unto the people that asked of him a king.

The message which God gave to Samuel for the people, and their reaction to it, are found in the remainder of the chapter from which the text is taken; and they should be carefully read at this point. But the solemn warning of Samuel had no effect on the people, as the closing paragraph of the chapter plainly states. The elders were adamant; and once their real desire was made known, they felt no further need to bolster their arguments by references to the age of Samuel and the wickedness of his sons. They wanted a king, in order to be like the nations about them; and that which they said to introduce their petition was only meant for an occasion to get the question before Samuel.

We have already seen that the aged prophet and judge listened patiently to all that the elders of Israel had to say to him; and then went to God in prayer for further guidance. God's answer, as we have already noted, was for Samuel to grant the people's request, and that he would himself become the king-maker. Someone has observed that one of the most magnanimous, majestic, and heroic deeds ever done in human history was performed by Samuel. When once he was convinced that it was the will of God for his people to have a different form of government, this man of God set himself to do that which no other man could do, namely, forsake all the past, abandon all the lines of action on which he had worked through the best years of his life, and then put into other men's hands the future of his people. All of this meant the condemnation of what he had struggled to accomplish. My God have mercy on the memory of Samuel!

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What basic idea was behind the conduct of the people who asked Samuel for a king?

- Why is this such an important lesson for us?
- Why can't the thoughts and ways of God and man run parallel?
- What, then, is the only safe course for men to follow?
- Why do so many people want changes in the work of the church?

The Golden Text

- Under what circumstances were the words of the golden text written?
- What particular thought was the psalmist emphasizing?
- Why should any people who know anything about the Lord want to trust in men?
- Why is it better to trust the Lord than to put our confidence in political leaders?
- Why do many brethren seem to think that they should try to improve society through political means?

The Occasion for Requesting a King

- What was the probable status of Samuel's judgeship at the time of this lesson?
- Why did he apparently appoint his sons as judges?
- Where were they located and what was said regarding their conduct in office?
- What probable reason can you give for their misconduct as judges?
- What were the charges placed against them and their relation to each other?
- Why, apparently, wasn't Samuel punished for the sins of his sons, as Eli was for his?

Implications Contained in the Request

- What insight into the characters of the elders of Israel who came to Samuel do we get here?
- What did they use as the basis of their request for a king?

- What was the real motive behind their petition?
- What does the looking upon the wrong object often do for one?
- Discuss something of the magnitude of the request which the elders made of Samuel.
- Why did they profess to want such a revolutionary change in their government?
- Why do some professed followers of Christ want to keep up with the world?
- What is the difference between a departure from God's way and the use of modern means for the accomplishment of that which he has ordained to be done?
- What are some of the modern means which are available for use in accomplishing the Lord's will?
- Why are they so valuable in the work of the Lord?
- How was Samuel affected by the request for a king?
- What did he do about it and what was Jehovah's reply to him?
- How should the Lord's people regard the leaders who have been placed over them?
- What happens when they reject the Lord's plan for governing the church?
- Why was rebellious Israel spared and what is the lesson in that for us?
- When the Lord allows rebellious people to have their way, what does he always do for them?

God's Message Delivered to the People

- What was the message which Jehovah gave to Samuel for the people who asked for a king?
- What was their reaction to it?
- What attitude did they clearly manifest?
- What revealed the greatness of Samuel's character?

Lesson X—September 3, 1967

SAUL REJECTED AS KING

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 15: 10-23

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

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

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

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

14 And Sam'-u-el said, What meaneth then this bleating of the

sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

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

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

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

18 And Je-ho'-vah sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly

destroy the sinners the Am'-a-lek-ites, and fight against them until they be consumed.

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

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

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

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

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

Golden Text.—*"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice."* (1 Sam. 15: 22.)
Devotional Heading.—1 Sam. 10: 1-9.

Daily Bible Readings

August 28. M.....	Saul Becomes Impatient (1 Sam. 10: 7, 8; 13: 8-15)
August 29. T.....	Samuel Warns Saul (1 Sam. 12: 1-5)
August 30. W.....	Rewards of Faith (1 Sam. 12: 12-15)
August 31. T.....	Proofs of God's Goodness (1 Sam. 12: 16-19)
September 1. F.....	Samuel Prays for the People (1 Sam. 12: 20-25)
September 2. S.....	Saul's Sin of Rebellion (1 Sam. 15: 1-23)
September 3. S.....	Samuel Condemns Saul (1 Sam. 15: 24-35)

Time.—1079 B.C.

Place.—Gilgal.

Persons.—Jehovah, Samuel, and Saul.

Introduction

Saul, as every Bible reader knows, was the first king of Israel, but not every one stops to consider the fact that he is an outstanding illustration of failure in high office. There is hardly a sadder story in all the Bible, than that of the son of Kish. So humble and promising at the beginning of his career; but so haughty and disobedient at its close! He is usually listed as one of the greater men of the Bible, and apparently correctly so; but his very place in history is so completely surrounded by men whose characters were so much greater than his, that his life cannot be adequately considered apart from theirs. James Hastings notes that as if to throw a stronger light upon the unhappy character of Saul by comparison or contrast, the Scriptures present him along with Samuel, the man of prayer, David the man after God's own heart, and with his own son Jonathan, so lovely and so truly great. Saul might have prayed like Samuel, he might have waited upon God as David did, and he might have loved with largeness

of heart as Jonathan did; but alas! he did none of these. Instead, his story is one of retrogression of the soul; his life was a success of gradual changes, and in those changes evil prevailed over the spirit of grace and opportunities for doing good. As a day which begins with sunshine, then clouds over gloomily, and at last closes with a storm, so was the life of Saul. His is certainly one of the most tragic characters in the Old Testament, or in the whole Bible, as for that matter.

Saul prospered as king over Israel for a period of about two years, under the guidance of the Spirit of Jehovah; and then came the time of his trial—the time when the children of Israel had to do something about the heavy yoke of the Philistines which was resting upon their shoulders. But Saul was not equal to the occasion; and his first act of disobedience is recorded in 1 Sam. 13: 1-15, which should be read. Jonathan, Saul's son, smote a garrison of the Philistines, and the latter assembled themselves together to fight against

the Israelites. It appears that Samuel had told Saul to wait seven days for him to come to him; but when Samuel did not arrive when Saul thought that he should, the latter took matters in his own hands, and offered the sacrifices, which service Samuel was supposed to have performed. Saul saw that the Philistines were busily getting ready for battle, that his own people were becoming panic-stricken; and he, accordingly grew impatient and "forced" himself, as he later told Samuel, to proceed with the sacrifices. Saul's lack of faith resulted in his presumptuous sin, for which his kingdom was ultimately taken away from him; and Samuel left him to follow his own headstrong way.

The extent of Israel's subjugation to the Philistines, Saul's rash oath, Jonathan's salvation from it, some of Saul's victories, and the names of the members of his family are re-

corded in 1 Sam. 13: 15, 14: 52, which also should be read. Saul's second act of disobedience is described in the verses which immediately precede the lesson text for today's lesson. The Amalekites had made an attack on the children of Israel, soon after they had come out of the land of Egypt; and Jehovah had sworn with an oath to destroy the Amalekites. (See Ex. 17: 8-16.) Saul was commissioned to perform this task, and was given specific instructions to make their extermination complete. But Saul failed to follow his instructions, as may be seen by reading 1 Sam. 15: 1-9. This involves a lesson which every person today should carefully learn; for God expects implicit obedience on the part of those who would claim his promises, and he will not allow any one to substitute his will for that of the divine will.

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

Jehovah's Attitude toward Saul Revealed to Samuel (1 Sam. 15: 10-12)

Then came the word of Jehovah unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And Samuel was wroth; and he cried unto Jehovah all night. And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning; and it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a monument, and turned, and passed on, and went down to Gilgal.

The term "repent," as used in the text just quoted, is attributed to Jehovah, when wicked men give him cause to alter his course of method and procedure, and deal with them as if he had actually repented of the kindness which he had showed them. The same original word for "repent" is found in verse 29, where this statement is recorded: "And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he is not a man, that he should repent." The meaning in the passage just quoted is that Jehovah is not changeable, and will not be untrue to the promises he made con-

cerning his people. But when the term "repent" is applied to God, as in verse 11, the technical word for its use is *anthropomorphism*, or an *anthropomorphic* conception or representation; and its practical meaning is the ascription of human form or attributes to God, or to something which is not human. The use of anthropomorphic language with reference to God is intended to bridge the great chasm between the infinite and finite minds. Just as we adapt ourselves to the conceptions of a child, in an effort to enable him to understand us; just so the Bible employs anthropomorphic language, when it is necessary to bridge the gulf between God and human beings.

Samuel was filled with righteous indignation when he heard of that which Saul had done; but, like Paul, he did not let the sun go down on his wrath. (Cf. Eph. 4: 26.) His action at that time was in keeping with his declared purpose to pray for those who were running counter to God's will. "Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against Jehovah in ceasing to pray for you: but I will instruct you in the good and the right way." (1

Sam. 12: 23.) More praying on the part of the Lord's people today, and less criticism and indifference, might result in turning many to the Lord's way of doing things.

But while Samuel was praying in bitterness of soul. Saul was acting in character, with apparently no thought of humbly seeking Jehovah's forgiveness. In fact, it is doubtful if he even thought that he had disobeyed the plain commandment of Jehovah, which he could not have misunderstood. The question of disobedience probably never occurred to him. The "monument" Which Saul set up was probably a kind of "triumphal arch," or maybe a hand pointing to the place of his victory. (See marginal note, and of. 2 Sam. 18: 18.)

The Meeting between Samuel and Saul

(1 Sam. 15: 13-16)

And Samuel came to Saul; and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of Jehovah: I have performed the commandment of Jehovah. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto Jehovah thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed. Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what Jehovah hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.

Saul, in an apparent attempt to conciliate Samuel with a friendly, and perhaps an arrogant greeting, tried to make it appear that he was entirely satisfied with his mission with reference to the Amalekites, if indeed he felt any compunction of conscience at all, regarding his professed obedience to the Lord. But that is not the way in which Jehovah looks at such matters, notwithstanding the fact that many people today apparently still think so. When Jesus was here among men, he said to his disciples, "Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do." (Luke 17: 10.) And

James puts it this way: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all." (James 2: 10.)

Saul's profession of obedience was loud; but the circumstantial evidence was against him. There are many professed Christians today who boast of their obedience to the will of the Lord; but their indulgence of the flesh, their love of the world, their passion and unkindness, and their neglect of specific duties, all unite in testifying against them. (Cf. Tit. 1: 16.)

It is interesting to note that although Saul was himself the king, and the army which destroyed the Amalekites was under his personal command, yet he sought to shift the blame for the failure to carry out the commandment of the Lord to the people. But that, of course, could not be done; and it is doubtful if even Saul himself felt that way about the matter. But a religious motive, however pious, can never compensate for disobedience. It sometimes happens that a man who oppresses the poor, and engages in robbery or trickery, will attempt to salve his conscience by giving a part of the proceeds to the church! But Saul and the people utterly destroyed that which they did not want to save; just as many professed Christians today gladly emphasize, and vigorously execute, other duties, in order to atone for some glaring sin.

While Samuel was endeavoring to fulfil his obligation in passing Jehovah's message to Saul, the king, on the other hand, appeared to manifest a spirit of contempt toward the prophet, to say nothing of the Lord. It is as if he had said, "O. K., Let's hear it." Saul probably knew that Samuel would condemn his action; and so, with a defiant spirit, he bade him say on. Many faithful gospel preachers have had to stand before "influential" members of the church, and tell them that which God wants them to know, when those who should be listening manifest only an attitude of condescension, or behave in an obviously patronizing manner. And like Samuel, the preacher often has to stand alone; but he is not alone, for the Lord is with him. (Cf. John 16: 32.)

Saul's Rejection As King Made Known

(1 Sam. 15: 17-23)

And Samuel said, Though thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made head of the tribes of Israel? And Jehovah anointed thee king over Israel; and Jehovah sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of Jehovah, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah? And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of Jehovah, and have gone the way which Jehovah sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the devoted things, to sacrifice unto Jehovah thy God in Gilgal. And Samuel said, Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim. Because thou hast rejected the word of Jehovah, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

When Samuel reminded Saul that he was little in his own sight,, he probably had reference to Saul's statement regarding himself at their first meeting, when he himself said that he was little in his own sight. When Samuel, at that meeting, suggested something great for Saul, the latter replied, "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou to me after this manner?" (1 Sam. 9: 21; of. 10: 21, 22.) Benjamin was not only the youngest of Jacob's children; but the tribe itself was almost wiped out by the others. (See the last two chapters of Judges.) But, like Saul, there are relatively few people who can stand real prosperity and advancement in power and position, especially if their beginnings were humble. Matthew Henry notes that those who are advanced to honor and wealth, ought

to remember often their mean beginnings, so that they may never think highly of themselves, but always study to do great things for the Lord, who has advanced them. (Cf. James 1: 17; 1 Cor. 4: 7.)

It should always be kept in mind that Saul, although the king, was, nevertheless, subject to the will of God. He was simply an instrument in the hands of Jehovah to accomplish his holy purposes. And in the matter of destroying the Amalekites, the question was simply that of punishing sin. It was true then, as it is now, that the wages of sin is death. Jehovah is never vindictive in his dealings with the human race; but when wicked people reach the point where they became cancers in their relation to other nations, the cancers had to be wholly exterminated. Jehovah's benevolent design for mankind made it necessary for him to destroy those people who would destroy the peace, morality, and spirituality of the world.

After reminding Saul of that which he had been commanded to do, Samuel asked him, "Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of Jehovah, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah?" These were searching questions, and the principle involved is just as applicable now, as it was in Saul's case. When any professed child of God receives a command from the Lord, through his revealed will, of course, it is essential that he make every effort to please the Lord; and he must not allow any other motive to influence his thinking and acting.

But when people are bent on having their own way with reference to their alleged obedience, they rarely ever admit their failure to do all that is commanded; and when changes are made in that which God requires, such people usually contend that the alterations which they introduced in no way detract from that which God stipulated. This principle is clearly illustrated in such practices as substituting sprinkling and pouring for New Testament baptism, and the addition of mechanical instruments of music to the divine command to sing. When Saul said that he had gone the way which Jehovah had sent him, he failed to say that only his feet went; his heart

went elsewhere, and there can be no true obedience apart from the heart. (Cf. Rom. 6: 16-18.) The "devoted things" which the people brought back with them were the things which had been devoted to destruction. (Cf. Josh. 6: 18; 7: 10-12.) The religious motive which Saul and the people professed could not justify their rebellious conduct.

The difference between burnt-offerings and sacrifices, and in obeying the voice of Jehovah, is the difference between outward forms of service, and the devotions of the heart. The worshipper's will must be brought under subjection to God's will; and when that is done the heart will be right, and all that is done will be made to conform to the divine standard. This principle is clearly stated in both the Old and the New Testaments. "For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." (Hos. 6: 6.) "Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God." (Mic. 6: 6-8.)

"Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things that are written." (1 Cor. 4: 6.) "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9.) God is glorified more, and self is denied more, by heart-felt obedience, than by outward forms of sacrifice. It was and is much easier for the people to bring upon the altar, or some other form of outward obedience, than to bring every thought into obedience to God. (Cf. 2 Cor. 10: 5; Mark 7: 5-9.)

Samuel made it plain to Saul that rebellion and stubbornness were equal to setting up false gods and

worshipping them, and engaging in witchcraft. The "teraphim" were household gods. (Cf. Gen. 31: 19, 32-35; 1 Sam. 19: 13.) It is doubtful if many people who are guilty of rebellion and stubbornness are aware of the danger which is theirs. But such characteristics serve as an index to the condition of the heart; and it is always true that where one's heart is, there will also be the object of his devotion.

It should be kept in mind that Saul was no monster, who had won his crown by unrighteous means; and then plunged at once into a reckless abuse of his power. And neither was he an apostate who had cast off his belief in Jehovah, and then set up some foreign idol as his god. He simply forgot the God of heaven, and the prophet through whom he had been led to the new life and its inspirations. He failed to remember that he was under law, and that he had a mission to fulfil. When he was commanded to perform a certain service, his obedience was nearly always, if not indeed always, partial and incomplete, which way, of course, in effect, no obedience at all. Saul appeared to assume that Jehovah would be satisfied with the beginning of obedience, and would pardon a certain amount of human desire and self-will.

The principle involved in the kind of attitude just referred to is clearly set forth in the New Testament. Jesus, for example, says, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself." (Matt. 16: 24.) This passage is translated by Phillips and Goodspeed, respectively, in these words: "If anyone wants to follow in my footsteps he must give up all right to himself." "If anyone wants to go with me, he must disregard himself." It is easy to see from this passage that Jesus makes self-denial an essential requisite of Christian discipleship—in fact, the first condition of such discipleship. It is not the denial of anything, little or big, *to self*, but the denial *of self*. It is the turning away from self to Christ, from one center to another. This requires that our thinking be centered on Christ, rather than on ourselves. (Cf. Prov. 23: 7; Matt. 16: 23.) A good soldier does not think of saving himself, but of winning the battle. (See 2 Tim. 2: 4; 2 Cor. 5: 9.)

When Saul failed to carry out Jehovah's command to destroy the Amalekites, the death knell of his kingdom was sounded. The command which he received was plain and unmistakable: "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." (1 Sam. 15: 3.) And as already pointed out, Samuel made it plain to Saul that Jehovah would no longer tolerate him as king; and it was then that Saul confessed that he had sinned. But it is plain from the record that Saul's attitude had not changed, and it, to one of true penitence, in which he humbly sought the Lord's forgiveness (of. verses 24-26), but one of seeking an excuse, so that he might continue to hold the respect and loyalty of the people (verse 30).

Hastings sums up the results of Saul's action in these words: From

the time of his disobedience in the matter of Amalek, Samuel came no more to see Saul, whose season of probation was over. The light which he had refused to follow had been put out, and the voice which he had declined to hear was silenced. The person who had represented high and holy refreshments and influences was removed, because he ignored his sacred help; and the spiritual friend whom he had refused to follow was lost to him for ever. (Verse 35.) The only time that Saul ever saw Samuel again was in connection with his experience with the witch of Endor, in which in the utter terror of his soul, in the presence of a witch, while his flesh crept with horror and his hair stood on end, the saintly image of his friend, the impersonation of all that was good in his life, called from the world of spirits by the wretched man, rose before him who was paralyzed and speechless, and again pronounced his doom. (See 1 Sam. 28: 3-19.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Who was Saul and what was his place in Hebrew history?

What makes the study of him such a sad one?

Why can't the life and character of Saul be adequately studied alone?

How did he compare with those men who were the closest to him?

Why was he one of the most tragic figures in the history of the Bible?

When and under what circumstances did his downfall begin?

Why was he commanded to destroy the Amalekites?

What great truth does his experience on that occasion illustrate?

Jehovah's Attitude toward Saul Revealed to Samuel

In what sense was the term "repent," as attributed to Jehovah, employed?

What important lesson do we learn from this usage?

What is the process called and what does it mean?

What effect did Jehovah's message to Samuel regarding Saul have on him?

What did Samuel do about it?

What scriptural truth is illustrated by his action?

What was Samuel's constant practice regarding those who were going contrary to God's will?

What effect should this have on us today?

What was Saul doing at the time Samuel was praying?

The Meeting between Samuel and Saul

In what way did Saul greet Samuel and what was his obvious motive?

What is the Lord's attitude toward partial obedience?

What is the teaching of the New Testament regarding this subject?

What gave the lie to Saul's profession of obedience?

What common practice did Saul engage in, as he sought to excuse himself from censure?

Show that a religious motive will not compensate for disobedience.

What attitude did Saul manifest toward Samuel, as the latter was preparing to give Jehovah's message to him?

In what way is that same attitude often seen today?

Saul's Rejection As King Made Known

How did Samuel begin his report of God's message for Saul?

What important lesson do we learn from Saul's attitude and conduct?

Why is it so easy for people with humble beginnings to fall in the face of prosperity?

What great truth should we always remember under such circumstances?

What was the Lord's motive for destroying the Amalekites?

What searching questions did Samuel ask Saul regarding his disobedience?

Why did Saul continue to claim that he had obeyed the will of Jehovah?

In what ways is this principle illustrated by religious people today?

Why is Jehovah pleased more with obedience than with outward sacrifices?

What does the Bible say with reference to this question?

What was the basic reason for Saul's downfall?

Give a summary of the results of his action.

Lesson XI—September 10, 1967

DAVID ANOINTED KING

Lesson Text

1 Sam. 16: 4-13

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

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

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

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

8 Then Jes'-se called A-bin'-adab, and made him pass before Sam'-u-el. And he said, Neither hath Je-

ho'-vah chosen this.

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

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

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

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

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

Golden Text.—"Man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart." (1 Sam. 16: 7.)

*Devotional Reading.—*1 Sam. 16: 1-3.

Daily Bible Readings

September 4. M.....	Saul Envis David (1 Sam. 18: 1-9)
September 5. T.....	David Designated (1 Sam. 16: 4-13)
September 6. W.....	God Selected David (Psalm 89: 19-37)
September 7. T.....	David's Great Faith (Psalm 27)
September 8. F.....	David and Goliath (1 Sam. 17: 41-49)
September 9. S.....	David and Jonathan (1 Sam. 18: 1-9)
September 10. S.....	David, Faithful Servant of God (Ezek. 34: 20-31)

Time.—1063 B.C.

Place.—Bethlehem.

Persons.—Samuel, Jesse, and his sons.

Introduction

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

vid attained. And not only that, but to this great king belongs the distinction of typifying the greatest of all kings, his son (according to the flesh) and successor, the Lord Jesus Christ, who sits today upon the throne which is called by David's name. (See Acts 2: 29-31; Luke 1: 30-33; of. Psalm 89: 35-37; Dan. 7: 13, 14.)

In introducing a series of studies

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

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

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

The Golden Text

This part of the lesson for today is found in the principal text, and it will be dealt with in its proper place.

The Text Explained

The Preparation for Anointing: a New King

(1 Sam. 16: 4, 5)

And Samuel did that which Jehovah spake, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably; I am come to sacrifice unto Jehovah: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

The clause, "And Samuel did that which Jehovah spake," can be understood only in the light of the preceding verses of the chapter. "And Jehovah said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from being king over Israel? fill thy horn with oil, and go: I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite; for I have provided me a king among his sons. And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And Jehovah said, Take a heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to Jehovah. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint

unto me him whom I name unto thee." (1 Sam. 16: 1-3.)

The closing verses of chapter 15 say, "Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul. And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death; for Samuel mourned for Saul: and Jehovah repented that he had made Saul king over Israel." The self-willed Saul, whose course was rapidly descending toward the fatal battlefield of Gilboa, had proved a complete failure, and he could not therefore continue to be God's instrument for ruling Israel. He did remain for a time as king, until his sin worked out to its sad end; but Jehovah had selected another man to take his place, and Samuel was delegated to anoint him as the new king.

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

servant, had to have a part in it. Samuel's question about how he could go to Bethlehem in safety does not imply a lack of faith and his unwillingness to obey God; he apparently was simply asking for more light. And when people come to God in that spirit, he is neither displeased with them, nor reluctant to grant their request. (Cf. James 1: 5-8.)

Superficial Bible students are sometimes wont to ask if the arrangement for Samuel's safe trip to Bethlehem did not partake of duplicity. It was indeed an act of concealment, as *The Expositor's Bible* points out; but it certainly was not an act of duplicity. Neither Jehovah nor Samuel was under any obligation to divulge the plan for anointing the new king to anyone, nor was the intention to induce anyone to do something which he would not have done, had the whole truth been known to him. It is a crime to practice concealment in order to take unfair advantage of others; but when the aim is to protect the rights of others, while under no obligation to reveal the plan when some important end is to be gained, the situation is entirely different.

Furthermore, it is certainly true that Samuel did offer a sacrifice; and it is probably true that he could not have done that which God sent him to do, without the sacrifice; for it was essential that others be called in and there had to be a motive for their going. The elders of the city were alarmed at Samuel's coming, but the sacrifice seems to have caused their fears to vanish. And so, Samuel apparently had two purposes in going to Bethlehem—one to offer a sacrifice, and one to anoint a king, even if one was a secondary purpose.

If one will read the last part of the Book of Ruth, he will see that Jesse was the grandson of Boaz and Ruth, the beautiful gleaner and satisfied stranger, who left her home in Moab and came to Bethlehem with Naomi, where she married the wealthy farmer Boaz, and became the ancestress of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Cf. Matt. 1: 1-5.) Situated on its high ridge and overlooking some fertile fields, as well as the wilderness of Judaea, the little town of Bethlehem never had much part in the eager life of the Hebrew people. But it is a recorded fact that age after

age saw some event, notable in history, some birth or death, or some prophetic word which drew the attention of the people to the little city in affection or in hope; the greatest of which was the prediction of the birth of Jesus. (Cf. Mic. 5: 2; Luke 2: 1-14.) Bethlehem is located some five or six miles south of Jerusalem; and after the events of the lesson for today, it became pre-eminently known as "the city of David."

It had been Samuel's duty as judge to go from city to city to render judgment, and punish offenders (of. 1 Sam. 7: 15-17); and it is possible that the elders of Bethlehem feared that in some way their city had incurred the divine wrath. And too, it appears that Samuel was accustomed to visit various localities at uncertain intervals for the purpose, not only of holding courts of justice and redressing grievances, but also of celebrating religious services, and offering sacrifices. Samuel, as we have seen in a previous lesson, was a judge, a priest, and a prophet.

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

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

The Divine Standard for Judging

(1 Sam. 16: 6-10)

And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely Jehovah's anointed is before him. But Jehovah said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him: for Jehovah seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart. Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath Jehovah chosen this. And Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath Jehovah chosen this. And Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Jehovah hath not chosen these.

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

It was after Jehovah had rejected Eliab as the forthcoming king of Israel, that he gave Samuel the divine standard for judging one's fitness for that high position; and it is one which we cannot study too carefully or too often. God's ways and man's ways (when left to himself) are never the same; for no man unaided

can reach the standard which Jehovah maintains. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55: 8, 9.)

Man, in the very nature of the case, can see only the outward appearance and manifestations of other human beings, but Jehovah sees all of that and more; for he looks into the innermost recesses of the soul. "And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb. 4: 13; of. Psalm 33: 13-15.) In commenting on Jehovah's words to Samuel, William M. Taylor notes that it makes little difference, therefore, what the outward appearance is; for if the heart is wrong, nothing can be right. Christianity does not consist in attractive physical features, and bodily beauty is not holiness; and it is for that reason that character ought to be the principal object of one's attention. It is not how one looks, but what he is that counts with Jehovah; and if his people will follow the divine pattern, their souls will become beautiful in the eyes of the Lord, and their lives will be bright, even in the sight of their fellow men, with a glory which is not of this world.

If the matter of selecting a king for Israel had been left to Samuel and Jesse, it is certain that one of the seven sons of the latter, who passed before Samuel, would have been chosen. But the work which was to be done was the Lord's, and he reserved the right to make his own selection of the one to do it. There are too few people who profess to follow the Lord who are willing to allow him to choose those who are to take the lead in his work here among men. Untold numbers of men have been selected for the eldership, for example, who were totally unfit for the place, all because those responsible for their selection were unwilling to follow the Lord's revealed will regarding that phase of his work. (See 1 Tim. 3: 1-7; Tit. 1: 5-9; 1 Pet. 5: 1-3.) Too often we allow personal and worldly considerations, rather than God's will and glory, to say nothing of the good of

our fellow men and ourselves, to determine the choices which are made. Any congregation which does its best and trusts God for guidance, can look back over its past experiences in the matter of selecting its leaders, and see many instances in which the Lord has overruled things for his glory and the good of all concerned.

David Selected and Anointed

(1 Sam. 16: 11-13)

And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he is keeping the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon. And Jehovah said, Arise, anoint him; for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

That which was said about David seems to suggest that he was a fairly young lad, but old enough to attend to the duties of caring for his father's sheep. His age probably made Jesse feel that he was not old enough to be invited to such a meeting as Samuel had called. How often in the family and in the congregation do we see the younger ones neglected! But they are often, as in the case now before us, the very ones who can best accomplish a given task. If the older people, and especially the leaders in the congregation, would only look about them, they could find many useful people among the younger ones in the home and the church.

David's occupation was ideal for the training which he needed for the work which God had in store for him; and it is both interesting and profitable to note the many references which he made to his shepherd-life, during the time he reigned over the Lord's people. Who but a man with a shepherd's experience could have written the twenty-third psalm!

Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want.

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.
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.

Many of the outstanding men and women of the Bible were among the lowly toilers of the earth. Consider, for example, Elisha, Amos, Ruth, Jesus, and Paul, to name only a few of them. Some of the Lord's apostles were fishermen, and Moses himself was a keeper of sheep. Such people not only knew the meaning of work; they also understood many of the problems which are common to the average man and woman who make up such a large part of human society.

If David was disappointed in not getting to attend the sacrifice to which Samuel invited his father and older brothers, it must have been forgotten when his father called for him to come in. He was busy at his work as a shepherd of the sheep when the message came to him; and when he did get the opportunity to go to the sacrifice, he obtained the greatest blessing of all. The term "ruddy" means *red*, and it is generally thought that David had red, or perhaps golden hair, and fair skin, which would mark him as being goodly to look upon, in contrast with those of dark hair and complexion, which probably was the general rule. Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with oil, when they were inducted into office.

The record does not say whether or not Samuel explained the significance of the anointing oil, but it is reasonable to suppose that he did; but whether he did or not, David

was at that time consecrated to the service of God, and the Spirit of God came upon him as a seal and pledge of the blessings which Jehovah bestowed upon the rulers of the nation for the people's good. The anointing of David to be king over Israel was among the last public acts which Samuel performed, that is, so far as the record goes. And after he had finished that service, he arose and returned to his home in Ramah.

In assessing the life, character, and work of David, Charles Foster Kent says, As poet, patriot, warrior, and devout worshipper of Jehovah, David embodied the highest ideals of his age. It is, therefore, not strange that he was idolized by his own and idealized by succeeding generations. His love for Jehovah and his people left little place in his heart for pride and tyranny. He kept always before him the noble Hebrew ideal of the kingship. Except on the one memorable occasion, when he yielded to his own base passion, he ever showed himself the loyal servant of the people. Thus, as a king, he proved, as did no other ruler in Hebrew history, "a man after God's own heart." In the perspective of history Saul figures as the great pioneer; but David built well on the foundations which Saul had laid.

Under his leadership united Israel became a fixed reality. By closer organization, by sharing together a common capital, by uniting in suc-

cessful wars against their common foes, rival tribes were led to forget their jealousies and to recognize the bond of common race, ideals, and religion. By his foreign conquests, David gave to his people peace and prestige, and prepared the way for that development of the resources of the empire and of commerce which quickly followed in the days of Solomon. David also inspired those ideals of kingly justice, as well as of world-wide dominion, which were ever after cherished by the Hebrews, and which find frequent echoes in the Messianic predictions of later prophets. In uniting all Israel under one king he also impressed upon his subjects the conception of Jehovah as the one Supreme Ruler over all the different tribes. In conquering the neighboring nations and building up a great empire he laid the foundations of that later monotheism which was proclaimed by the great prophets of the Assyrian period.

And so, in the words of Charles Kingsley, let us urge young people to look to the future, with a determination to make the best use of their opportunities.

Be good, my child, and let who
will be clever—
Do noble deeds, not dream them
all day long;
And so make life, death, and that
vast forever
One grand deep song.

Questions for Discussion

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What difference is noted between Saul and David with reference to character study?

What can you say of the greatness to which David achieved?

What are some of the things of Israel which he embodied?

Why then was David so great?

The Preparation for Anointing a New King

What was it that Samuel did, as Jehovah commanded him?

What was the attitude of Samuel toward Saul, after the latter's rejection by Jehovah?

What did the grief of Samuel reveal regarding himself?

What was his feeling about going to Bethlehem to anoint another king?

Under what circumstances did Jehovah tell him to go?

What did that plan involve?

Could the principle in it be applied to-day? Give reasons for your answer.

What occasion was made possible by the sacrifice?

Who was Jesse?

Where was Bethlehem located and what place did it have in Hebrew history?

Why would the elders of the city tremble at the coming of Samuel?

What was the sanctification which Samuel asked the people to accomplish?

The Divine Standard for Judging

What was Samuel's reaction when Jesse's first-born son passed before him?

What was the possible reason for that reaction?

What reason did Jehovah give for rejecting Eliab?

What standard for judging did he then assign?

Why can't men judge adequately in this respect?

What place, if any, should physical fitness have in such matters?

What is the real thing which should always be of prime consideration?

What lesson should we learn from this regarding the selection of leaders for the church?
 Why are mistakes made so often in this respect?
 What is the standard which should govern us in such matters?

David Selected and Anointed

What must have been the approximate age of David at the time of this lesson?
 What common characteristic of parents and church leaders does his case illustrate?
 What can be said of the value of David's

occupation at the time of his call to this service?
 What use did he make of his experience as a shepherd in later years?
 From what segment of society did many of the great men and women of the Bible come?
 What is said regarding the appearance of David when he was called before Samuel?
 What did Samuel do after he anointed David to be the next king of Israel?
 What can be said regarding the over-all character and work of David as king?
 What important lesson should young people get from his example at the time of this lesson?

Lesson XII—September 17, 1967

NATHAN REBUKES DAVID

Lesson Text
2 Sam. 12: 1-10

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

2 The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The thing that David had done displeased Jehovah(2 Sam. 11: 27.)*

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Sam. 12: 11-15.

Daily Bible Readings

- September 11. M..... David's Family (2 Sam. 3: 1-5)
- September 12. T..... Other Members of David's Family (2 Sam. 5: 11-16)
- September 13. W..... David Is Crowned King (2 Sam. 2: 1-4)
- September 14. T..... David Anointed King of Israel (2 Sam. 5: 1-5)
- September 15. F..... A Message to David (2 Sam. 7: 18-29)
- September 16. S..... David Commits Sin (2 Sam. 12: 1-13)
- September 17. S..... David's Confession (Psalm 51: 1-17)

TIME.—1034 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Nathan, and David.

Introduction

The emphasis on the lesson for today, as any one can easily see, is on sin, its consequences, and its forgiveness. One of the remarkable things about the Bible, and one of the reasons why we know that it is from God, is that it portrays the sins of its heroes, as well as their virtues. No effort is ever made to conceal the wrongdoings of the people who are called by the Lord's name. It is never God's purpose to cover up the sins of his people, in the sense of hiding them from the views of others; on the contrary, his plan is to bring his professed followers to repentance and forgiveness. This, however, can only be done by bringing the individual sinner to the realization of that which he has done; and that, in turn, can be accomplished only by exposing the sin, and bringing the wrongdoer to a confession of his transgression. No one will repent of a sin which he will not admit that he has committed; and a confession will not likely be made while the sinner thinks that the sin is unknown. (Cf. Achan, Josh. 7: 1ff.)

The story of David's sin, about which we are to study today, is found in the eleventh chapter of Second Samuel, which should be read in connection with the study of this lesson. David was not only guilty of the sin of adultery; he was also guilty of deceit and murder, to mention only two of his additional crimes in this connection. From the days of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, man has consistently endeavored to hide his wrongdoings from others; and has in many, many, in-

stances tried to make it appear that others were responsible for them. (Cf. John 3: 19-21.) There is something about sin which make men want it covered, and there are two ways of doing that, namely, a wrong way and a right way. (Cf. Prov. 28: 13; Psalm 85: 2.) David tried the wrong way at first; but when that failed, as it always does, he accepted the right way and received the Lord's forgiveness.

It should be of interest to all of us to ask, Why would a man like David commit such a monstrous sin? The answer to this question does not concern David alone; for the principle involved is always applicable in any age of the world. However, the facts in the life of David do bring to light, in an admirable manner, some of the precursors of such a fall as he experienced. In the first place, David had, as the preceding chapters indicate, been enjoying a life of almost unbroken prosperity. He hardly knew what it meant to suffer defeat, or to have his personal popularity questioned by any of his people. This condition naturally lead to a period of idleness; and so, instead of leading his army as other kings did, he "tarried at Jerusalem." (See 2 Sam. 11: 1.) It is at such a time as this that Satan comes to a man, and makes his appeal where passion is strongest and principle is the weakest—in the case of David polygamy, or the love for many women. He would not have yielded to this temptation, if he had been governed by principle, rather than by passion or personal desires. (Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 22.)

The Golden Text

"The thing that David had done displeased Jehovah" It would be interesting, as well as profitable, to go through the Bible, and read about the things which displeased Jehovah. (Read, for example, Isaiah 59.) When we take into account the fact of human sin and depravity, we should not be surprised to find God's displeasure registered on almost every page of the Bible. It began with

Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, and it has continued, in an almost unbroken series of events and practices, until the present time. Jehovah has made it clear that it grieves his heart for his people to run counter to his will; and the punishments which have been heaped upon the human race are grim reminders of that grief and displeasure. (Cf. Gen. 6: 5, 6.) And if sinful hu-

manity would only look at the matter as they should, they would see that even the suffering which they have had to endure was meant to show them how sinful sin is.

In a recent book of sermons, *Fresh Every Morning*, Gerald Kennedy begins the series with a lesson entitled, *Dealing with the Eternal*, based on David's attitude and expression on the occasion of God's smiting Uzzah when he touched the ark, as it was being moved upon a new ox-cart, in the hope of taking it into the city of Jerusalem, or, as it was then called, the city of David. The passage in question reads as follows: "And when they came to the threshing-floor of Nacon, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. And David was displeased, because Jehovah had broken forth upon Uzzah; and he called that place Perez-uzzah, unto this day. And David was afraid of Jehovah that day; and he said, How shall the ark of Jehovah come unto me?" (2 Sam. 6: 6-9.)

The Text Explained

The Issue Parabolically Stated

(2 Sam. 12: 1-4)

And Jehovah sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own morsel, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

Nathan was a prophet during the reign of David (2 Sam. 7: 2), and as such he was God's spokesman; and it was his responsibility to deliver any

Taking verse 9 as his text, Kennedy goes on to say that either we discover what God's law is and live by it, or ignore it and die by it. Toward the close of the sermon, he says, "In the closing part of Mark's record of the gospel there is a passage which at first seems out of place, namely, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.' (Mark 16: 15, 16, RSV." He then asks, "Is this not unnecessarily harsh, coming from the resurrected Christ?" The King James Version has it that those who do not believe will be damned. "But this hard word," continues Kennedy, "needs to be spoken to this generation; for God does not adjust himself to suit the desires of even his well-meaning followers, and the sooner we understand this truth, the better it will be for us." Let us not forget that God made us in his image, rather than that we made him in our image; and to try to move him into a better position will only bring upon us the disaster which came to Uzzah, when he tried to interfere with the ark of God.

message which Jehovah wanted spoken to the king, or to any one else. Those who are familiar with the Old Testament period are aware of the fact that various kings and rulers, along with the people themselves, had prophets among them who declared unto them the principles of righteousness, which God had ordained for their instruction and guidance. It has already been pointed out that the eleventh chapter of Second Samuel contains the record of the sin which David committed, and the closing paragraph of that chapter reads as follows: "And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she made lamentation for her husband. And when the mourning was past, David sent and took her home to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased Jehovah." The last sentence, which is the golden text for today, gives the reason for Nathan's going to David. We do not know how long after David's sin it

was before Nathan went to him, but judging from 11: 27 and 12: 14, it must have been the greater part of a year, if indeed not a year or more.

A parable is an effective means of getting an unwelcomed truth before one who needs to be taught a lesson. It is altogether possible that complaints about the unrighteous rich oppressing the helpless poor had often been made to David; and he evidently thought that Nathan was presenting a genuine case for his judgment. The strategy employed by the prophet had the effect of getting David to commit himself regarding the principle involved, before he realized that he was the offender. David passed judgment on himself, so that when the real issue was made known to him, he could not claim that he had been unfairly treated. The parable itself is so simple and true to life, that no one who reads it can miss the lesson which it was meant to teach.

In commenting on Nathan's parable, *The Interpreter's Bible* points out that this story is a masterpiece of pathos and power; and that it ranks with the parables of Jesus as an effective instrument to disturb the conscience and to produce repentance. The prophets of those days were, for all practical purposes the preachers of God's will during that period; and we know that some of the basic purposes of preaching are (1) to enlighten the mind, (2) to disturb the conscience, (3) to energize the will, and (4) to stir the heart; and any one who reads David's reaction to Nathan's preaching to him can see a forceful demonstration of the things which preaching is designed to accomplish. *The Interpreter's Bible* goes on to say that the poor man and his little ewe lamb are still among us, as the victims of greed and exploitation wherever honest toil is deprived of its fair rewards, whenever minorities are denied their privileges and due, and wherever great political powers of the world dominate and despoil the weaker people of the earth.

The Fury and Folly of Self-Righteousness

(2 Sam. 12: 5, 6)

And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As Jehovah liveth, the

man that hath done this is worthy to die; and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

Although David's indignation was greatly aroused by the parable which Nathan spoke to him, it is a noticeable fact that his conscience was still asleep; for he was still indulging his own sins, while ready to condemn the wrongdoings of others. But we must remember that Nathan was not through with the king, as shall be seen in the next section of the lesson text.

And as is usually the situation in such cases, David went further in his condemnation of the wicked than the law warranted. The law of Moses did provide for the fourfold restoration of a sheep which had been unlawfully taken and disposed of (see Ex. 22: 1); but it did not authorize the execution of a man for such a crime. But how often do we find people today manifesting the same attitude, which David did, toward wrongdoers! It is easy for some professed followers of the Lord to try to justify their own sins, while at the same time condemning the wrongs of others. This principle was emphasized by Jesus, when he said:

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me cast out the mote out of thine eye; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, Cast out first the beam out of thine own eye; and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." (Matt. 7: 1-5.) The apostle Paul taught the same truth, when he wrote to the Romans, "Wherefore thou art without excuse, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest dost practise the same things . . . and reckonest thou this, O man, who judgest them that practise such things, and dost the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Rom. 2: 1-3.)

It is easy for our wrath and re-

sentment to be kindled against the injustices in human relationships, which do not directly concern our security, position, and selfish desires; but when the situation is reversed, and the same treatment comes home to us, we lift our hands and our voices in holy horror, and cry out for judgment to descend upon the offenders. Any careful observer can see injustices practiced every day, and sometimes by his own hands; and then when the voice of God's spokesman looks the offender squarely in the eye, and announces, Thou art the man, the situation immediately changes. In relating Paul's teaching on this subject to ourselves, we might say, If we wear the name of Christ, and are sure that we are capable of teaching others the truth of the gospel, do we ever stop to teach ourselves? "Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou rob temples? thou who gloriest in the law, through thy transgression of the law dishonorest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, even as it is written." (See Rom. 2: 17-24; of. Isa. 52: 5; Ezek. 36: 22.)

The Lesson Brought Down to Date

(2 Sam. 12: 7-10)

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

These terrible words which Nathan spoke to David pierced his

heart, aroused his conscience to a degree greater, apparently, than his anger had been aroused at that which he thought was the sin of another, and brought him to his knees. Something of the depth and sincerity of his penitential sorrow may be learned from the fifty-first psalm. (Cf. Psalms 32: 103.) Jehovah pardoned David, insofar as his restoration to divine favor was concerned; but no effort was made to spare him, that is, save him from, the consequences of his sin. His fall from the heights of his noble character, and from his eminent rank in society would, Nathan told him, do great injury to the cause of the Lord; and it was therefore necessary for Jehovah to make known his abhorrence of sin, by leaving his own forgiven servant to reap the bitter fruits of it in his life. Verse 14, of the chapter from which the text is taken says, "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." David himself was not required to die, according to his own pronouncement of that which justice demanded (see verse 5); but he did have to suffer anguish in the successive untimely deaths of his own sons, besides a multitude of other heartbreaking experiences. (Cf. 2 Sam. 12: 15-23; 13: 1-33; 18: 31-33.)

In the words of Hezekiah Butterworth,

I walked through the woodland meadows,

Where sweet the thrushes sing;

And I found on a bed of mosses

A bird with a broken wing.

I healed its wound, and each morning

It sang its old sweet strain,

But the bird with the broken pinion

Never soared as high again.

I found a young life broken

By sin's seductive art;

And, touched with a Christ-like pity,

I took him to my heart.

He lived with a noble purpose

And struggled not in vain;

But the life that sin had stricken

Never soared as high again.

But the bird with the broken pinion

Kept another from the snare;

And the life that sin had stricken

Raised another from despair.

Each loss has its compensation,
There is healing for every pain;
But the bird with the broken pinion
Never soars as high again.

In commenting on Nathan's statement to David, "Thou art the man," Ainger notes that we cannot be too thankful that it was not left to any partisan to interpret the remarkable character of David, and to enforce the moral of his story. Considered as a biographer merely, the sacred historian neither extenuates nor sets aught down in malice. Moreover, he does not weigh the good acts of David against the evil, in order to show which quality predominates. For to him David, in his two character's, is not one man, but two. There is no concord between David fighting for God, in the confidence of God's righteousness, and David violating the plainest laws of society for his own selfish lusts. They are not to be reconciled.

The reference to the giving of the wives of Saul into David's bosom probably means no more than that they were given into his custody. It seems quite clear from such passages as 1 Kings 2: 10-25 that it was customary for a king who succeeded to the throne to have the wives and the concubines of his predecessor (of. 2 Sam. 3: 6-11); and for any one else to attempt to take one of them for himself, was nothing short of a claim to the throne. (Cf. 2 Sam. 16: 20-23.) There is no positive proof that David actually took the wives and concubines of Saul to be his wives and concubines, unless indeed the passage now before us, that is, the words of Jehovah to David through Nathan, implies it. But the statement regarding David's contempt for the word of Jehovah, and his guilt of

murder, was real. David not only ordered Uriah killed, but even sent the letter containing the death warrant to Joab by the hand of the victim himself, as the following verses show:

"And it came to pass in the morning | that is, the morning after Uriah had refused to go to his house and spend the night with his wife, 2 Sam. 11: 6-131, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die." (2 Sam. 11: 14, 15.) The same idea of disregard for that which Jehovah has spoken is found in James 2: 10, where the term "stumble" means to set aside or ignore.

It is a historical fact that the sword did not depart from the house of David, as may be seen by reading the records of the Old Testament. Amnon, one of the sons of David, was ordered killed by another son, Absalom, for criminally assaulting his sister, Tamar; Absalom was killed by Joab, after the former had taken, by conspiracy, the kingdom from his father; another son, Adonijah, was executed at the command of his brother Solomon, because he asked for himself one of their father's wives; and as the house of David, that is, the royal line of kings, neared its end, the sons of king Zedekiah were slain before his eyes by his Babylonian captors, before putting out his, that is, Zedekiah's, own eyes, and taking him in fetters to Babylon. There is no way for finite beings to compute the tragic results which came to David, as a consequence of his sin with Bathsheba.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Upon what is the emphasis of the lesson for today?
What reason, in this connection, makes us think that the Bible is of divine origin?
What is God's over-all purpose with reference to sin?
What is always necessary before one will confess his sin?
What are the basic facts of the sin of David which we are to study today?
What trait of human nature did he illustrate?

In what way may sins be covered?
Why would, a good man like David commit such a terrible sin?
What important lesson is there in this for us?

The Golden Text

What were some of the things with which Jehovah has been displeased?
Why is the human race so slow in learning this great lesson?

The Issue Parabolically Stated

Who was Nathan?
What was the place and work of the prophets of the Old Testament?
Approximately how long was it after Da-

vid's sin with Bath-sheba before Nathan came to him?

What are the principal facts of the parable and why was this means of teaching employed?

What are the primary purposes of preaching?

What lesson does Nathan's parable have for our day?

The Fury and Folly of Self-Righteousness

Why was David so greatly aroused when he heard the parable which Nathan spoke?

Why wasn't his conscience immediately disturbed?

What judgment did the king propose regarding the offender?

Why can people usually see sin in others rather than in themselves?

What did Jesus teach on this subject?

What did Paul say about it?

Why are people so quick to condemn sin in others, and then when it is pointed

out to them that they are really the ones who are guilty, try to lighten their penalty?

In what ways may the name of God be blasphemed?

The Lesson Brought Down to Date

What over-all effect did the words of Nathan have on David?

What are some of the things which we may learn regarding the depth and sincerity of David's penitential sorrow?

What two important things did Jehovah do for him?

What was the public effect of David's sin, insofar as the Lord's work was concerned?

What lesson is there here for us?

Why can't the consequences of sin be removed?

Discuss the case now before us with reference to character study.

How do we know that the sword never departed from the house of David?

Lesson XIII—September 24, 1967

THE LAST WORDS OF DAVID

Lesson Text

2 Sam. 23: 1-7; 1 Kings 2: 1-4

1 Now these are the last words of David.

David the son of Jes-se saith,
And the man who was raised on high saith,

The anointed of the God of Jacob,
And the sweet psalmist of Is'-ra-el:

2 The Spirit of Je-ho'-vah spake by me,

And his word was upon my tongue.

3 The God of Is'-ra-el said,

The Rock of Is'-ra-el spake to me:

One that ruleth over men righteously,
That ruleth in the fear of God,

4 *He shall be* as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth,
A morning without clouds,
When the tender grass springeth out of the earth,
Through clear shining after rain.

5 Verily my house is not so with God;

Yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant,
Ordered in all things, and sure:
For it is all my salvation, and all *my* desire,
Although he maketh it not to grow.

6 But the ungodly shall be all of them as thorns to be thrust away,

Because they cannot be taken with the hand;

7 But the man that toucheth them
Must be armed with iron and the staff of a spear:

And they shall be utterly burned with fire in *their* place.

1 Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Sol'-o-mon his son, saying,

2 I am going the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man;

3 And keep the charge of Je-ho'-vah thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, *and* his commandments, and his ordinances, and his testimonies, according to that which is written in the law of Mó'-ses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself:

4 That Je-ho'-vah may establish his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Is'-ra-el.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Jehovah is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer.*” (2 Sam. 22: 2.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—2 Sam. 22: 1-7.

Daily Bible Readings

September 18.	M.....	Moses' Final Charge (Deut. 31: 1-8)
September 19.	T.....	Joshua's Last Words (Josh. 24: 22-28)
September 20.	W.....	Last Words of Paul (2 Tim. 4: 1-22)
September 21.	T.....	Christ's Parting Message (Acts 1: 1-11)
September 22.	F.....	Stephen's Last Words (Acts 7: 54-60)
September 23.	S.....	God's Kindness (Psalm 103: 8-14)
September 24.	S.....	David's Death (1 Kings 2: 10-12)

TIME.—975 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—David and Solomon.

Introduction

In his *History of Israel*, Ewald, in speaking of the character of David, says, "If we proceed to put together, in its most general features, the whole picture of David which results from all these historical testimonies, we find the very foundations of his character to be laid in a peculiarly firm and unshaken trust in Jehovah, and the brightest and most spiritual views of the creation and government of the world, together with a constant, tender, and sensitive awe of the Holy One in Israel, a simple, pure striving never to be untrue to him, and the strongest efforts to return to him all the more loyally after errors and transgressions . . . His mouth continually overflows with heartfelt praise of Jehovah, and his actions are ever redolent of the nobility inspired by a real and living fear of him (for the errors by which he is carried away stand out prominently just because of their rarity). . . . In the clear daylight of Israel's ancient history, David furnishes the most brilliant example of the noble elevation of character produced by the old religion."

It is, of course, a well known fact, acclaimed by the writers of both Testaments, that David was the greatest of the kings of Israel, and of Judah after the kingdom was divided. It was to David, rather than to Saul, that the people looked back to find their greatest hero; and it was from David that they looked forward to his most illustrious Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; for it was given to him to be the type of the long-heralded and looked-for Messiah. His life's work, so far as the

record goes, began as a shepherd boy, and it ended as a king; and, as Hastings (*The Greater Men and Women of the Bible*) points out, seldom indeed has a king reached sovereign power in an important state after the manner in which David attained it. He was not called to be a ruler because his father before him had reigned, and the kingdom therefore was his by hereditary right; and yet he constantly rose in both power and the favor of the people, without entering into any conspiracy or practicing any other kind of hostile art against the reigning dynasty. He was not called to the throne as a result of a popular vote, and yet he was finally acknowledged, spontaneously, and with enthusiastic love, by the whole people, as the only man who was worthy to be called to be their ruler.

But although David was the most worthy to ascend the throne of Israel, and by far the greatest man of his time, yet both the real facts in the case, and his own consciousness, combined to warn him that he had reached this lofty position only by his reverence for God, which had been embodied in the community of Israel, while the lack of which had been the immediate cause of the downfall of Saul. And so David was clearly urged by the striking events of his past life to seek, above all things else, true welfare thereafter on the throne of Israel in nothing but a faithful clinging to the Rock of Ages and remaining in the light which came from it, with the assurance that he might expect a glo-

rious and more glorious development of the new period of his kingly career. Or, to state the same thing in another way, David had to decide whether at the height to which he had attained he would continue, as king, to be led by the same Spirit of Jehovah which had raised him thus far, or whether he would forsake

that Spirit and rely, in his pride, upon the power which his unprecedented greatness had conferred upon him. The manner in which David stood this keenest test, a test which could be applied to him alone, determined the issue of his life, and his abiding place in the history of the future.

The Golden Text

"Jehovah is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer" The harp of David must have been his constant companion during his days as the shepherd boy, while he cared for the sheep upon the slopes and valleys of Bethlehem; and he doubtless beguiled the weary hours by the music he was able to make upon it. We do not know whether or not he composed any songs during that period of his life; but, judging from his later experience, he must at least have sung the songs of others, as he attempted to praise Jehovah. Soon after he was anointed to be the successor to Saul, he was called by the latter to remain in his company, and with his harp to drive away the evil spirits which were troubling the beleaguered king. And even in the times of his great distress and his deepest sorrows, he was able to praise God and solace himself with sacred songs. (Cf. Psalms 3 and 51.)

But whatever may have been the situation in which David found himself, he was always able to sing praises unto God. The psalm from which the golden text is taken was a song of thanksgiving, and the inspired historian tells something of the circumstances under which it was composed and sung. Verse 1 of the chapter from which the text is taken says, "And David spake unto Jehovah the words of this song in the day that Jehovah delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul." Any

man is fortunate to be able to sing at all; but he is doubly happy who can sing songs to God in the night, or in the morning after dreadful experiences during the preceding night. "By reason of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; they, cry for help by reason of the arm of the mighty. But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night." (Job 35: 9, 10; of. Acts 16: 25.)

The entire psalm from which the golden text is taken is, as already indicated, a song of praise; and the first part of it ascribes all sources of help to Jehovah to whom it was sung. "And he said, Jehovah is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, even mine; God, my rock, in him will I take refuge; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge; my saviour, thou savest me from violence.

I will call upon Jehovah, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. For the waves of death compassed me; the floods of ungodliness made me afraid: the cords of Sheol were round about me; the snares of death came upon me. In my distress I called upon Jehovah; yea, I called unto my God: and he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came into his ears." (2 Sam. 22: 2-7; of. Psalm 18.) The "rock" and "fortress" suggest a *place of security*, while "saviour" implies *action* on the part of the one by whom the rescue is made.

The Text Explained

The Identity of the Psalmist

(2 Sam. 23: 1-3a)

Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse saith, and the man who was raised on high saith, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel: the Spirit of Jehovah spake by me,

and his word was upon my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me.

Regardless of the greatness of any person, and the outstanding work which he has been able to accomplish, the time must come when he must speak his last word, and per-

form his last deed. It is very probable, however, that the reference in the section of the lesson text just quoted was to David's last psalm or poetical work, rather than to the last word he actually spoke in common conversation, or in giving direction for certain things to be done. But, be that as it may, we are evidently here dealing with David's last word in some sense. Practically every adult has had the experience of hearing the last words of some loved one, or at least has been told what they were; and such expressions usually have a very dear and special meaning to those directly connected with the dying person. Even many people who have died in rebellion against God have been known to speak final words of memorable meaning and significance.

David is referred to in the text now before us as being the "sweet psalmist of Israel;" and there is no question about that in the minds of serious and thoughtful Bible students. Adam Clarke points out that this character not only belonged to him as the finest poet in Israel, but also as the greatest poet, from the standpoint of the divine, in the whole Christian world. The sweet psalmist of Israel has also been the sweet psalmist wherever civilized men have lived, and especially where religion and piety have been held in reverence.

We have no way, of course, to be certain about the actual number of psalms which David composed; but we do know that almost half—seventy-four, to be exact—of the psalms contained in the *Book of Psalms* are directly ascribed to him; and it is altogether possible that he wrote some of the forty-nine found in that book, which are listed as being anonymous. Furthermore, there are other psalms which David wrote which are in other parts of the Old Testament record, apart from the Book of Psalms. (Cf. the one now under consideration, 2 Sam. 1: 17-27.) It may be said in safety that there is a range of song in the psalms of David which appeals to every lover of the Lord. The psalms of David which are found in any section of the Old Testament promote devotion; and by their variety of occasion and sentiment, they are suitable for instruc-

tion and edification in practically all relationships of life.

It should be carefully noted here that David made direct claim to inspiration, especially with reference to the psalm now before us; and it is reasonable to suppose that the same thing was true of the other psalms which he wrote, and certainly those which were Messianic in their character. David was a prophet (of. Acts 2: 29, 30), and as such he certainly spoke by the Spirit of God. In speaking of the salvation which has been revealed through Christ, Peter says, "Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angels desire to look into." (1 Pet. 1: 10-12.) And again, "And we have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Pet. 1: 19-21.)

The last psalm of David, the one which we are considering at this time, was Messianic; and inasmuch as it was his last, he apparently went to great length, as we would express the matter from the human point of view, to make certain that it was recognized as an inspired composition. David clearly identified himself as being the anointed of Jehovah, and the sweet psalmist of Israel; and that it was God who, through his Spirit, was speaking to him. It is easy to see, of course, that Hebrew parallelism was employed by the poet. Adam Clarke notes that "the words of this song contain a glorious prediction of the Messiah's

kingdom and conquests, in highly poetic language."

The King of Rule Which the Messiah Would Inaugurate and Maintain

(2 Sam. 23: 3b-7)

One that ruleth over men righteously, that ruleth in the fear of God, he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds, when the tender grass springeth out of the earth, through clear shining after rain. Verily my house is not so with God; yet he hath made me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for it is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he maketh it not to grow. But the ungodly shall be all of them as thorns to be thrust away, because they cannot be taken by the hand; but the man that toucheth them must be armed with iron and the staff of a spear: and they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place.

To rule righteously is to rule in the fear of God, or, which is the same thing, according to that which he has ordained. When Peter was at the house of Cornelius, he 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 have reverence toward him, or the proper respect for him; while to work righteousness is to do that which God has commanded. When John the Baptist hesitated to baptize Jesus, the latter said, "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt. 3: 15); which was to say that inasmuch as God has commanded all Israelites to submit to John's baptism, and since I am an Israelite, then it is proper and right that you should baptize me. (Cf. Psalm 119: 172.)

Isaiah and other prophets of the Old Testament period clearly predicted that the universal character of the kingdom of the Messiah would have righteousness as its foundation and principle of operation. "Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with right-

eousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this." (Isa. 9: 7.) And when Paul stood among the philosophers of Athens on the Areopagus, he said to them, "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17: 30, 31.)

The practical meaning of all of this for us is essentially the following. The kingdom of Christ, in all of its details, is based entirely upon, and is characterized wholly by, the commandments of God; and all who are pleasing to God must maintain the proper attitude toward him, and make every effort to obey him in all that has been ordained (of. Matt. 28: 20; Acts 2: 42). And in order to help people reach this goal, the Lord has provided preachers and teachers, and the principle of mutual edification, so that the commandments of God will always be before them. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 1-5; 2: 2.) The writer of Hebrews says, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape; if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard." (Heb. 2: 1-3.) When the day for meting out final rewards and punishments arrives, everything will be based on whether or not those before the judgment seat have ordered their lives according to the principle of righteousness. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 9, 10; Rev. 22: 12; 20: 11-15.)

Although the text itself in verse 4 is not clear, as indicated by the use of italics, the reference is probably to the Messiah, that is, "He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds, when the tender grass springeth out of the earth, through clear shining after rain." In the words of

Robert Jamieson, "Little patches of grass are seen rapidly springing up in Palestine after rain; and even where the ground has been long parched and bare, within a few days or hours after the enriching showers begin to fall, the face of the earth is so renewed that it is covered over with a pure, fresh mantle of green. This beautiful imagery was designed to convey an idea of the auspicious effects that would result from the reign of the great Ruler; and how truly descriptive it really was of the ministry and the religion of Christ needs no illustration,—the morning sun representing its gladdening influences, and the springing of the tender grass symbolizing the growth, the beautiful development, and progress, the silent, but rapid and steady advancement of piety and virtue amongst nations and people that are subject to the benign power of Christianity."

Verse 5 as the translation stands in the text now before us, one would gather that the reference was to David's house; but if one will stop to think, it will be easy for him to see that that viewpoint does not harmonize with the context. The idea seems to be something like this: Jehovah is a covenant-making God, and he made a covenant with Israel—his house; but Israel did not keep her part of the agreement. However, in the long-run, when the Messianic kingdom is established, true Israel will be brought to God, and the real blessings of the covenant will then be realized. The ungodly are compared to thorns, which must be destroyed; but those who remove them from among the righteous, must be properly armed for their undertaking.

The King's Final Charge to His Successor

(1 Kings 2: 1-4)

Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I am going the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man; and keep the charge of Jehovah thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his ordinances, and his testimonies, according to that which is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou

doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself; that Jehovah may establish his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel.

There is a sense, of course, when sadness prevails, as a father speaks his final words to his son, and successor; but there is another sense which must be recognized as a great occasion, and a time for thanksgiving and praise. David had lived a full life, and he was leaving a great kingdom, and a son who was capable of continuing the work which he was about to leave. David had received God's promises, and he had a good understanding of their meaning and significance; and he was therefore anxious that Jehovah's word be fulfilled in his children. And it was for that reason therefore that the dying king could talk to and encourage his son to face the future, and claim the promises which God had made. David knew full well that the final fulfillment of that which God had said would depend, in a large measure, upon the manner in which his children conducted themselves. It is a pity that more fathers and sons do not realize this relationship and responsibility, and try earnestly to do something about it.

There were many things that David would liked to have done himself, build the temple, for example; but God had told him that he could not have that privilege, but that his son could. (See 1 Chron. 28: 1-7.) After exhorting the people to be faithful to the Lord, and claim the promises which he had made to them, David turned to his son Solomon, and said, "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for Jehovah searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. Take heed now; for Jehovah hath chosen thee to build a house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it." (1 Chron. 28: 9, 10.)

In commenting on the idea that the work of one must be continued

by another, A. Maclaren says, "None of us are privileged to perform completed tasks. One soweth and another reapeth." We have to be content to do partial work, and to leave its completion to our successors. There is but one Builder of whom it can be said that his hands 'have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it.' He who is the 'Alpha and Omega,' and he alone, begin and complete the work in which he has neither sharers nor predecessors nor successors. The rest of us do our little bit of the great work which lasts on through the ages, and, having inherited unfinished tasks, transmit them to those who come after us."

It is privilege enough for any Christian to lay foundations on which coming days may build. We are like the workers on some great cathedral, which was begun long before the present generations of masons were born, and will not be finished until long after they have

dropped the trowel and mallet from their dead hands. Enough for us if we can lay one course of stones in the great structure. The greater our aims, the less share has each man in their attainment. But the division of labor is the multiplication of joy, and all who have shared in the toil will be united in the final triumph. It would be poor work that was capable of being begun and perfected in a lifetime. The laborer that dug and levelled the track, and the engineer that drives the locomotive over it, are partners. Solomon could not have built the temple unless, through long, apparently idle, years, David had been patiently gathering together the wealth which he bequeathed. So, if our work is but preparatory for that of those who come after, let us not think it of slight importance, and let us be sure that all who have had any portion in the toil shall share in the victory, that "he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together."

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What does the Bible say regarding the over-all character of David?
How did he rank among the kings of Israel?
Describe the manner in which he came to the throne of Israel.
What great warning was ever before him?
What great choice did he have to make?

The Golden Text

In what way were David and his harp related?
Under what circumstances did David compose the psalm from which the golden text is taken?
What did David mean by saying that Jehovah was his rock, fortress, and saviour?

The Identity of the Psalmist

What is inevitable in the experience of every person?
What effect do the last words of people usually have on others?
In what sense was David the sweet psalmist of Israel?
What can you say of his work as a psalmist?
What proof do we have of the inspiration of the psalms of David?

What was the nature of the last psalm which David composed?

The Kind of Rule Which the Messiah Would Inaugurate and Maintain

What does it mean for one to rule righteously?
What does the Bible teach regarding the righteousness of the kingdom of Christ?
What is the practical meaning of this for us?
What metaphors were used in the text with reference to the kingdom of Christ?
What did the psalmist say with reference to God's house?
What will be the destiny of the wicked and what about those who deal with them?

The King's Final Charge to His Successor

What can you say regarding the nature of a father's last words to his son?
If both have endeavored to do right, what occasion should the final message present?
Why wasn't David permitted to build the temple himself?
How did he feel toward the prospects of Solomon's building it?
What was his final charge to his son Solomon?
Why was David anxious for Solomon to be faithful to the Lord?
What is the relation of practically every one toward the work of the Lord?

FOURTH QUARTER STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Aim.—To study carefully the Biography of Christ written by "the disciple whom Jesus loved" and to imbibe the deeply spiritual message which it contains.

Lesson I—October 1, 1967

THE WORD BECOMES FLESH

Lesson Text

John 1; 1-14

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made.

4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

5 And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not.

6 There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John.

7 The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him.

8 He was not the light, but *came* that he might bear witness of the light.

9 There was the true light, *even the light* which lighteth every man, coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world knew him not.

11 He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:

13 Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

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.

Golden Text.—*"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among¹ us"*
(John 1: 14.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—John 1: 15-18.

Daily Bible Readings

September 25. M..... "And the Word Was God" (John 1: 1-9)
 September 26. T..... Christ Became Flesh (John 1: 10-14)
 September 27. W..... The Witness of John (John 1: 15-18)
 September 28. T..... In the Form of God (Phil. 2: 5-11)
 September 29. F..... Christ the Prophet (Deut. 18: 15-19)
 September 30. S..... Deliverance through Christ (Heb. 2: 9-18)
 October 1. S..... "Immanuel" (Isa. 7: 10-17)

TIME.—Of John's writing, near the close of the first century of the Christian era; of the events of the lesson, from the beginning to the incarnation.

PLACE.—Of writing, Ephesus; of the events, Eternity and Judaea.

PERSONS.—John the writer; Jesus the subject.

Introduction

It should be noted that the time, place, and persons of this lesson are given in detail, and it is hoped that they will be observed carefully by those who use this commentary; for in the following lessons in this quarter, only the time, place, and

persons of the lesson in question will be given.

Many Bible students refer to the Gospel of John as the *Forth Gospel*, since its plan and purpose are different from the other three records of the life and work of Jesus

here upon the earth. The other three records, that is, the records of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are known as the Synoptic Gospels. The term "synoptic" literally means a similar view, and when applied to the first three gospel records, the idea is that the three writers treated the life, character, and work of Jesus from the same general point of view. In speaking of John's record of the gospel, *Harper's Bible Dictionary* points out the fact that the book has a unique quality, in that historical fact is blended with religious interpretation, which may be described as vivid dramatic narrative, and profound theology, fused into literary unity. This difference between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics was early recognized by Bible students, and it should be kept in mind by students today, if they are to understand the book from which the lessons of this quarter are taken. Clement of Alexandria, in speaking of John's record, says, "Last of all John, perceiving that the bodily literal facts had been set forth in the other gospels, with the inspiration of the Spirit composed a spiritual gospel."

The purpose which John had in writing his record of the gospel is plainly stated in his own words, namely, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." (John 20: 30, 31.) This implies that it was faith, rather than fact, which prompted John to write; or, to say the same thing in another way, John's concern with historical events was not simply to relate them as

such, but rather to use them to produce faith in the hearts of his readers. This purpose, to be sure, is present to some extent in the other three records; but in John's account, it is more consciously and creatively set forth, than it is in the others. This fact explains John's choice of representative material, much of which differs from the Synoptists, and his unique method of dealing with it.

Referring again to *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, we note that the method which John employs is not that of historical record, but of a drama, the successive scenes of which, reveal the glory of Christ. Although the record is built on a foundation of history, its superstructure is concerned with spiritual truth. And in order to develop this plan, the author chooses typical miracles, and then unfolds their meaning in elaborate discourses. At the heart of these dramatic discourses are brief, vivid expressions which Jesus himself uttered, such as "I am the light of the world" (8: 12), and "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (7: 37). The discourses of John's narrative are apparently not verbatim records, but rather a development of the central teaching of Jesus in a manner similar to the plan followed by the writer of Ecclesiastes with reference to the life and teaching of Solomon, and also by Plato in writing the speeches of Socrates. Ignatius said, "He who truly possesses the word of Jesus is able to hearken unto his silence." And so, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (John 14: 26), John fills the silence of Jesus, and interprets him to succeeding ages. (Cf. John 16: 13.)

The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is found in the principal text, and it will be dealt with in its proper place.

The Text Explained

The Eternal Nature of the Word

(John 1: 1-5)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made. In him was life;

and the life was the light of men. And that light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not.

The first eighteen verses of the first chapter of John are usually referred to as the Prologue of that gospel, in which, as Alford points out, is contained the substance and subject

of the whole record. Vincent quotes Godet as saying that the Prologue is summed up in three thoughts which determine its plan, namely, The Logos: The Logos disowned; and the Logos acknowledged and regained. These three fundamental aspects correspond with the three principal aspects of the history as related in this record of the gospel: (1) the revelation of the Logos; (2) the unbelief of the Jewish people with reference to him, and (3) the faith of the disciples in him. "Logos" is the Greek term for *Word*.

Each of the four gospel writers had a beginning point for his narrative. Matthew began with the genealogy of Jesus and the virgin birth; Luke, with the birth of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus; Mark, with the work of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus; but John went back, as it were, into Eternity itself. John wrote his record after the others had finished theirs; and it is obvious, as has already been suggested, that he had a different purpose in mind. John omitted many of the events in the life of Jesus which the others recorded, and dealt more with the spiritual aspect of Jesus and his ministry. His apparent reason for this was to combat the errors of the advocates of *Gnosticism*, who denied much of the basic teaching regarding Christ and the divine revelation.

The "beginning" to which John referred was the beginning which antedated the creation of Gen. 1: 1. The *beginning* of Gen. 1: 1 refers to the beginning of the created universe; not to the beginning of God. And so, the expression as used by John is equivalent to saying that the Word had a being before the world existed. "And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John 17: 5.) The "beginning" of John 1: 1 therefore denotes absolute pre-existence, insofar as the universe is concerned. (Cf. John 8: 58; Ex. 3: 13, 14.) It appears that the term "was" is used in contrast with "was made" and "became" in verses 3 and 14.

In speaking of the creation of the universe in the abstract, inspired writers attribute it to the word or commandment of God; and it should be noted that the term which is em-

ployed is spelled with a small letter at the beginning. "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.) Jehovah's *word* was his means and method of creation.

John declares in the section of the lesson text now under consideration that the Word is both the source of life, and that which enlightens and sustains men in this world. (Cf. John 8: 12.) The light of God's Son shines in the darkness; and the darkness has never been able to overcome it. (See marginal note.) Williams renders verses 4 and 5 in these words: "It was by him that life began to exist, and that life was the light of mankind. So the light continues to shine in the darkness, for the darkness has never overpowered it." Goodspeed translates the passage in this way: "It was by him that life came into existence, and that life was the light of mankind. The light is still shining in the darkness, for the darkness has never put it out." Some one has observed that all the darkness in the world cannot put out the light of a single candle; and if that is true of something which men can make and light, then no one should be surprised that the light of God's Son is still shining. This means, of course, that no one needs to be in the dark with reference to anything which he should do, in order to be pleasing unto him.

The Basic Mission of John the Baptist

(John 1: 6-8)

There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light.

It is in this section of the Prologue that John, for the first time, reaches the realm of history in his narrative. Hitherto he has been concerned with that which was in the beginning, and before time began. There are

two interesting things to note with reference to John the Baptist, namely, (1) his divine mission; he was "sent from God"; and (2) the fact that he is simply called "John." That John the Baptist was divinely sent is not only affirmed in the text now before us; it is likewise a matter of prophecy, as well as history. (Cf. Mark 1: 2-4; Mal. 3: 1; John 1: 31-34.) The probable reason why the writer never refers to John as John the Baptist was due to the fact that his own name was John, and he therefore wrote as if the Baptist was the only John who was entitled to distinction.

After introducing the subject of his gospel narrative as the Word of God, John, like Mark, begins his historical record with the work of the harbinger; and he shows clearly why God sent the forerunner, namely, to be a witness. And it is well, just here, to observe that the passage now before us is only one of several in this book which carefully indicates that John the Baptist was inferior to Jesus. (See John 1: 15, 24-27, 30; 3: 28-30; 4: 1; 5: 33-36; 10: 41.) Vincent points out that the emphatic development of the idea of witness is peculiar to John's gospel, and he quotes Westcott as saying that it evidently belongs to a time when men had begun to reason about the faith, and to analyze the grounds on which it rested.

The prominence of the idea of witnessing, in the gospel now before us, may be seen by reading the following passages, namely, (1) the witness of the Father, 5: 37; 8: 18; (2) the witness of Christ himself, 8: 14; 18: 37; (3) the witness of works, 5: 36; 10: 25; (4) the witness of scripture, 5: 39, 46; 1: 45; (5) the witness of John the Baptist, 1: 7; 5: 33; (6) the witness of the disciples, 15: 27; 19: 35; 21: 24; and (7) the witness of the Holy Spirit, 15: 26; 16: 13, 14; of. 1 John 5: 7.

The Relation of the Word to Mankind

(John 1: 9-14)

There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received

him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 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.

John begins this section of the lesson text with a contrast between John and Baptist and the Word. John himself was a light (John 5: 33-35), but he was not the true light. Judging from the punctuation, it appears that the "coming into the world" (verse 9) refers to the light, rather than to every man; and the light, in turn, that is, the true light, has reference to the Word, or, to Jesus who was the Word become flesh. "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness." (John 12: 46.) The true light existed from the beginning, but it was coming into the world during the ministry of John the Baptist. "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.)

With the coming of Christ, or the Word, into the world, he 'was, of course, in the world, the world which he had created; but the world, that is, the people of the world, did not recognize him. He simply did not meet their expectations of the Messiah. Verse 11 says, "He came unto his own, but they that were his own received him not." The first "his own" is neuter, and the meaning is *his own things* (see marginal note); but the second "his own" is masculine—"but *they* that were his own"—has reference to his people, that is, his fellow Jews. And in making this application, John passed from the general to the specific action of the Word as the light of the world.

Not every one, however, rejected Christ; for there were some among the people who did receive him, and

they were and are the ones who believe on his name. "But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name." The primary reference was to the Jewish people, as already indicated; but the principle is applicable to all people throughout the Christian dispensation. To "receive" Christ is to *believe* on him, that is, to accept the divine testimony regarding him. But it should be noted that those who believe on him are not his people, merely because they believe on him; rather, they have the right of becoming his people.

The original word for "right" in verse 12 is *exousian*, and it literally means authority; and as used in the passage now before us, the meaning is that believers have the legitimate right to become God's people, because the Lord, that is, the one who decides such matters, has authorized it. This right or authorization is an imparted designation to a new status, rather than an inherent ability; and the entire conception, as stated by both John and Paul, is that membership in the Lord's family, or, which is the same thing, salvation from alien sin, is a gift of God which must be received. "But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (Verse 12.)

Paul told the Romans that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes it; and he then told them that God's righteousness, or that which he expects of them, is revealed in the gospel. (See Rom. 1: 16, 17.) The Jews took pride in the fact that they were born children of Abraham, and therefore children of God; but Jesus makes it plain that fleshly relationships do not count with him. He later taught Nicodemus that a new

birth is essential to salvation. (See John 3: 1-5; Acts 2: 36-41.) The apostle Paul further told the Romans that ignorance of God's righteousness, that is, the righteousness which is revealed in the gospel, can and will result in one's failure to submit to the righteousness of God. (See Rom. 10: 1-4.)

One of the chief dogmas of the heretical Gnostics of John's day was the denial that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. (Cf. 2 John 7.) They admitted that Jesus came in the flesh, but they denied that he was the Christ. Their contention was that Christ, a wholly spiritual being, descended upon Jesus, a wholly human being, at his baptism; and then left him at the cross. But John declares that it was the Word, a wholly spiritual being, who became flesh, that is, who took upon himself a fleshly body, and lived among men here upon the earth. (Cf. Heb. 10: 5; 1 John 1: 1-3.) Thus, in taking upon himself a body of flesh, the Word did not give up his divine nature, but took upon himself, in addition to his Deity and Divinity, the nature of humanity; or, to say the same thing in another way, he was both God and man. (See Phil. 2: 5-8.)

But the expression "became flesh" means more than that he merely assumed a human body; he assumed human nature too, and thereby identified himself with the human race. The passage now before us does not say that the Word *clothed* himself with flesh, but that he *became flesh*. He had a human body. (Cf. John 11: 33-35; 12: 27; 13: 21; 19: 30; Heb. 4: 15.) This can only mean that during his earthly sojourn, it was necessary for Jesus to live under human limitations. He could be at only one place at a time (John 11: 1-6); he depended upon God for his strength (Luke 22: 43); and he plainly declared that he did not know everything (Matt. 24: 36). Divinity was united with humanity in the incarnation.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Why is it essential to note the time, place, and persons of this lesson?

Why is John's record of the life and

teaching of Christ frequently called the Fourth Gospel?

What is the principal difference between John's record and the other three narratives?

What was John's primary purpose in writing his narrative?

What general plan did he follow in composing his record?

In what way was John peculiarly fitted for the work which he did in this respect?

The Eternal Nature of the Word

- What is the general term often used to designate the first eighteen verses of John's record?
- What three thoughts are expressed in this part of the record?
- What is the meaning of the term "Logos"?
- How did each of the four gospel writers begin his narrative?
- In what way did John differ from all the others and why?
- What "beginning" does John refer to?
- What is affirmed of the light which the Word brought into the world?
- What is the practical meaning of this to us?

The Basic Mission of John the Baptist

- What two interesting things are seen in the remark about John in this section of the text?
- What was the primary purpose of John's coming, as set forth in this part of the lesson text?

What does it mean for one to bear witness? What emphasis does John place upon witnessing?

The Relation of the Word to Mankind

- In what way does John begin this section of the lesson text?
- What was the basic difference between the light of John and the light of Jesus?
- What effect has the light of the Word had upon mankind?
- What does the text say about the reception of the Word in the world and his relation to it?
- What is said regarding those who did receive Jesus?
- What does it mean for one to receive Christ?
- What "right" do believers receive and what is the implication regarding their salvation?
- How alone can people become righteous before God? Give reasons for your answer.
- Why did John write regarding the Word's becoming flesh and what does that mean?

Lesson II—October 8, 1967

THE NEW BIRTH

Lesson Text

John 3: 1-12

1 Now there was a man of the Phar'isees, named Nic-o-de-mus, a ruler of the Jews:

2 The same came unto him by night, and said to him, Rab'-bi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him.

3 Je'-sus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

4 Nic-o-de-mus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

5 Je'-sus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh

is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew.

8 The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

9 Nic-o-de-mus answered and said said unto him, How can these things be?

10 Je'-sus answered and said unto him, Art thou the teacher of Is'-ra-el, and understandest not these things?

11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

12 If I told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." (James 1: 18.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—John 3: 13-17.

Daily Bible Readings

- October 2. M....."Ye Must Be Born Again" (John 3: 1-8)
- October 3. T.....Nicodemus, a Defender of Jesus (John 7: 45-52)
- October 4. W..... Nicodemus at the Tomb of Jesus (John 19: 38-42)

October 5. T..... Acquiring the New Life (John 3: 9-16)
 October 6. F..... A New Creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5: 14-21)
 October 7. S..... Christ, Light of the World (John 3: 17-21)
 October 8. S..... Life through the Son (John 3: 22-36)

TIME.—A.D. 27.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jesus and Nicodemus.

Introduction

The subject which we are to consider today is a highly controversial one, but if the student will keep in mind and be governed by a few fundamental facts, he should have little, if any, trouble in understanding that which the Lord meant to teach on the question. And so, one of the very first things which we should get clearly fixed in our minds, as we begin the study of this lesson, is the fact that the language which Jesus employed in discussing the new birth, is largely figurative. This is especially true of the term "born." It was necessary for Jesus, during much of the time of his earthly ministry, to speak in dark sayings. "These things have I spoken unto you in dark sayings: the hour cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in dark sayings, but shall tell you plainly of the Father." (John 16: 25.) The marginal reading for "dark sayings" is *parable* but they were not parables in the sense of those found in the Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

The reason why Jesus spoke in dark sayings to the people during the time of his earthly sojourn among them, was because of their inability to grasp the true significance of his spiritual teaching. (Cf. Matt. 13: 10-15; 1 Cor. 3: 1-3.) Not only did the people, generally speaking, fail to understand much of the teaching of Christ during the period referred to; that was also true of the apostles themselves, to a very large extent. (Cf. Luke 9: 43-45.) But when the will of Christ began to

be made known, beginning with the first Pentecost following his ascension, plain and literal language was used in telling people what to do in order to be saved. In commenting on the question now before us, Isaac Errett says, "Here, therefore, we may learn the terms of entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Why will men puzzle themselves over the enigmatical language of John 3: 1-5 and perpetually appeal for authority to a private conversation with Nicodemus at a time when, for many reasons, Jesus veiled his instructions in parables, when we have here the terms of entrance into the kingdom announced *by authority*, in unfigurative terms, in the literal and positive language of law?" (*First Principles*, p. 29.)

It is, of course, both proper and right to study the figurative language which was used by Jesus during his public ministry here upon the earth; but we must learn to interpret such language in the light of the plain and literal truth which was revealed later. Thus, instead of trying to make the figurative the pattern of our thinking and conduct, we should, as Errett points out, accept the unfigurative terms which have been spoken in the literal and positive language of law. When people have inquiring minds, and are willing to ask questions, as did the apostles, and then search diligently for the answers in the revealed will of God, they will have little trouble in ascertaining that which is God's will for them. (Read again Matt. 13: 10-17.)

The Golden Text

"Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" After having pointed out the source of evil, and that every good thing comes from God (see James 1: 12-17), James, in the passage now before us, cites one of the greatest examples of God's goodness,

namely, the salvation of our souls. And we should note that this salvation is due to God's own will, and not to any external circumstance, thereby showing that his essential nature is to do good, rather than evil. (Cf. Tit. 3: 5.)

James says in verse 15, in discussing the manner in which sin comes

into being (see also verses 13, 14), "Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death"; and now, in contrast with that which sin does, the writer affirms that God "brought us forth" to be his people. To bring forth in the sense used by James is equivalent to conversion. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently: having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth. . . . And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you." (1 Pet. 1: 22-25; of. Eph. 5: 25-27.)

Before Jesus left his disciples to go back to the Father, he said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." (Mark 16: 15, 16.) The gospel which Jesus authorized to be preached is God's power unto salvation for the *believer* (Rom. 1: 16), and that is the "word of truth." "In whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation,—in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the

Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Eph. 1: 13, 14.) The reason why the gospel is God's power to save the believer is that it *moves* him to do that which the gospel authorized men to do. Noah believed God's message, and he was "moved with godly fear" to do that which God commanded him (Heb. 11: 7); and in the same way, when people believe the gospel they are moved to do that which they are commanded to do. This is the meaning of "be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves." (James 1: 22.)

The figure regarding the firstfruits appears to be based on the law of Moses, which required that the firstfruits be consecrated to God. Such fruits were always regarded as being holy, and they were never subjected to the will of men. The same general idea is also expressed in the New Testament. (Cf. Rom. 11: 16.) Christians therefore, being "A kind of firstfruits of his creatures," should be consecrated to God. This is what the writer of Hebrews meant, when he said, "Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification [consecration] without which no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12: 14.)

The Text Explained

The Visit of Nicodemus with Jesus

(John 3: 1,2)

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came unto him by night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him.

The term "now," with which the lesson text for today begins, is explanatory and transitional, rather than adversative. John had just said, in the closing verses of chapter 2, "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, during the feast, many believed on his name, beholding his signs which he did. But Jesus did not trust himself unto them, for that he knew all men, and because he needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man."

(John 2: 23-25.) Nicodemus was an example of the human race which Jesus knew so well; and the text now under consideration proved the correctness of the observation which John had just made—Jesus did know the man who came to him by night, along with all the others.

John, alone of the gospel writers, mentions Nicodemus; and this is the first reference to him. It appears that the Jewish leader was seeking information regarding Jesus, although nothing is said in the text regarding the purpose of his coming to Jesus. The next appearance of Nicodemus is recorded in John 7: 45-52, where he is represented as a defender of Jesus, and as a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. His final appearance is in John 19: 38-42, where he joined with Joseph of Arimathea, a fellow member of the Sanhedrin, in burying the body of Jesus, in Jo-

seph's own new tomb. It is easy to see from the three references to Nicodemus that he displayed a genuine interest in Jesus, in the face of an almost unanimous hostility on the part of his Pharisee colleagues, which suggests, as *Harper's Bible Dictionary* notes, a virtual discipleship in his heart. The Pharisees were one of the three principal sects of the Jews, the other two being the Sadducees and the Essenes.

Although, as already pointed out, the Bible does not tell us *why* Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, there can be little doubt about the purpose of his coming. It is easy to speculate on such matters, but we would not gain any further information on the subject than we now have. The miracles of Jesus, along with his declaration of authority over the temple, had made a deep impression on the Jewish leaders, and Nicodemus apparently wanted some direct information regarding the newly arisen teacher; and he evidently felt that the best way to get that information, was to go directly to him and contact him personally.

While not intending to enter into the field of speculation regarding the reason Nicodemus may have had for coming to Jesus by night, it is probably not out of place to notice some of the possible reasons which have been suggested for the nightly visit. Some have supposed that it was because of his fear of the Jews (of John 12: 42, 43), and that could have been true; but when we consider the courage which Nicodemus displayed on other occasions, it is doubtful that his visit at night was due to fear of reprisal on the part of his fellow Jews. It is possible that he may have wanted to avoid comment on the part of other members of the Jewish Supreme Court; or he may have hesitated to commit himself with reference to a new teacher, until he learned more about his doctrine. Furthermore, it is altogether possible that his chief motive in coming to Jesus by night, was because he wanted a quiet conversation, such as he could not hope to obtain during the daytime. But whatever his motive may have been for the nocturnal visit, the record simply says, "the same came unto him by night." If we keep in mind the manner in which the houses of that

time and place were constructed, it will be easy for us to understand that Nicodemus could go directly to the room where Jesus was, that is, the guest chamber, without being seen by other people who may have been in the house at the time of the visit. An outside stairway led to the upper room which was usually reserved for visitors.

Nicodemus was a "teacher of Israel" (verse 10), but he addressed Jesus by the very title which his own disciples applied to him. The term "Rabbi" literally means *My Master*; and, as Milligan and Moulton points out, we may be sure that a member of the sect which had carefully scrutinized the credentials of John the Baptist (John 1: 19-24) would not lightly address Jesus by this title of honor, or acknowledge him as a teacher sent from God. On the contrary, Nicodemus was serious when he came to Jesus for this interview.

The miracles which Jesus had been performing in Jerusalem during the early days of his ministry attracted attention and challenged investigation; and they gave evidence, as Nicodemus freely acknowledge, that God was with him. (Cf. Acts 10: 38.) And if God was with Jesus, it is necessary to assume that God also approved his teaching. (See Acts 2: 22.) That which Nicodemus said to Jesus does not necessarily mean that he thought that the latter was the Messiah; but he certainly did recognize him as "a teacher come from God." And when people feel that way about a man who claims to be teaching the way of truth and righteousness, it will be much easier for him to lay aside any prejudice which he might have, and make a full and careful investigation of that which is being taught. (Cf. Acts 17: 10-12.)

The Doctrine of the New Birth Announced

(John 3: 3-7)

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be bom? Jesus answered, Veri-

ly, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I say unto thee, Ye must be born anew.

It may, upon first thought, seem strange that Jesus would make his reply to Nicodemus in this manner; but when we take into consideration the fact that the Jewish ruler had just acknowledged that the young teacher was from God and had his approval, it is certainly not strange that he would give him the information which he needed. The Jewish teachers were expecting the Messianic kingdom to appear; and, as Alford points out, Jesus simply informed Nicodemus that it is *life*, rather than *learning*, that is needed for that kingdom; and that life must begin with a birth. Alford then quotes Luther as saying, "My teaching is not of *doing* and *leaving undone*, but of a *change in the man*;—so that it is, not *new works* done, but a *new man* to do them; not another *life* only, but another *birth*." And Jesus wanted his caller to understand that it was by this method only that he could receive and understand the information for which he had come.

The apostle Paul declares that those who are in Christ are new creatures, or, as the marginal note has it, *there is a new creature* (2 Cor. 5: 7); and that implies the beginning of a new life. "Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6: 3, 4.) John says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God." (1 John 5: 1.) One is begotten by the Spirit when he is made a believer in Christ "through the gospel." (1 Cor. 4: 15.) "Belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Rom. 10: 17.) Therefore, one is begotten of the Spirit when by the Spirit, who is the author of the gospel, he is made a believer in Christ "through the gos-

pel." One is "born of the water" when he is baptized.

Luke's account of the virgin birth of Christ illustrates the principle of the new birth in a forceful manner. "And Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 1: 34, 35.) There would have been no life for Mary to deliver, if it had not been previously imparted by the Holy Spirit; and, just so in the case of the one who is baptized into Christ, there would be no new life in that relationship, if it were not previously begotten by the Holy Spirit. But as it is, the old life is destroyed, the new life is created, and the obedience is completed when baptism is performed according to the word. (Cf. Eph. 5: 25-27; Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 37, 38; 22: 16; 1 Pet. 3: 21; etc., etc.) This, again, is the meaning of being "born of water and the Spirit." (Cf. Rom. 1: 16, 17; 1 Pet. 1: 22-25; 1 John 5: 1; 1 Cor. 4: 15.) And it should always be kept in mind that if the life which has been begotten is not delivered into its God-ordained sphere, it can never grow and function as it should. This should be enough to convince any one of the importance of baptism in the gospel plan of salvation; for it is by or through baptism that the newly born child of God enters the church, or, which is the same thing, the God-ordained sphere of growth and activity.

The principle which we are now discussing is important, and it is doubtful if it can be over-emphasized in one short lesson; and so, even with some repetition, let us remember that human life, as we understand it, is always ushered into the sphere, where it must grow and be developed, by a birth; and Jesus told Nicodemus that the same thing is also true of the spiritual life. That life must have its beginning in the new order of things, that is, in the kingdom of God, by a birth. This was startling news to the Jewish leader who had come to Jesus, for he, along with other Jewish teachers of his day, supposed that all the chil-

dren of Abraham, through Isaac and Jacob, would automatically become citizens of the kingdom of God. (Cf. Matt. 3: 8, 9; John 1: 11-13.) It is hardly probable that Nicodemus completely misunderstood that which Jesus was saying regarding the need for a new or second birth; for we are told that the Jews regarded a proselyte to their faith as "like an infant just born." (Lightfoot.) It is altogether probable that Nicodemus was trying to reduce the Lord's remark to an absurdity. (See verses 3, 4; of. John 6: 60.) Ridicule is a trenchant weapon in the hands of those with preconceived ideas!

Heavenly Things Illustrated by Earthly Things

(John 3: 8-12)

The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?

The term *pneuma*, from which we have both "wind" and "Spirit" in the passage now before us, occurs nearly four hundred times in the New Testament, and in no other place is it translated "wind," except in Heb. 1: 7, where a quotation is made from Psalm 104: 4. But Greek scholars tell us that *pneuma* does mean both "wind" and "spirit," as may be seen in both the Septuagint and the classics. It is also true that the same word means both *wind* and *spirit* in other languages, such as Hebrew, Syriac, and Latin. Furthermore, the term from which we have "bloweth" occurs in five other places in the New Testament, and it always refers to *wind*. The original term for

"bloweth" is *pneo*, and it is found in the following passages: Matt. 7: 25, 27; Luke 12: 55; John 3: 8; 6: 18; Rev. 7: 1.

Jesus was probably using an allegory, involving the wind, a natural phenomenon, to illustrate that which he had just said about the new birth; or, he was using earthly things to illustrate heavenly things—the natural to help his visitor to understand the spiritual. Nicodemus had objected to the Lord's teaching, on the ground that he couldn't understand it; and Jesus, in effect, told him that the basis of his objection was not consistent with his usual behavior; for he was continually believing things which he did not understand, including the one which Jesus had just cited, namely, the wind. (Cf. Eccles. 11: 5.)

It is clear from the text now under consideration that Nicodemus still did not grasp the true meaning and the full significance of that which Jesus was saying to him; but it appears that he was much more cautious in his attitude toward the Lord. It should also be noted that in his reply to the nightly visitor, Jesus emphasized Nicodemus' position as a teacher of Israel; and a literal rendering of the Lord's question is this, "Art *thou* the teacher of the Israel," that is, the well-known and accepted teacher of the people of God, and still you do not understand the thing about which I am speaking? Robertson thinks that his Pharisaic theology had made him almost proof against spiritual apprehensions, and he notes that "it was outside of his groove (rote, rut, rot, the three terrible r's of mere traditionalism)." Vincent points out that Nicodemus was not reproved for his lack of previous knowledge, but for his want of perception or understanding after these truths were explained to him. The idea of a spiritual kingdom, and a spiritual life to match it, were not foreign to the Old Testament (of. Ezek. 11: 19, 20); and if Nicodemus had read that record aright, he would have been better prepared to understand the new order of things which Jesus came to make known.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why did Jesus frequently speak in dark sayings during his earthly ministry?

What rule should we always follow with reference to our duty before God?
 What, then, is the best way to interpret figurative language?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did James write the words which serve as the golden text for today?
 Upon what principle is our salvation from God based?
 Discuss the plan which the Lord employs in saving people.
 In what way is the gospel of the power of God for the salvation of the believer?
 What is the significance of Christians being the firstfruits of his creatures?

The Visit of Nicodemus with Jesus

What is the force of "Now" in the beginning of the lesson text for today?
 What is known of Nicodemus, insofar as the New Testament record is concerned?
 How was he evidently affected with reference to his relation with and his attitude toward Christ?
 What evidently prompted Nicodemus to seek an interview with Jesus?
 Who was Nicodemus and what was his relation with the people of Israel?
 What significance was attached to the manner in which he addressed the Lord?

In what way was Nicodemus affected by the miracles of Jesus?

The Doctrine of the New Birth Announced

Why do some people think that the Lord's first words to Nicodemus were rather "blunt"?
 What did Jesus actually say to his visitor?
 Why is a "birth" absolutely essential to entrance into the kingdom of God?
 How is the new birth brought about?
 In what way does Luke's record of the virgin birth illustrate the new birth?
 Why should a lesson on this subject be carefully emphasized?

Heavenly Things Illustrated by Earthly Things

What are the principal facts regarding the terms from which we have "wind" and "bloweth"?
 What was the evident purpose of Jesus in introducing the subject regarding them?
 Why is the Lord's illustration an appropriate one?
 What change was apparent in the attitude of Nicodemus to Jesus as the discussion continued?
 In what way did Jesus seek to enforce his instruction to Nicodemus?
 What was the basic trouble with Nicodemus' ability to understand these spiritual matters?

Lesson III—October 15, 1967

JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

Lesson Text

John 4: 7-26

7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

8 For his disciples were gone away into the city to buy food.

9 The Samaritan woman therefore saith unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman? (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then hast thou that living water?

12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle?

13 Jesus answered and said unto

her, Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.

15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

17 The woman answered and said unto him, I have no husband. Jesus saith unto her, Thou saidst well, I have no husband:

18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: this hast thou said truly.

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem

sa-lem is the place where men ought to worship.

21 Je'-sus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Je-ru'-sa-lem, shall ye worship the Father.

22 Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews.

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall

worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers.

24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Mes-si'-ah cometh (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things.

26 Je'-sus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am *he*.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation” (Isa. 12: 3.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—Isa. 55: 1-11.

Daily Bible Readings

- October 9. M.....Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (John 4: 1-8)
- October 10. T.....Jesus Talks with the Samaritan Woman (John 4: 9-26)
- October 11. W.....Samaritans Converted (John 4: 27-42)
- October 12. T.....Wells of Salvation (Isa. 12: 1-5)
- October 13. F.....Waters of Healing (Ezek. 47: 1-9)
- October 14. S.....Invitation to All (John 7: 37-44)
- October 15. S.....“Whosoever Will” (Rev. 22: 16-22)

TIME.—A.D. 27.

PLACE.—Sychar, in Samaria.

PERSONS.—Jesus and the woman of Samaria.

Introduction

The land of Samaria was one of the three divisions of Palestine west of the river Jordan. It included the territory which was once occupied by the tribe of Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh; and it was situated in the central part of the country, between Judaea on the south, and Galilee on the north. The capital city of Samaria also bore that name; and it was built by Omri, one of the kings of Israel. (See 1 Kings 16: 21-24.) The people of Samaria, that is, the original Samaritans, were a mixed race of people who sprang from the poorer class of the ten tribes who were left in the land, when the others were taken captive by the Assyrians, and some foreigners who were brought in by the captors who had removed the Israelites from their homeland. (See 2 Kings 17: 24; Ezra 4: 1-10.)

The new inhabitants of Samaria did not fear Jehovah at first, and he accordingly, sent lions among them; and they killed some of them. Word of this reached the king of Assyria, and he commanded that a priest who had been taken captive be sent back to Samaria, to dwell among the people, and teach them the law of Jeho-

vah. This was done, but the people there did not free themselves entirely from idolatry. (See 2 Kings 17: 25-29.) Neither the people who reported this condition to the king, nor the king himself, acted to prevent the attacks by the lions, because they believed Jehovah to be the God of heaven and earth; but rather because they considered him merely as the god of Samaria, and they reasoned that if his law was obeyed, he would be satisfied and would cause the lions to cease their attacks.

The hostility which grew up between the Jews and the Samaritans became very pronounced; with the result that there was little or no intercourse between the two peoples. Much of the background of the bitter animosity which existed between the two races may be learned from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. When the Jews first returned to their homeland from their Babylonian captivity with plans to rebuild the temple, the Samaritans offered to help them; but the Jews rejected the offer. And when Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, the Samaritans did all they could to

frustrate his efforts. The Samaritans obtained permission from the Persian monarch to build their own temple, which they did on mount Gerizim; and they made the claim that that was the location which Moses designated as the place of

worship. They accepted only the five books of Moses, Genesis through Deuteronomy; and rejected all the rest of the Old Testament Scriptures. These are some of the reasons why the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.

The Golden Text

"With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" A fuller import of the passage just quoted may be had by reading the context from which it is taken. "And in that day thou shalt say, I will give thanks unto thee, O Jehovah; for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid: for Jehovah, even Jehovah, is my strength and song; and he is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day ye shall say, Give thanks unto Jehovah, call upon his name, declare his doings among the peoples, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto Jehovah; for he hath done excellent things: let this be known in all the earth. Cry aloud and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion; for great in the midst of thee is the Holy One of Israel." (Isa. 12: 1-6.)

The preceding chapter in Isaiah was a Messianic prediction of good things to come, and the words just quoted, that is, chapter 12, was a song of thanksgiving for the wonderful things which God had in store for his afflicted people. The prophet was assuring the people that deliverance from captivity would come to them, but he did not stop there; instead, he looked forward to the coming of Christ, when salvation would be both full and complete. It is pos-

sible that Isaiah may have also been thinking of the time when Israel was thirsty while wandering in the wilderness; and if so, he was assuring the people of the Lord that they would, in time to come, not have to depend upon the water which came from the rock, when Moses struck it; but upon deeper and more abundant wells, not of water only, but also of salvation itself.

It is a fact, as all Bible readers know, that Jesus used substantially the same figure, as reported by the writer of the book from which the lesson text for today is taken. "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7: 37-39.) Water, in its literal sense, is absolutely essential to life; and it is, in a similar manner, that salvation must be obtained, if eternal death is to be avoided. God, through his Son, has provided the well of salvation for all who are willing to accept it; and inasmuch as he is the source of all good blessings (of James 1: 17), we must, of course, regard him as the only source of salvation. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18-6: 2.)

The Text Explained

The Meeting of Jesus and the Woman of Samaria

(John 4: 7-9)

There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. For his disciples were gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman therefore saith unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman?

(For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

If the first six verses of the chapter now before us are read, it will be seen that Jesus was leaving Judaea, and was returning to Galilee. It is probable that the Lord had spent several months in Jerusalem and Judaea. He had gone to Jerusalem for the passover feast, which was probably during the latter part of March, or early April; and from his ref-

erence to the time of harvest (John 4: 35), it appears that he was making the journey through Samaria during the middle of December. The harvest about which he spoke came about the middle of April; and counting back four months from that time would be about the middle of December.

Because of their intense hatred for the Samaritans, the Jews, in travelling to and from Judaea and Galilee, usually avoided passing through Samaria. This made it necessary for them to cross the Jordan, and go up or down the eastern side of the river. But Jesus, for some reason, decided to take the shorter route, and go through Samaria. "And he must needs pass through Samaria." (John 4: 4.) This necessity may have arisen because Jesus was conscious of his Father's will. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28; Acts 16: 11-15.) It was about the sixth hour, that is, about noon, Jewish time, when Jesus and his disciples reached the well where he met the Samaritan woman; but if the reference was to Roman time, which John frequently employed in his record, then the time was close to six o'clock, probably in the evening.

John, along with other Bible writers, does not usually give many of the details of the happenings which he records, and about which we would like to know; but he does tell enough to enable us to have a fairly accurate picture of that which took place. The fact that the woman appears to have come alone to draw water, strongly suggests that it was not the usual time for the women to come for that purpose. (Cf. Gen. 24: 10ff; Ex. 2: 16; 1 Sam. 9: 11.) This is one of the reasons for thinking that the time reference was probably Jewish. Some expositors are of the opinion that the moral character of the woman in question may have had something to do with her being alone. It is also possible that she may have been working in a nearby field, and came for a refreshing drink for herself, and to carry back with her water for others who may have been with her. The term "Samaria" refers to the country by that name, and not to the city of Samaria, which was some six or eight miles away from the place where she and Jesus were.

The record specifically says that

Jesus was weary with his journey, and that he was sitting by the well. This is one of the many references in the New Testament to the humanity of our Lord. He was subject to the same fleshly infirmities which characterize all of us. (Cf. Heb. 4: 15.) Jesus opened the conversation with the woman by asking her for a drink of water; and Johnson notes that it was the custom of people in those lands to grant such a request cheerfully, even to strangers and enemies. (Cf. Matt. 10: 42.)

Jesus was apparently alone at the well when the woman of Samaria arrived, and was resting nearby, while his disciples had gone into the city to buy some food for him and themselves. This request for a drink of water came as a surprise to the woman, in as much as she recognized him as being a Jew. We are not told just how she was able to recognize him, whether by his dress, physical features, or speech; but realizing how the Jews felt toward the Samaritans, she was moved by surprise to ask Jesus why he would condescend to ask her for a drink. This, of course, implies that she considered him as being a typical Jew.

There is no indication in the record to justify the conclusion that the woman of Samaria meant to refuse to grant the Lord's request for a drink; for the fact that the disciples had gone into the city to purchase some food implies that the "dealings" referred to applied primarily to social intercourse. *The Fourfold Gospel* says that according to later tradition, a Jew accepted no hospitality from a Samaritan; and to eat his bread as a guest was as polluting as to eat swine flesh; but such social courtesy was the very thing which Jesus was here requesting. McGarvey and Pendleton continue: "There are today between one and two hundred Samaritans dwelling in Shechem at the foot of Mt. Gerizim, and Dr. Robinson says of them that they 'neither eat, nor drink, nor marry with the Jews, but only trade with them.' " Jesus, however, was not willing to manifest that attitude toward the people of Samaria; and he made that abundantly clear in the parable of the good Samaritan. (See Luke 10: 25-37.) But the feeling which the Jews maintained toward the Samaritans will help to explain

why it was necessary, when the gospel was preached to them, to have apostolic approval, in order to convince the Jewish brethren that the Samaritans were entitled to gospel privileges, including church membership. (See Acts 8: 14-17.)

A Great Claim and an Earnest Request

(John 4: 10-19)

Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her. Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said unto him, I have no husband. Jesus saith unto her, Thou saidst well, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: this hast thou said truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

Jesus, of course, realized that the woman had no idea as to who he was; she simply looked upon him as being one of the many Jews around her country, and it was upon the basis of this failure to recognize him as being the Messiah that Jesus based his remarks to her. And what was true of the woman of Samaria is, in principle, largely true of us today. If we would only recognize the Lord for what he is and can do for us, we, too, would be asking for the blessings which he would gladly bestow upon us. (Cf. Phil. 4: 6, 7, 13, 19.) The "gift of God" is, in the broad

sense, Christ himself. (Cf. John 3: 16; 2 Cor. 9: 15.)

Johnson observes that Jesus asked a favor, in order to confer a greater one; and he made a request, in order to open up a conversation which would give him access to the heart. Barnes points out that this is one of the many instances in which Jesus took occasion from topics of common conversation to introduce religious discussion; and no one could do it more skillfully than he. It would prove to be a great blessing to all of us, if we would study his method and follow his example. One way to acquire the art of religious discussion with others is to have one's mind full of the subject of that which men should know, and then consider every person a prospect for religious instruction.

The Samaritan woman thought that Jesus was talking about literal water; and with that idea in mind, she was, of course, not able to grasp the thought about which the Lord was speaking. Many people today make the same mistake with reference to the figurative language which is so often found in the Scriptures. The term "Sir" which the woman used in addressing Jesus was only an expression of her respect for him. She did not understand Jesus to be divine, as we do. The well before them was, according to commentators, about a hundred feet deep; and the woman, with that fact in mind, could not see how or where Jesus could obtain the water about which he spoke, and especially with no visible means of drawing it from that well.

The comparison which the woman drew of Jesus with Jacob may have indicated that she was beginning to wonder about the greatness of the man who was speaking to her; although it could have meant that she really did not think of him as being in a class with the patriarch whom the Samaritans so highly regarded. It is true that she was slow in grasping the thought which Jesus had in mind; it is also true that she was beginning to think that he might be the Christ. (See verse 29.) The woman's claim that the Samaritans were the descendants of Jacob was not entirely true, as was pointed out in the beginning of this lesson. Jesus

himself classed them with the Gentiles (Matt. 10: 5, 6), and he also spoke of them as strangers or aliens (Luke 17: 18).

But Jesus made it plain to the woman of Samaria that he was not talking about water which could be drawn from the well which was before them. His words appear to have a close connection with the idea he expressed regarding the water which would be obtained from him, as already noted in the quotation from John 7: 37-39. This is the water which not only satisfies the longings of the soul, but which is also the elixir of life, which quickens it into a new kind of life which shall never end. It is a beautiful figure of the joy in Christ. In heat, in cold, in drought, in shower; in prosperity, in adversity; it still springs up, cheering and refreshing the soul, and this unto all eternity. The water of life, which the Lord alone can supply, never fails to meet any need which the soul may have; for it is the salvation, full and complete, which is offered to all men.

When the woman of Samaria showed her interest in obtaining the water which Jesus can give, the Lord evidently wanted her to see herself as she really was, and thereby realize her need of a Saviour. And in order to help her achieve this end, Jesus asked her to go and call her husband, and then bring him with her. He knew, of course, what her marital relationship was, but he wanted her to become conscious of what she was doing. There are too many people today who think that they want to have the blessings which the Lord is able to bestow upon them, but whose lives are totally unfit to receive them. God, and we say it reverently, can no more save people who still cling to their sinful way of life, than he can give them a place in the kingdom of Christ, for which they are wholly unfitted. (Cf. Matt. 20: 23.) People must realize their need for salvation, and must be willing to meet the Lord's requirements, before this great salvation becomes theirs.

The Kind of Worship Which Is Pleasing to God

(John 4: 20-26)

Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jeru-

salem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

"This mountain" was mount Gerizim, not far from which was Jacob's well. And in speaking of this well, *Harper's Bible Dictionary* notes that it is one of the most exactly identified sites in Old Testament Palestine. One would expect to find this well out in the open, but, as it is, it is beneath a church building; and it is necessary to descend a stairway in order to reach it. In referring to "our fathers," the woman of Samaria was again reiterating her claim to the heritage of Jacob and his descendants. Those who are familiar with the Old Testament are aware of the fact that Jeroboam, the first king of Israel and a descendant of Jacob, Joseph, and Ephraim, taught the northern kingdom to worship elsewhere than in Jerusalem (1 Kings 12: 25ff); and this probably set the precedent for the worship on mount Gerizim. When the Jews returned from Babylon to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem, as already noted, the Samaritans offered to help them; but when their offer was rejected, they, under the leadership of Sanballat, built their own temple on mount Gerizim. This temple was destroyed by John Hyrcanus, about 129 B. C.; but the place remained holy, and to this day, according to Vincent, Robertson, et al, the Samaritans annually celebrate the feast of the passover there.

Jesus refused to enter into a controversy with the Samaritan woman regarding the place of worship, but plainly told her what would have to

be done, if she was pleasing to the Father. The reason why the Samaritans worshipped in ignorance was because they rejected much of that which God had revealed on the subject, as already noted. (Cf. Acts 17: 23.) Both the Saviour and the salvation which is offered to men are matters of record; and it is a recorded fact that no one can please God and worship him acceptably, while rejecting that which he has revealed in his word. The reason why people who worship God must worship him in spirit and truth, is that God is himself a Spirit, and cannot therefore be localized and worshipped in a material manner. (Cf. 1 Kings 8: 27; Psalm 139: 7-10; Jer. 23: 23, 24; Acts 17: 26-28.) There was a time when, according to divine revelation, men had to worship at certain places; but that was before revelation was completed.

Worship, let it be carefully noted, is not simply the performance of certain acts; it is something which takes place in the heart—"the ador-

ing reverence of the human spirit for the divine." Before there can be any true worship, therefore, 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. When one has the proper feeling toward God, it always seeks an outward expression; and when one is properly instructed, the outward expression will conform to the revealed will of God.

One worships in spirit when he has a spiritual sense of the object he worships, and a spiritual communion with him; and he worships in truth when he is guided by the truth, and is therefore free from false conceptions, resulting from imperfect knowledge. True worship always includes a truthful conception of the object of worship; and this truthful conception can be gained only by learning the truth. The response of Christ to the woman's remark about the Messiah is his first recorded declaration that he is the Christ.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What and where was the land of Samaria?

Who were the Samaritans?

Why did the Jews dislike them so intensely?

The Golden Text

What is signified by the "wells of salvation"?

Toward what was the prophet Isaiah looking when he spoke the words of the golden text?

The Meeting of Jesus and the Woman of Samaria

Under what circumstances did Jesus and his disciples visit Jacob's well?

What was unusual about the journey?

How did Jesus come to meet the woman at the well?

What do we learn from the text regarding the humanity of Jesus?

In what way did the Lord surprise the woman of Samaria?

How did Jesus himself feel toward the Samaritans?

A Great Claim and an Earnest Request

What occasion prompted the Lord's remarks to the woman regarding the living water?

What lesson is there in this for us?

What use do Bible writers make of the metaphor of living waters?

What lesson do we learn from Jesus regarding the manner of introducing religious discussions?

What was the woman's response to the Lord's remarks about the gift of God?

What probable reason did she have for comparing Jesus with Jacob?

In what way did Jesus classify the Samaritans?

What does the water which Jesus gives always do for those who receive it?

Why did Jesus apparently bring up the question of the woman's marital relationship?

What lesson should we learn from this incident?

The Kind of Worship Which Is Pleasing to God

What mountain was referred to in the discussion between Jesus and the woman of Samaria?

To whom did the woman refer when she spoke of "our fathers"?

Why did they worship on mount Gerizim?

Why did they worship in ignorance?

What plain truth did Jesus set before the woman?

Why must all acceptable worship be in spirit and truth?

What is the meaning of worship?

How does one get into the mood for acceptable worship?

Lesson IV—October 22, 1967

JESUS FEEDS THE FIVE THOUSAND

Lesson Text

John 6: 1-14

1 After these things Je'-sus went away to the other side of the sea of Gal'-i-lee, which is *the sea* of Ti-be'-ri-as.

2 And a great multitude followed him, because they beheld the signs which he did on them that were sick.

3 And Je'-sus went up into the mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

4 Now the passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.

5 Je'-sus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great multitude cometh unto him, saith unto Philip, Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat?

6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

7 Philip answered him, Two hundred shillings' worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little.

8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Si'-mon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

9 There is a lad here, who hath five barley loaves, and two fishes: but what are these among so many?

10 Je'-sus said, Make the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

11 Je'-sus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down; likewise also of the fishes as much as they would.

12 And when they were filled, he saith unto his disciples, Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost.

13 So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with broken pieces from the five barley loaves, which remained over unto them that had eaten.

14 When therefore the people saw the sign which he did, they said, This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst* (John 6: 35.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—John 6: 52-59.

Daily Bible Readings

October 16. M.....	Feeding of the Multitude (John 6: 1-14)
October 17. T.....	The Living Bread (John 6: 41-51)
October 18. W.....	The Bread of Life (John 6: 52-59)
October 19. T.....	Promise of Bread (Psalm 132: 11-18)
October 20. F.....	"Our Daily Bread" (Matt. 6: 5-15)
October 21. S.....	God Provides (Psalm 34: 1-11)
October 22. S.....	Our Needs Supplied (Rev. 7: 13-17)

TIME.—A.D. 29. j

PLACE.—Bethsaida, across the sea of Galilee from Capernaum.

PERSONS.—Jesus, his disciples, and the multitudes.

Introduction

It is interesting to note that the feeding of the five thousand is the only recorded miracle of Jesus, which is found in all four of the gospel narratives. (See Matt. 14: 13-21; Mark 6: 30-44; Luke 9: 10-17; John 6: 1-14.) All of these records should be carefully read, in prepara-

tion for this lesson. When this is done, it will be observed that Matthew places the feeding of the five thousand immediately after Jesus received the news of the beheading of John the Baptist. Mark also mentions that incident, along with the report of the disciples to Jesus re-

garding the mission which they had just completed. "And the apostles gather themselves together unto Jesus; and they told him all things, whatsoever they had done, and whatsoever they had taught. And he saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desert place apart." (Mark 6: 30-32.)

Luke calls attention to Herod's perplexity regarding Jesus, and his effort to see him; and then mentions the fact that the disciples came to Jesus, and gave their report concerning their mission. It is quite easy to see how all of these things could be mentioned at this time, when we take into account the fact that the writers of the gospel records did not always try to maintain a chronological account of the events in the life of Jesus. John gives no particular reason for Christ and the apostles going away to the other side of the sea of Galilee; but simply records the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, as an occasion for the

Lord's discourse on *The Bread of Life*. This was in keeping with the general plan which was followed by John throughout his narrative.

The place of the feeding of the five thousand was near Bethsaida. (See Luke 9: 10.) It is well to observe, however, that there is a difference of opinion among Bible students regarding the identity of this Bethsaida. Many of these students hold that there were two cities by that name, one east and one west of where the river Jordan flows into the sea of Galilee. The Bethsaida on the west side is generally regarded as being the home of Peter, Andrew, and Philip (John 1: 44), while the one on the east side of the river was known as "Bethsaida Julias." (See map.) Thomson (*The Land and the Book*), Taylor (*The Miracles of Our Saviour*), and others are of the opinion that there was only one Bethsaida, with houses on both sides of the river. But in either case, it seems fairly certain that the feeding of the five thousand took place on the eastern side of the river, which would be northeast of the sea of Galilee.

The Golden Text

"Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" It has always been the plan of God that life be sustained by food and drink. We all understand that this principle applies in the physical realm; and it is, of course, just as true in the spiritual domain. The golden text for today's lesson is taken from the Lord's discourse on *The Bread of Life*, which followed the feeding of the five thousand; and it was in this address that Jesus discussed two of the great needs of life, namely, food and drink. It is utterly impossible for any one to live a life, that is, a spiritual life, which is acceptable to God, by his own unaided powers. Prior to the time of this lesson, Jesus had said, "And ye will not come to me, that ye may have life." (John 5: 40.) It is through Jesus that people have life, that is, spiritual life, and the means of sustaining it. "Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life,

which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him the Father, even God, hath sealed." (John 6: 27.) John reports the words of Jesus regarding the importance of this spiritual food as follows:

"Jesus said therefore unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven: not as the fathers ate, and died; he that eateth this bread shall live for ever." (John 6: 53-58.)

To eat the flesh of the Son of God, and to drink his blood, is equivalent to partaking of the quality of his life, and the benefits of his death; or,

to state the same thing in another way, it is to imbibe his spirit, and be governed by his word. (Cf. John 6: 68.) Christianity has been defined as the reproduction of the life of Christ in the human heart and life; and that is the goal toward which every per-

son who expects to go to heaven must strive. If bread is the type of all earthly sustenance; then the bread of heaven may stand for all that which is involved in spiritual nourishment. It is not therefore surprising to hear Jesus say, "I am the bread of life."

The Text Explained

The Setting for the Miracle

(John 6: 1-4)

After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they beheld the signs which he did on them that were sick. And Jesus went up into the mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. Now the passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.

The expression "after these things" is John's usual manner of indicating the lapse of an unspecified period of time. (Cf. John 2: 12; 3: 22; 5: 1; 7: 1.) It is, of course, impossible to tell by the expression itself, whether a long or short interval was meant. (Cf. John 4: 43; 20: 26.) The last place mentioned in John's narrative before this account was Jerusalem (John 5: 1); but that was not the place from which Jesus and his disciples crossed over the sea of Galilee, on the occasion now before us.

The sea over which Jesus and his disciples passed at the time of this lesson was known by four names, namely, (1) the sea of Chinnereth, Num. 34: 11; Deut. 3: 17; Josh. 13: 27; and it may have received this name because of its lyre or harp-like shape; (2) the lake of Gennesaret, Luke 5: 1, which was also the name of an extended plain on the north-western shore of the lake; (3) the sea of Galilee, probably because of its relation to the province of Galilee; and (4) the sea of Tiberias, which may have been given to it because of the city by the same name, which Herod built on its eastern shore, in honor of the then reigning emperor, Tiberias Caesar. This last name of the sea was probably the one which John's Gentile readers knew best; while *Galilee* and *Tiberias* would be understood by all, both Jews and Gentiles.

As may be seen from the map, Jesus and his disciples cross the north-

ern end of the lake, on the occasion of this lesson; and we learn from Matthew and Mark that the multitudes from the cities "followed him on foot" and "outwent them." This was during the Lord's third circuit of Galilee, and the people had had many opportunities to see the miracles which he had wrought in healing the sick. John has comparatively little to say about the ministry of Jesus in Galilee, notwithstanding the fact that the major part of his work and teaching was done the province of Galilee.

The article before mountain (which is in the original—"the mountain"—probably indicates that John was referring to a well known mountain in that area. Johnson says that the mountains on the eastern shore of the sea of Galilee rise to a height of nearly two thousand feet above the level of the water of the lake. The region where Jesus and the disciples stopped was uninhabited, and was therefore an ideal place for rest and communion with each other, and with God.

If, as many Bible students think, the feast of John 5: 1 was the passover, then the passover of the lesson now before us was the third such feast in the ministry of Jesus. (See John 2: 13.) This also signifies that there was almost a year between the events of chapter 5, and those of this lesson. There is no indication that Jesus attended the passover, mentioned in this lesson; and if he did not, it was doubtless because of the hostility of the Jews. (Cf. John, chapter 5; 7: 1.) John's reference to the passover as being "the feast of the Jews" was doubtless for the benefit of his Gentile readers.

Sympathy, Hunger, and Helplessness

(John 6: 5-9)

Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great multitude cometh unto him, saith unto Philip,

Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred shillings' worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, who hath five barley loaves, and two fishes: but what are these among so many?

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all mention the fact that Jesus healed the sick among the people who came to him on the occasion of the lesson, a matter which John passes over entirely. Mark also speaks of the Lord's sympathy for the people, as the following words plainly indicate: "And he came forth and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things." (Mark 6: 34.) It is necessary to keep all these facts in mind, as we endeavor to reconcile the apparent discrepancy between John and the Synoptists.

It appears that John pictures Jesus as being upon the mountain with his disciples, when he saw the multitude coming unto him; and it seems to have been *then* that he addressed the words unto Philip regarding the matter of feeding the people. But later on in the day, after he had spent the time in teaching the people and healing their sick, it was the disciples themselves who raised the question about food for the hungry. "And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This place is desert, and the day is now far spent; send them away, that they may go into the country and villages round about, and buy themselves somewhat to eat." (Mark 6: 35, 36.) Thus, according to John's record, it was Jesus who first raised the question of food for the people, when he saw that they were come to him; and then, according to Mark, near the close of the day, and after the people had been with him sometime, it was the disciples who took the initiative and asked Jesus to send the multitudes away, so that they might obtain food for themselves. However, when all the facts are considered, it is probable that Jesus did mention the matter, as in-

dicated by John; and then, after having taught the people and healed their sick, without having fed them, the disciples felt that the time had arrived when the people should be leaving, so that they could find themselves food before night overtook them.

Nothing is said in the record about why Jesus singled out Philip regarding the question of food for the people; and it may be true, as Alford suggests, that Philip was nearest to Jesus at that moment, and he simply wanted to see what the disciples would do in such a time of helplessness. He therefore apparently left the thought of feeding the multitudes in the minds of the disciples all day long; and they were bound to think of the estimate which Philip suggested as a staggering amount. A "shilling," according to the marginal reading, was worth nearly seventeen cents; and was the price which was generally paid to a laborer for a day's work. (See Matt. 20: 2.) Two hundred shillings therefore would amount to a little more than thirty dollars. (Cf. Mark 6: 37.) Judging from the manner in which the disciples spoke of this amount of money, it is reasonable to conclude that they did not possess that much; or, at least, they considered the question of spending that amount for that purpose as being out of reason.

Various Bible students have pointed out the fact that "barley" indicated an inferior type of bread. Vincent says that Pliny and some Jewish writers describe it as being food fit for beasts. The fish were probably small, dried or pickled; and the entire amount, five barley loaves, and two fishes, were probably intended for the boy's lunch. The disciples were clearly alarmed at the situation. They saw the crowds, the darkness, the distance, and the danger; but they forgot the only thing they should have thought of, namely, their Lord! (Cf. Matt. 16: 5-12.) The disciples, however, were not alone in feeling that way about such matters; their attitude was pretty much the same as ours today. This is doubtless the reason why so much is said in the New Testament about the question of putting our trust in the Lord, when we are unable to see the way out of a situation which we

consider as being beyond our ability to deal with. (Cf. Heb. 11: 6; Matt. 6: 24-34; Phil. 4: 6, 7; Heb. 13: 5, 6.)

The principle contained in this lesson therefore involves one of the major problems of our day. We look at the deplorable condition of our race, and that which needs to be done for its betterment, to say nothing of the glory of God; and then looking at ourselves, one by one, we exclaim, What can we do! And if we see a little help available, we immediately ask, but what is this among so many? The Lord, however, is not helpless; and if we are willing to take our problems to him, and trust in him to multiply our efforts and resources, great things can be accomplished. (Cf. 2 Cor. 9: 6-11.)

When people learn to use whatever resources they have in the service of the Lord, they will never be disappointed in the results. The story is told of the father of a famous sculptor, who was persuaded to spend his last years with his distinguished son. The father, also a sculptor, asked for some clay that he might spend his evenings at modeling. The older man was hampered by age, enfeeblement, and failing eyesight; and he was greatly discouraged when he had to put aside his work, and go to bed. He was simply unable to make that which he had in mind to accomplish. However, after the father had gone to bed, the son, the master-sculptor, would take the clay which his father had been handling; and, while his father slept, he would fashion it into an object of beauty. In the morning the father would look at his work of the previous night, and, not knowing that another hand had touched it, would exclaim with delight, "Why, it isn't as bad as I thought!" (Cf. Phil. 4: 13, 19; Rom. 8: 28.)

The Miracle and the Results

(John 6: 10-14)

Jesus said, Make the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down; likewise also of the fishes as much as they would. And when they were filled,

he saith unto his disciples, Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost. So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with broken pieces from five barley loaves, which remained over unto them that had eaten. When therefore the people saw the sign which he did, they said, This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world.

Mark says that the people, on the occasion now before us, sat "upon the green grass." It was the spring-time of the year, being near the pass-over season; and the entire countryside must have been suited to the occasion. The fact that "green grass" was there plainly shows that the term "desert," as used by the Synop-tists, does not mean an arid waste. The country was merely uninhabited. "Much grass" suggests that there were comfortable places for the people to sit, even for so large a number. Mark, Luke, and John mention only the men who were fed; whereas, Matthew says that there were about five thousand men, "besides women and children."

John does not say anything about the sitting arrangement; but we learn from the other writers that the people sat in companies or ranks, "by hundreds, and by fifties." McGarvey and Pendleton point out that this seating arrangement had several advantages, namely, it saved the apostles much time and labor in distributing the food; it made it easier to count the number who were fed; it made it easier to see that each one received his portion; and it made certain that the reality of the miracle could not be questioned.

Where John says that Christ gave thanks for the food which he held in his hands, the other three writers say that he blessed it; and where John says that Christ distributed the food to the people who were seated, the others say that he gave it to the disciples, and they, in turn, gave it to the waiting multitudes. Jesus blessed the loaves and fishes by giving thanks; and vice versa. It is said that the Jews held that any one who ate without first giving thanks, acted as if he stole the food. Jesus always gave thanks for the food which he ate (of. Luke 24: 30); and the New Testament plainly teaches that such

is the will of God for all of his people. (See 1 Tim. 4: 3-5.) Christ, of course, distributed the food to the people through the hands of his apostles. (Cf. John 4: 1, 2.)

Only Mark mentions the gathering up of the broken pieces of the fishes, and only John records the command of Christ to gather up that which remained over after the multitude had eaten, along with the reason for doing so, namely, "that nothing be lost." The same power which multiplies the seed which the farmer puts into the ground, multiplied the loaves and the fishes in the hands of Jesus; and the same reason for not wasting that which God makes possible for his people, is equally applicable in both instances.

It should be observed that the "broken pieces" were not the *scraps* which the people had thrown away, but the unused pieces which had not been touched by those who had eaten. There was one small amount of edible food which could be put into one small basket, before Jesus performed the miracle; but there were twelve baskets of the same type of food left over, after the more than five thousand people had eaten to their complete satisfaction. The original term for "basket," as used here, is *kophinos*, which has been defined as a "wicker travelling basket"; whereas, the term for "basket," in the case of the four thousand, who were fed from seven loaves and a few fishes, is *spuris*, that is, a hamper large enough for a man to get into. (Cf. Matt. 15: 32-39; 2 Cor. 11: 33.)

After the people had witnessed the miracle now under consideration, they immediately concluded that they were in the presence of the prophet whom God had promised to send into the world. The prophet re-

ferred to was the one about whom Moses spoke in Deut. 18: 15-19; and about whom the delegation from Jerusalem asked in John 1: 21. And while the people, in either instance, did not fully comprehend the meaning and significance of that which Moses predicted, it is, nevertheless, true that Jesus was indeed that prophet. In his second sermon, as recorded in Acts, Peter declared, "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. Yea and all the prophets from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days. Ye are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Servant, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities." (Acts 3: 22-26.)

Not only did the Jewish people of Jesus' time fail to understand the meaning and significance of that which the prophets had said about him, they tried desperately to make out of him something which was totally different from that which Jehovah intended. It is in the very next verse, following John's record of the miracle now under consideration, that the evangelist says. "Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force, to make him a king, withdrew again into the mountain himself alone." (John 6: 15.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is peculiar regarding the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, which is not true of any other miracle which Jesus performed?
Under what circumstances did the Lord perform this miracle?
What reason does John apparently have for recording it?
Where did the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand take place?

The Golden Text

What has always been the plan of God for sustaining life here upon the earth?
Under what circumstances were the words of the golden text spoken?
How alone may we have the things which are necessary to sustain our spiritual lives?
What does it mean to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus?
What is the importance of this lesson to us?
What, in reality, is Christianity?
Why did Jesus say, "I am the bread of life"?

The Setting for the Miracle

- In what way does John usually indicate the passing of time in his narrative?
- What were the names of the sea over which Jesus and his disciples passed?
- Why did John probably use both *Galilee* and *Tiberias* in speaking of it?
- How did the multitude get to Jesus so quickly?
- Why did Jesus and the apostles decide to go to those mountains?
- Why, apparently, did John mention the approaching passover?

Sympathy, Hunger, and Helplessness

- What did Jesus do when the people came to him?
- In what way did John express the Lord's feeling toward them?
- How was the subject of feeding the multitude brought up for consideration?
- When did Jesus mention the question, and what was the reaction of the disciples toward it?
- What was the attitude of the disciples regarding the cost involved in the en-

- deavor?
- What kind, and how much, food was available at the time?
- Why were the disciples so greatly alarmed regarding the situation then before them?
- What lesson is there in this for us?
- What principle should we endeavor to apply in our day?
- How may the Lord's people always be sure of success in righteous undertakings?

The Miracle and the Results

- How do you account for "green grass" in a desert place?
- What use was made of the grass?
- Why were the people ordered to be seated in an orderly manner?
- What did Jesus do before breaking the loaves and the fishes?
- What does the New Testament teach with reference to the Lord's people giving thanks for their food?
- Why were the "broken pieces" taken up?
- What was the reaction of the people to the miracle which they witnessed?

Lesson V—October 29, 1967

HEALING OF A BLIND MAN

Lesson Text

John 9: 1-9, 24, 25, 35-38

1 And as he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth.

2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Rab'-bi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?

3 Je'-sus answered, Neither d i d this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

4 We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: that night cometh, when no man can work.

5 When I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay.

7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Si-lo'-am (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

8 The neighbors therefore, and they that saw him aforetime, that he

was a beggar, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?

9 Others said, It is he: others said, No, but he is like him. He said, I am *he*.

24 So they called a second time the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give glory to God: we know that this man is a sinner.

25 He therefore answered, Whether he is a sinner, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

35 Je'-sus heard that they had cast him out; and finding him, he said, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

36 He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?

37 Je'-sus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh with thee.

38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

Golden Text.—"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8: 12.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalm 27: 1-6.

Daily Bible Readings

- October 23. M..... Jesus Heals a Blind Man. (John 9: 1-12)
- October 24. T..... The Pharisees Investigate (John 9: 13-23)

October 25. W.....	The Healed Man's Faith (John 9: 35-41)
October 26. T.....	Two Blind Men Healed (Matt. 20: 29-34)
October 27. F.....	Spiritual Blindness (Eph. 4: 17-24)
October 28. S.....	Light of the Gospel (2 Cor. 4: 1-6)
October 29. S.....	Christ, the Light of the World (John 8: 12-20)

TIME.—A.D. 29.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jesus, his disciples, the man born blind, and others.

Introduction

Bible students are not agreed as to when the miracle which we are to consider at this time took place; but apparently the majority of them are united in thinking that it occurred at the time of the Lord's visit to Jerusalem, on the occasion of the feast of the tabernacles, during which time the events of chapters 7 and 8 took place. It is proper to say, however, that there are some Bible students who hold to the view that the eyes of the blind man were opened during the feast of dedication, some three months later (John 10: 22, 23); but this is hardly probable. But assuming that the miracle now before us was performed during the Lord's stay in Jerusalem, when he went to the feast of the tabernacles, the question arises, On which day? There are many Bible students who are of the opinion that the 8th and 9th chapters of John constitute one unbroken narrative; and that the events which they record all belong to the same day. If this view is correct, then we should read the last verse of chapter 8 and the first verse of chapter 9 without a break; which is to say that as Jesus was leaving the place where the people were preparing to stone him, he saw the man who had been blind from his birth. (Cf. Acts 3: 1-3.)

Two objections have been registered against the viewpoint just mentioned; and, while they are formidable, they are not necessarily conclusive. The first of these views holds that it is not likely that the Jews would have tried to stone Jesus on the sabbath day (the eyes of the blind man were opened on the sabbath day, John 9: 14); but when people are filled with such hatred and rage as characterized those men, they are never too careful about what they do or when. (Cf. Acts 7: 54-60.) The second objection to the viewpoint now under consideration

contends that there was too much excitement for such a quiet scene, as that in which the miracle in question took place. But inasmuch as Jesus was leaving the infuriated multitude who were taking up stones to cast at him, it is not at all improbable that he had found the "quiet place" where the blind man was; and it may be that John was recording the great contrast between the angry multitude and Jesus, in order to show his superiority over all men. Thus, in the midst of such fury, Jesus was so completely composed, as to enable him to take note of a poor blind man, and remain there until he had healed him. But whichever may have been the day on which it occurred, it is a fact, set forth in the inspired record, that the miracle did take place.

The Jewish race, at the time Jesus entered upon his public ministry, was so completely divided religiously, as to make it utterly impossible for him to avoid conflict with their religious leaders, and escape criticism and censure. The Lord's work was destined to be a struggle and a conflict from the very beginning, since he could not hope to agree with the various groups, or enlist and continue to receive their full cooperation. Jesus, of course, made no effort to exclude any group of people from his audiences, or to evade any important question which might arise; and the efforts which he made to conceal himself from his enemies were only for the purpose of protecting his own life (of. Luke 4: 28-30), until he had finished the work which God had given him to do, and perfect the plans which had been placed before him. The Pharisees, who led the opposition to Jesus on the occasion of this lesson, were the largest and most influential group of Jewish people in Palestine; and they were the ones with whom

Jesus most frequently came in contact. Those who are interested in learning more about them, and other

Jewish sects, can find information regarding them in any good Bible dictionary or encyclopedia.

The Golden Text

"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." The words just quoted were spoken by Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple. (See John 8: 20.) If the section of John's gospel regarding the adulterous woman (John 7: 53-8: 11) is a part of his record, and we know of no valid reason for doubting it, then it is evident that the events of chapter 8 took place on the day following the feast of the tabernacles (see John 7: 37; 8: 1); and if chapter 9 is a continuation of chapter 8, then, as already indicated, the eyes of the blind man were opened on the same day. And if this is true, there may have been a deliberate design between the Lord's statement which serves as the golden text, and the enabling of the blind man to see.

It is a noticeable fact throughout the Book of John, that John selected the miracles which he used, and recorded them in connection with a discourse which Jesus delivered, or a pronouncement which he made, such as the golden text now under consideration. The cure of the invalid at the pool of Bethesda (John 5: 1-9) gave rise to the Lord's remarks concerning the relationship which exists between him and the Father. The

feeding of the five thousand (John 6: 1-14) resulted in the discourse on the bread of life. And it appears that the pronouncement about Christ's being the light of the world was illustrated and emphasized by the giving of sight to the blind man. (See John 9: 39-41.)

The golden text for today should be read in connection with John's earlier statements regarding Christ as being the source of light for all men. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1: 4); and "There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world" (John 1: 9). Insofar as its practical application is concerned, there are two things which light does for men, namely, (1) it enables them to see that which is in the world; and (2) it guides them in the way in which they should go. And this is precisely what Christ will do for those who will follow his lead. The text now before us presents this truth both negatively and positively. The people who follow Christ (1) "shall not walk in the darkness;" but (2) they "shall have the light of life." Thus, the Lord's people are not only led by the light, they also have the light themselves. (Cf. Heb. 5: 14.)

The Text Explained

The Healing of the Man Born Blind

(John 9: 1-9)

And as he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. When I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the

pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing. The neighbors therefore, and they that saw him aforetime, that he was a beggar, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Others said, It is he: others said, No, but he is like him. He said, I am he.

Whether Jesus was actually leaving the people who were preparing to stone him, as set forth in the closing part of chapter 8, or whether this event we are now considering took place at a later time, the lesson is the same. Jesus saw a man who had never been able to see; and, as is plainly set forth elsewhere in the chapter, his neighbors and friends knew of this condition; and this sug-

gests that there was no doubt about the miracle, when once the identity of the man in question had been established. Jesus frequently granted healing and health to people who were brought to him, or who came in contact with him; but here is a situation which he took hold of without being asked to, which not only would benefit the victim in question, but which also may have been intended to illustrate and emphasize that which he said about his being the light of the world.

It was a common belief among the Jews that sickness, blindness, and the like, were the result of sin. This is one of the errors which the Book of Job sought to correct, but the idea still persisted, and even Jesus himself endeavored to correct it more than once. (Cf. Matt. 9: 1-8.) Thus, not only did many of the Jews hold to the belief that affliction was the result of sin; it appears that they also considered special suffering the result of specific sins, such as those of the victim or others. This seems to have been the basis for the question which the disciples asked Jesus regarding the man who was born blind. It is relatively easy to understand how the parents could have been responsible for the blindness of their son; but it is not so simple to see how the man himself could have brought it on by his own sin.

In giving the answer which Jesus gave to his disciples, he did not say that sin does not sometimes cause afflictions (of. John 5: 14); but what he did affirm is that his own nor his parents' sin did not cause him to be born blind. Or, to say the same thing in another way, Jesus was not interested in the *backward look* of his disciples, but in their *forward look* toward the providence and glory of God. The affliction which the man in question had suffered was a part of God's plan for his life. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28.) This is an important lesson for us all to learn; because God is able to make good come out of our afflictions; and they can therefore contribute, not only to our own good, but also to the good of others, and to the glory of God. (Cf. 2 Cor. 12: 7-10; 2 Tim. 2: 10.) The fact of suffering, let it be repeated and emphasized, does not always presuppose

sin on the part of the sufferer. (Cf. Job 4: 5-9; Isa. 53: 4-6.)

Thus, while the disciples were inquiring into the possible cause of the blind man's condition, Jesus was proposing that they do something for him. The terms "day" and "night" were used figuratively, and their use may have been suggested by the waning of the day. Or, Jesus was telling his disciples that they must do God's will, while the opportunity was present; for the time was rapidly approaching when such opportunities would be over. The healing of the blind man came only a few months before Christ was crucified (of. John 7: 33); and there is no evidence that Jesus wrought any such miracles after his resurrection from the dead.

In speaking of himself as the light of the world, it appears that the Lord was looking both ways, namely, backward to what he had just said in the previous verse, and forward as a key to the interpretation to that which followed. In other words, what Jesus was about to do in giving sight to the blind man was an illustration of the work which he was continually doing as the light of the world. The immediate application was probably to the time of his earthly ministry; but his work in a moral and spiritual sense continues. Phillips renders the verse now before us in these words, "I am the world's light as long as I am in it."

We are not told why Jesus chose the particular method that he did to give sight to the blind man. It is altogether possible that Jesus wanted to teach his critic a lesson regarding their attitude toward the observance of the law, but there appears to have been another and higher motive which prompted him to act as he did, namely, to point out the proper attitude of heart and mind for acceptable obedience, that is, the type of submission which will endeavor to carry out a command of God, which apparently has no connection with the end in view. It is easy to see that there was no apparent connection between that which Jesus told the blind man to do, and the reception of his sight, that is, so far as the record is concerned. According to the view just stated, the clay had no more to do with the giving of sight to the blind man, than the waters of

the Jordan did in cleansing Naaman from his leprosy. The command, in both instances, was a test of obedience; it was power from on high which effected the cure in each case.

The pool of Siloam was an open basin within the city of Jerusalem, and was supplied with water from a source without the city. The pool, according to Thomson, was about fifty-three feet long, eighteen feet wide, and some twenty feet deep. It was probably to this pool, and the practice of drawing water in connection with the ceremonies on the last day of the feast of tabernacles, that Jesus had reference when he uttered his statement found in John 7: 37-39. For possible Old Testament references to the pool of Siloam, see Neh. 3: 15; Isa. 8: 6; 2 Chron. 32: 1-30; 2 Kings 20: 20. It is refreshing to observe that the blind man rendered implicit obedience, and received his sight; and it is a noticeable fact that neither he nor the unsympathetic Pharisees thought that the clay or the water had anything to do with the cure, although both were present.

The reaction of the neighbors who knew the man, his acquaintances, and the man himself, afford some interesting workings of human nature. The blind man's neighbors and those who were accustomed to seeing him from time to time at his familiar post, should have had no doubt about his identity; but there was a question regarding him in their minds. This was probably due to the slight change which his sight produced in him, and the seeming impossibility of a man born blind having normal vision. Or it was not possible, in their view of the matter, for a man who was born without eyesight, to be able to see as this man was doing; and so, regardless of how much he might resemble the well-known blind beggar, the two must be different men. It is true that some of the people had no doubt about his identity; but what should have been the final word about the question was that which was spoken by the man himself, namely, "I am he!" But even that apparently failed to satisfy the most of the people present; and certainly the Pharisees themselves.

All of that which has just been said is a clear example of the influence of preconceived ideas, and

the failure to listen to him who said, "I am the light of the world." This principle is just as true today, as it was then. There are multitudes of people who refuse either to see or to accept anything in religion which is different from their own thinking with reference to it. They have their own views about such matters; and it makes no difference what results may be set before them, or what the word of God may say about such things, they are still unmoved, or at least in doubt about them. This should be a very important lesson to all of us; and it is one which should be kept before us, until we are brought to realize its significance.

A Further Exhortation to the Blind Man and His Reaction

(John 9: 24, 25)

So they called a second time the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give glory to God: we know that this man is a sinner. He therefore answered, Whether he is a sinner, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

The neighbors and others who had seen the blind man at his post apparently were made to realize that the man's eyesight had been miraculously given to him; but for some reason they brought him to the Pharisees to get their judgment regarding the case. After hearing the report regarding the opening of the blind man's eyes, the Pharisees apparently, for the time being at least, accepted the truthfulness of the statement; but before admitting that a miracle had indeed been performed which would prove that God was with Jesus, the Pharisees subjected the man in question to a grueling test. They, however, were wholly unable to shake the man's testimony regarding the fact that he had received his sight; and they decided to call the man's parents. They admitted that he was their son, and that he was born blind; but further than that they declined to offer any testimony, for fear of the Jews. (Head John 9: 13-23.)

The Pharisees then turned again to the former blind man himself, and tried again to induce him to repudiate any belief in the divinity or deity of Jesus. The man who was born blind and who had received his sight

had told the Jewish leaders that he considered Jesus as being a prophet; but because Jesus had violated their conception of sabbath-day observance, they pronounced him a sinner. It was upon this basis that they urged the man to give glory to God by rejecting Jesus, but the latter he flatly refused to do. (Read John 9: 26-34.) The former blind man had followed the instruction of Jesus, had received his sight; and there was no power which the Pharisees could bring to bear upon him, which would cause him to repudiate his benefactor.

Jesus Revealed Himself and Was Accepted

(John 9: 35-38)

Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and finding him, he said, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

The withering reply which the former blind man gave the Pharisees infuriated them; "and they cast him out." But Jesus never forsakes those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake; and he is not only interested in their physical well-being, he is infinitely more interested in their souls. (Cf. Jesus as the good shepherd; Psalm 27: 10; Isa. 40: 11.) It is always the will of the

Lord that his people grow in grace, knowledge, and faith (of. 2 Pet. 3: 18; 2 Cor. 10: 15); and he has made all of that abundantly possible. When people are in need of the Lord's help, he will never fail them.

The term "Lord" in the passage now before us means just about what our word "Sir" indicates. The man who had been blind did not know that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God; and the form of his question shows that he regarded a knowledge of God's Son as being something greatly to be desired.

It is interesting to observe the progress which the faith of the one-time blind man made, as may be seen by reading verses 11, 17, 38, namely, "He answered, The man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to Siloam, and wash: so I went away and washed, and I received my sight. . . . They say therefore unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, in that he opened thine eyes? And he said, He is a prophet. . . . And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." We can also see in the narrative now before us the manner in which one's faith grows, namely, by hearing that which the Lord has to say. (Cf. Rom. 10: 17; John 20: 30, 31.) When the former blind man learned that Jesus is the Son of God, he confessed his faith in him, and paid homage to him; which in this case appears to have been an act of reverence. (See marginal note and of. John 4: 20-24; 12: 20.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

- When did the miracle of this lesson probably take place? Give reasons for your answer.
- What appears to be the relationship of John, chapters 7-9?
- Why was the mission of Jesus certain to encounter opposition from the Jewish leaders?
- Who were the Pharisees and what of the influence which they exercised?

The Golden Text

- Where and under what circumstance did Jesus speak the words of this text?
- What general plan did John follow in his use of the Lord's miracles?
- What other statements are found in the

Book of John with reference to the Lord's being the light of the world?
What does the light which he gives do for men who are willing to follow him?

The Healing of the Man Born Blind

- What was the general setting for the miracle now under consideration?
- What fact made it certain that its reality could not be questioned?
- What idea was illustrated and emphasized by it?
- What common belief was held by the Jews regarding sickness and sin?
- What is implied in the Lord's answer to the disciple's question?
- How can affliction benefit us and others, and redound to God's glory?
- How do we know that suffering is not always due to the sin of the victim?
- While the disciples were inquiring about the cause of the blindness, what was Jesus thinking?

Why should people always take hold of their opportunities for doing good immediately?

Why did Jesus apparently speak of himself as the light of the world at the time of this lesson?

Why did Jesus employ the method he used in opening the eyes of the blind man?

What great lesson should we learn from this?

Where was the pool of Siloam?

What was the reaction of the neighbors and others to the healing of the blind man?

What important principle did they illustrate?

A Further Exhortation to the Blind Man and His Reaction

What did the neighbors and others do with the blind man and apparently why?

What attitude did the Pharisees manifest toward him and why?

What did they try to get the former blind man to do and with what result?

Jesus Revealed Himself and Was Accepted

Why did the Pharisees cast the former blind man out?

What did Jesus then do for him?

What was the attitude of the man who was healed toward Jesus?

What does the record say regarding the progress of his faith?

How does any one's faith grow?

Lesson VI—November 5,1967

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Lesson Text

John 10: 1-16

1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

4 When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

6 This parable spake Je'sus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

7 Je'sus therefore said unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

8 All that came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

9 I am the door; by me if any man

enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture.

10 The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have *it* abundantly.

11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep.

12 He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth *them*:

13 *He fleeth* because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

14 I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own, and mine own know me,

15 Even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd.

Golden Text.—"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep" (John 10: 11.)

Devotional Reading.—John 10: 17-30.

Daily Bible Readings

October 30. M.....	The Shepherd Psalm (Psalm 23)
October 31. T.....	Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15: 1-7)
November 1. W.....	Great Shepherd of the Sheep (Heb. 13: 12-21)
November 2. T.....	False Shepherds (Ezek. 24: 1-6)
November 3. F.....	A Shepherd Promised (Isa. 40: 9-11)
November 4. S.....	God's Care for His Flock (Ezek. 34: 11-16)
November 5. S.....	The Lamb of God (Rev. 7: 9-17)

TIME.—A.D. 29.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jesus and the Pharisees.

Introduction

Inasmuch as Jesus, in the text of the lesson for today, represents himself as being the good shepherd, it will be helpful to us, as we endeavor to get the significance of the expression, to try to get before us something of the meaning of a shepherd, especially during Bible times and in oriental countries. Some of the characteristics of a good shepherd may be learned from references to them in various parts of the Bible. Isaiah pictures the Good Shepherd as carrying the lambs in his bosom, and gently leading the sheep with their young. (See Isa. 40: 11.) One of the beautiful passages of the Bible regarding the work of shepherds 'is Ezek. 34: 11-16, where Jehovah himself compares his care for Israel to that of a shepherd, who endeavors to meet every need which the sheep have. The devotion of the shepherd to his flock is graphically set forth in the text of the lesson for today, even his willingness to die for the sheep.

The idea of the integrity of the shepherd may be learned from such passages as Psalm 78: 70-72. Shepherd-life, as David knew and practiced it, was characterized by both emotion and devotion. He loved his sheep, and he put forth every effort to see that no harm came to them. The shepherd lived with his sheep in Eastern lands, and he was looked upon as the center of their unity, the

guarantee of their security, and the pledge of their prosperity. Their condition, apart from him, was one of abject and pathetic helplessness. If he was taken away from them, for any reason, they were distressed and soon scattered; and were often found wandering and stumbling among the rocks, bleeding in the thorn-tangles, and fleeing in terror from the wolf, if he had not captured them.

It was for the reasons just mentioned, and others which might be cited, that the good shepherd never forsook his sheep. He accompanied them by day, and abode with them by night. "And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock." (Luke 2: 8.) When the morning came, the shepherd led his sheep to their pasture; and when evening was approaching, he gathered them together, and himself lay down in their midst. As he looked upon their still white forms, which were clustered about him in the darkness, his heart brimmed with a brooding tenderness, as he thought of both his and their love for each other. It was no wonder therefore that a good shepherd would give his life for those helpless creatures, which depended upon him so completely, and trusted him so simply.

The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is found in the principal text, and it will be dealt with in its proper place.

The Text Explained

The Allegory of the Sheep-Fold

(John 10: 1-6)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

It is very evident that the first twenty-one verses of the tenth chapter of John are directly connected with chapter nine. The expression "Verily, verily" is not used by John to introduce a new and unrelated discourse; but simply connects that which follows with that which has just been said. Thus, the Lord's re-

marks regarding the good shepherd grew out of the assumption on the part of the Pharisees, to the effect that they were the only authorized leaders of the Lord's people, that is, the children of Israel. Jesus, in the closing part of chapter 9, had charged the Pharisees with being blind, and therefore unfit to be leaders or shepherds. (Cf. Matt. 15: 14.) The Lord then, in his address on the good shepherd, contrasted him with strangers and mere hirelings.

The fold of the sheep was usually a roofless enclosure in some suitable place, where the sheep could be protected at night; and thus relieve the shepherd from the necessity of spending the night with the sheep. The wall around these enclosures was made of stone or some durable material; and was sometimes surrounded by thorn bushes. There was only one entrance, a door, through which the sheep and the shepherd could enter; and this door was securely closed to all unauthorized people, and the only way that such individuals could gain an entrance into the sheepfold was by climbing over the wall. The people who had no right to enter the sheepfold are described in the text (1) as *thieves*, that is, those who take the property of others by stealth and in secrecy; and (2) as *robbers*, that is, those who seek to obtain the property of others by force and intimidation. And it was in this way that those professed leaders of God's people, who did not bother to make sure that they were conforming to God's will, were placed in sharp contrast with the true and lawful shepherd, who made certain that he was acting in keeping with God's revealed plan for such matters.

The purpose of Jesus in this allegory was to contrast his own care for God's people with the shameful manner in which the Pharisees were doing, who had just cast out the former blind man who had dared to tell them the truth. (Cf. 3 John 9-11.) The prophets of the Old Testament had freely predicted that false shepherds would arise, to the injury of God's people, which were compared to a flock of sheep. (See Ezek. 34: 1-10; Jer. 23: 1, 2; Zech. 11: 4, 5.) There were also predictions by the Lord's prophets of old to the effect that his sheep would be prop-

erly cared for by faithful shepherds, including Jehovah himself. (Cf. Jer. 23: 3, 4; Ezek. 34: 11-16; Isa. 40: 9-11.) The "door," in the passage now before us, may be described as the *door of prophecy*; and inasmuch as Jesus came as the prophets predicted that he would, he passed through the door and was therefore "the shepherd of the sheep." That, of course, made the others, such as the Pharisees to whom he addressed his message, thieves and robbers; for they had not passed through that door, as their own shameful conduct clearly demonstrated. This same principle, of course, is applicable to the shepherds, that is, the elders, of God's people today. Only those who come into that relationship, according to the scriptures, and who are doing the will of the Lord, as revealed in the New Testament, are the true shepherds: and all others are comparable to thieves and robbers.

It appears that originally, as already suggested, the shepherd remained with the sheep day and night; but when the "fold" was introduced, the night-watch was no longer necessary. Another person, maybe an undershepherd, was designated as the "door-keeper;" and it was his business to see that the door was kept closed to all unauthorized people. The door-keeper, of course, knew the shepherd, and would always open the door to him. It appears that in some instances that the sheep of more than one shepherd were kept in the same fold; but the sheep of each shepherd knew his voice, and responded to it readily when they heard it. It was customary to give names to sheep, after the fashion that we now do to horses, cows, dogs, et cetera; and the practice implied an intimate relationship.

In making a practicable application of the lesson now in hand, we may note that the "sheepfold" represents the church, Christ is the chief Shepherd (of. 1 Pet. 5: 4), and the sheep are his followers, that is, Christians. The probability is that the porter is only a part of the drapery of the allegory.

It should be observed that the shepherd sees to it that *all* the sheep leave the fold, as he prepares to lead them to pastures and watering-places. Not a single one was left be-

hind; and when they were all ready to start, the shepherd went before to lead the way, to see what was best for the sheep, and to protect them from danger. Jesus knows every road which his people must travel, and it is a glorious experience to have the assurance that he will never forsake them. (Cf. Prov. 3: 5, 6; Rom. 8: 31-39; Heb. 13: 5, 6.)

In commenting on the Lord's remark about the sheep refusing to follow a stranger, Thomson (*The Land and the Book*) says that this is not the fanciful costume of the allegory; it is, rather, a simple fact. Dr. Thomson goes on to say that he had often made the experiment himself. Johnson tells of a traveller who told a Palestinian shepherd that it was his dress, rather than his voice, which his sheep recognized. The shepherd, of course, knew better; and so, in order to settle the question, he and the stranger exchanged clothing. The traveller, then, with the attire of the shepherd, called to the sheep; but they refused to follow him. But when the shepherd, with the clothes of the stranger on, called to them, the sheep immediately responded to his voice.

It should be noted that the usual term for "parable" (*parabolē*) does not occur in the Book of John. The word which is rendered "parable" in the text now under consideration is *paroimia*; and its only occurrence outside the Book of John is in 2 Pet. 2: 22. Except for the use of "parable" (see marginal note) in the passage now before us, John has "dark sayings." (See John 16: 25, 29.) Thus, it can be seen from these facts that the parables of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are different from the "dark sayings" or *proverbs* of John. The Book of John contains no parables, in the usual meaning of that term, such as are found in the Synoptists.

Reference has been made to that which John says in this portion of the lesson text as an "allegory," rather than a *parable*; and it should be observed that, whereas, there is a relation between the two terms, there is also a difference. A parable may be defined as "a narrative true to nature or to life, used for the purpose of conveying spiritual truth to the mind of the hearer." (William M. Taylor.) Webster says that an

allegory is a "veiled presentation, in a figurative story, of a meaning metaphorically implied but not expressly stated." This is what Taylor means when he says that an allegory denotes a figurative discourse or dark saying, in which more is meant than meets the ear, and in which much valuable, though hidden, meaning has been closely packed.

Both the allegory and the parable employ figurative language; but it appears that the former requires more explaining—more filling in of the details, in order to get the meaning, than the latter. (Cf. Gal. 4: 21-31.) Vincent notes that a chief difference between an allegory and a parable is this: In the case of a parable the thing which signifies and the thing which is signified are kept distinct and parallel throughout, while in the case of an allegory the qualities and properties of the thing which signifies are attributed to the thing signified, and the two are thus blended, instead of being kept distinct and parallel. (Cf. the allegory of the vine and the branches, where Christ identifies himself with the figure, "I am the vine." John 15: 1-8.)

"I Am the Door of the Sheep"

(John 10: 7-10)

Jesus therefore said unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture. The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.

The Pharisees apparently failed to understand the lesson of the allegory which Jesus just presented, and he therefore proceeded to explain and amplify that which he had spoken. In the allegory he had called attention to the door through which the true shepherd entered into the sheepfold; but here he spoke of himself as the door through which the sheep must enter the fold, or, the church. (Cf. John 14: 6; Acts 4: 12.) Those who came before Christ were evidently false messiahs and self-appointed leaders, who endeavored to

turn the people in the wrong direction. It is not necessary, in order to get the meaning of the lesson here, to single out specific people who may have tried to steal the Lord's sheep for their own honor and well-being. It appears, rather, that Jesus was emphasizing the unique fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies in himself; and in keeping with the framework of the allegory just spoken, the emphasis had to take this form.

The words "I am the door" are repeated in verse 9, and, without doing any violence to the Lord's remarks, they can have a wider application in the latter passage. It has already been suggested, as the Bible plainly teaches, that no one can be saved apart from Christ; and it is also true that no spiritual blessing is possible for the saved from any other source. The apostle Paul, in speaking of these things, says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ: even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved; in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. 1: 3-7.)

The truth is affirmed over and over throughout the New Testament that Christ can and does give us, not only what the world cannot give, but that he gives it over and over again. It is through Christ that one enters into the joys and peace which are beyond understanding, and is enabled to meet any situation successfully which may come before him. The apostle Paul again says this: "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.

. . . I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me. . . . And my God shall supply every need of yours ac-

ording to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4: 6, 7, 13, 19.)

An open door therefore may be looked upon as an opportunity, just as a closed door suggests that, so long as it remains closed, there is no opportunity. This was true of the five foolish virgins, that is, the door was shut and they could not go in. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost; for a great door and effectual is opened unto me," he meant that he had a great opportunity with reference to the cause of Christ. (See 1 Cor. 16: 8, 9.) Some one has said, The parable hidden in the word needs no further exposition; it is among the commonplaces of speech. A door is an opportunity. An open door is an opportunity that is still within reach. A closed door is an opportunity which has gone by.

In commenting on this thought, *The Speaker's Bible* asks, "In what sense is Christ an opportunity to men? What do they gain by accepting his offer of himself? What do they lose by rejecting or neglecting it? The question might be answered in many ways, but here we cannot do better than follow his own words, "By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture." He is therefore the opportunity of security, spaciousness, and efficiency. A traveller in Hebron some years ago observed that the sheepfolds were mere c-shaped walls, and he asked the shepherd why they had no doors. The shepherd replied, "I am the door," meaning that at night he lay wrapped in his coat in the open entrance. This illustration will enable one to understand readily that which Jesus meant when he said, "I am the door." He is between those who are within the fold of faith and those who are on the outside. No sheep can leave the fold without passing over him (of. Heb. 10: 29); and no ravenous beast can enter the fold to harm the sheep, without first destroying the Son of God. (Read again Rom. 8: 31-39.) Outside the fold are the trying things, the temptations, and the dangers; but within there are peace and security.

The Lord's words in verse 10 present a contrast between the motives and results of the two types of leadership, as illustrated by Christ and

the Pharisees. One is selfish and is characterized by theft, murder, and destruction, while the other is beneficent and makes possible not only the good life, but also all that can be desired in such a life. This principle can still be seen in operation today. Jesus warns, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matt. 7: 15, 16.) Any one who tries to turn any person into any way, other than the one which Christ has designated, is guilty of theft, murder, and destruction, in the truest sense of those terms.

"I Am the Good Shepherd"

(John 10: 11-16)

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth them: he fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own, and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd."

The repetition of the article in the original, "I am *the* good shepherd *the* good," makes the literal rendering read this way, "I am the shepherd the good one." The previous section of the lesson text, as we have already seen, pictures Jesus as the door; and in a similar manner, this section portrays him as the shepherd. Both figures explain and amplify those used in the allegory of the first section of the lesson text. Sometimes it was necessary for the shepherd in literal life to die, in order to protect the sheep; and that, of course, is exactly what Jesus did.

A hireling works for the money involved, but that alone does not make him a hireling in the sense in

which Jesus used the term. The Bible emphasizes over and over the truth that the laborer is worthy of his hire. But the hireling whom Jesus condemns is the one who has a selfish interest; and who would have no interest in the sheep at all, if it were not for the money he receives. And so, when danger arises, he thinks of himself, and not of the helpless sheep which have been entrusted to his care. It would be difficult to picture selfish religious leaders in a worse light; but we can be sure that such dastardly conduct will receive its due reward.

The relationship which Christ sustains to his people, the sheep of his flock, is in direct contrast with that which is manifested by the hireling. The mutual feeling between Christ and the church is based on knowledge and understanding; and it is analogous to and illustrated by the mutual knowledge and understanding which exists between the Father and the Son. (Cf. Matt. 11: 27.) And, in further contrast between Christ and the hireling who leaves the sheep in the face of danger, Jesus laid down his life for them. This is a lesson which all elders should learn well. (Cf. Acts 20: 28-30; 1 Pet. 5: 1-4.)

When Jesus said, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd," he was picturing himself, as so often is the case in the New Testament, as the world's Redeemer, rather than being merely the Jewish Messiah. His flock, the church, according to his statement here, would include Gentiles as well as Jews. In his first sermon under the reign of Christ, Peter said to the inquiring people on Pentecost, "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 to you (Jews) is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off (Gentiles), even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him." (Acts 2: 38, 39; of. John 11: 51, 52; 12: 32; Eph. 2: 14-18.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is the essential meaning of a good shepherd?
What are some of the scriptural passages which tell of shepherd life?
Why is the shepherd-sheep relationship such an apt illustration of the Lord and his people?
Why does the shepherd feel so kindly toward and act so diligently on behalf of his sheep?

The Allegory of the Sheep-Fold

In what ways are chapters 9 and 10 of John related?
Why did Jesus deliver his address on the good shepherd?
What was the attitude of the Jewish leaders toward teachers such as Jesus?
What was the "sheep-fold"?
What did Jesus mean by saying that all who did not enter the sheepfold through the door were thieves and robbers?
What was the purpose of Jesus in presenting the allegory of the sheepfold?
What had the Old Testament predicted regarding the shepherds of God's people?
To what did Jesus refer when he spoke of the door into the sheepfold?
What lesson should the Lord's people today get from this regarding elders in the church?
How was the sheepfold made secure against strangers and unauthorized people?

What did the naming of sheep imply?
What does the sheepfold represent, so far as our time is concerned?
How did the shepherd care for the sheep who had been put in the fold?
What did Jesus say about his sheep and strangers?
What is the principle difference between a parable and an allegory?
What difference is noted between John and the Synoptists in this respect?

"I Am the Door of the Sheep"

Who were the "all" who came before Jesus?
What lesson did the Lord mean to convey by his further remarks?
What is implied in the extra remark regarding his being the door?
What are some of the great opportunities which come to us through Christ?
Why is a door regarded as an opportunity?
What is the significance of a shut door?
What did the shepherd mean by saying, "I am the door"?
What great contrast did Jesus present between him and the false shepherds?

"I Am the Good Shepherd"

What peculiar construction of the sentence is noted here in the original language?
What did Jesus say regarding the hireling?
What makes a man a hireling?
What contrast did Jesus draw between himself and hirelings?
What other sheep did Jesus refer to and what did he say about all his sheep?

Lesson VII—November 12, 1967

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD

Lesson Text

John 11: 32-44

32 Mary therefore, when she came where Je'-sus was, and saw him, fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

33 When Je'-sus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews *also* weeping who came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see.

35 Je'-sus wept.

36 The Jews therefore said, Behold how he loved him!

37 But some of them said, Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him that was blind, have caused that this man also should not die?

38 Je'-sus therefore again groaning

in himself cometh to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone lay against it.

39 Je'-sus saith, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time the body decayeth; for he hath been *dead* four days.

40 Je'-sus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldst see the glory of God?

41 So they took away the stone. And Je'-sus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hearest me.

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the multitude that standeth around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me.

43 And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Laz'arus, come forth.

44 He that was dead came forth,

bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Je'-sus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

Golden Text.—*"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live"* (John 11: 25.)

Devotional Reading.—John 11: 1-31.

Daily Bible Readings

November 6. M.....	Lazarus Death (John 11: 1-16)
November 7. T.....	Christ's Message to Mary and Martha (John 11: 17-31)
November 8. W.....	Jesus Raises Lazarus (John 11: 32-44)
November 9. T.....	Christ's Resurrection (1 Cor. 15: 1-11)
November 10. F.....	Promise of Our Resurrection (1 Cor. 15: 12-28)
November 11. S.....	Manner of the Resurrection (1 Cor. 15: 35-49)
November 12. S.....	Triumph Over Death (1 Cor. 15: 50-58)

TIME.—A.D. 29.

Place.—Bethany. (Jesus and his disciples were in Peraea when the word regarding Lazarus reached him.)

Persons.—Jesus, his disciples, the family of Bethany, and the multitude.

Introduction

There are other accounts of resurrections in the ministry of Jesus (see Mark 5: 21-43; Luke 7: 11-17), but the one about which we are to study today apparently has made the greatest impression on the minds of those who are familiar with the Scriptures. The miraculous raising of the dead was one of those incidents in the life of Jesus, which the gospel narrators recorded, in order to show that the Lord had the power to give life to whomsoever he would. The raising of Lazarus from the dead was, in fact, a dramatic demonstration of the truthfulness of the statement Jesus made, as recorded in John 5: 21, namely, "For as the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom he will." The single instances of giving life to the dead were but forerunners of the general resurrection which will take place in the last day. (Cf. John 5: 25, 28, 29.)

The Lord Jesus Christ not only had the power to raise others from the dead; it was also necessary that he himself also be brought back to life, after death overcame him. Hence we read, "For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself: and he gave him authority to execute judgment: because he is a son of man." (John 5: 26, 27.) When the Word of God became flesh (John

1: 14), and appeared in history as Jesus Christ, he was identified with the human race; and if one of that number is raised from the dead, so must the others be also. Paul says, "But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's, at his coming." (1 Cor. 15: 20-23.)

The personal relationship between Jesus and the family of Bethany, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, was both interesting and beautiful. It was in this home that we are permitted to see something of the private life of Jesus, through the record, that is. There were other homes, indeed, where Jesus found a welcome (of. Mark 1: 29), but we have no record of one which is more interesting and rewarding than the home of the two sisters and their brother in Bethany. One of the most pathetic statements which Jesus made about himself, was with reference to his homelessness. (See Luke 9: 58.) It appears that the home in Bethany was to him a haven of quiet and rest; and it is fair to assume that he visited there as often as conditions would permit. The information which we have regarding Jesus and the family of

three in Bethany indicates that Jesus was always welcome there; and it is easy to think that the hearts of all

four continued to respond to each other with sincere affection. (Cf. John 11: 3.)

The Golden Text

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live " Lazarus was ill when the sisters sent word to Jesus; but when he and the disciples reached Bethany, the brother had been in the tomb four days. The town of Bethany was not far from Jerusalem, and many of the Jews from the latter city had come to Bethany to comfort Martha and Mary. Martha was the first to meet Jesus when he arrived near the village, and her words to him were, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. And even now I know that, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee." (See John 11: 20-22.) Jesus then assured Martha that her brother would rise again; but she did not grasp the full significance of his meaning.

The passage which serves as the golden text for this lesson is only a part of a sentence. The full statement is as follows: "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11: 25, 26.) Three of the most tremendous words in human speech are found in the passage just quoted, namely, *life*, *death*, and *resurrection*. These words stand for ideas about which men crave light; and to know and accept the truth regarding them, is to be set gloriously free.

The context seems to indicate that

Martha had some information regarding the things just mentioned; but her knowledge was imperfect, and it did not bring her very much comfort. Her brother had lived and died; and while she expected him to rise again, the resurrection was in her mind a faraway *event*, and she would have to wait until the last day before Lazarus could live again. It was in reply to the idea just mentioned that Jesus spoke the words quoted in the previous paragraph. One of the principal things which Martha did not understand was the spiritual significance of the resurrection. She had never connected it with Jesus, but had always thought of it as an event which was made known by a doctrine.

But Jesus made it plain to her, and to all others who will accept his word, that he, and not some event or doctrine, is the resurrection. This is true, because life is in Jesus (of. Col. 3: 1-4); and resurrection is involved in life, as an incident made necessary by the apparent triumph of death. But that triumph is only temporary; because Jesus, as the source of life, has the power to overcome and destroy death. (Cf. Heb. 2: 14, 15.) The resurrection therefore is in Christ, just as life is; and it is within his power to raise the dead, the authority of which he demonstrated by giving life to Lazarus then and there. Christ is the resurrection, because he is the source of it; just as he is the life, because he is the source of life.

The Text Explained

Mutual Grief Visibly Expressed
(John 11: 32-36)

his narrative, as, for example, "Lazarus of Bethany." This descriptive title would distinguish Lazarus from all other men by that name, and would also show that the "Bethany" was not the one where Jesus was when the word of his friend's illness reached him. (Cf. John 1: 28 with 10: 40.) The village now before us is also identified as the "village of Mary and her sister Martha." And too, Mary is also pointed out as "that Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair," although the anointing in question did not take place until a later date. (See John 12: 1-8.) John could mention the anointing as a fact, since he wrote his narrative long after all of the events about which he spoke took place. This identification of Mary would also serve to distinguish her from all other women of that name, who are prominently mentioned in the New Testament. (Cf. Luke 1: 27; Mark 16: 1; John 19: 25; Acts 12: 12.)

Bible students, in considering all the information we have regarding this family of Bethany, are of the opinion that Martha was perhaps the oldest, and Lazarus the youngest. While there is no definite information on the subject, it appears in the light of John 12: 1-8; Matt. 26: 6-13; Mark 14: 3-9, that Simon the leper was in some way connected with the family; and many have thought that he was the husband of Martha. At any rate, these sisters, in their distress because of their brother's illness, sent word to their beloved Friend; and they probably felt that the very mention of the sickness of Lazarus would be sufficient to bring Jesus to them. "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." (John 11: 5.)

But Jesus did not go to the sorrowing sisters immediately, for John says, "When therefore he heard that he was sick, he abode at that time two days in the place where he was." (John 11: 6.) Following that, he suggested to his disciples that they return to Judaea; and, when they expressed surprise at the idea, because of the danger involved, he told them that Lazarus was asleep, and that he was going to awake him. The disciples misunderstood that, and suggested that if he were only

asleep, he would himself recover. It was then that Jesus told them plainly that Lazarus was dead. (Read verses 7-16.) When Jesus said that the sickness of Lazarus was "not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby" (verse 4), he evidently meant that Lazarus would not remain dead. Both God and Christ were glorified when Jesus exercised the divine power, which demonstrated that he had the power over death, as well as by the sublime teaching which grew out of the whole situation.

The words which Mary spoke to Jesus when she met him were identical with those which her sister had spoken to him earlier, with the exception that Mary did not say anything about the resurrection from the dead. It appears that Martha manifested more self-control than Mary did, although there was nothing out of the way in the latter's expressing her grief. Some have thought that the words which the sisters spoke to Jesus were intended as a mild rebuke for his delay in coming to them, after having received word of their brother's illness; but there is not positive indication that such was the case. It appears more in keeping with their relation with Jesus to regard their words as expressing their complete confidence in his ability to save their brother from death, if he had been there.

Jesus was evidently deeply stirred in the inward man, when he saw the weeping of Mary and the Jews who were with her. The basic meaning of "groaned" is a violent agitation of the mind, such as indignation; but in the case now before us, it appears that the violent agitation was due to grief, rather than to anger, as some have supposed. Or, to state the same thing in another way, Jesus was "troubled" as a result of his deep grief and sympathy for the sorrowing sisters, and their friends. It is not necessary to conclude that Jesus was disturbed, because of what could have conceivably been hypocritical weeping on the part of some of the Jews who were there. It is also well to note that the "weeping" which characterized Mary and the

Jews was that of *wailing*. (See marginal note.)

If Jesus was merely asking for information regarding the place of the tomb when he asked, "Where have ye laid him?" then it is obvious that he was simply speaking as a man; but it is probably nearer the truth to say that his purpose in asking the question, was to direct the people to the place where Lazarus had been buried. A similar situation, insofar as the question is concerned, is found in John 6: 5, 6, namely, "Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great multitude cometh unto him, saith unto Philip, Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do." But whatever may have been the purpose of the question now before us, the people to whom it was addressed immediately showed Jesus the place of the tomb.

The original word for "wept," in the expression "Jesus wept," is not found anywhere else in the New Testament. It means to shed tears, to weep silently. There is a different word which means to weep audibly; and it is used with reference to Jesus in Luke 19: 41. Vincent quotes Godet as saying that the very gospel in which the deity of Jesus is most clearly asserted, is also that which makes us best acquainted with the profoundly human side of his life. The *weeping* of Jesus, in the case now under consideration, was in marked contrast with the *wailing* of Mary and the Jews; and the manner in which Jesus was affected made a deep impression on the Jews who witnessed it—"Behold how he loved him!"

Life's Moral Mysteries

(John 11: 37, 38)

But some of them said, Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him who was blind, have caused that this man also should not die? Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone lay against it.

The sisters of Lazarus could not understand, at the moment at least, why Jesus delayed his coming to them; and the Jews, in the passage just quoted, were made to wonder, and apparently rightly so, about the

power of Jesus over death. Human experience, as we know it best, is filled with mysteries; but the ones which disturb us most are the moral ones. There are some things, of course, which we will never fully understand in this life, but we can usually find enough evidence to give us confidence, if we will only wait and see. The principle involved in that which has just been said is illustrated in the prayer which Reinhold Niebuhr has suggested, namely, "O God and heavenly Father, grant us the serenity of mind to accept that which cannot be changed, the courage to change that which can be changed, and the wisdom to tell the one from the other: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

The miracle which the Jews referred to, in which Jesus opened the eyes of the blind man, is that which is recorded in John 9. But if Lazarus had merely been kept from dying, there would have been no evidence of the power of Jesus over death, so far as the Jews who were there were concerned; and neither would they have witnessed the glorification of God and Christ, as Jesus suggested in verse 4, which has already been noted. The resurrection of Lazarus from the dead demonstrated the truthfulness of both of the propositions just referred to, namely, the power of Jesus over death, and the glorifying of the Father and the Son.

John, while not going into detail about it, does give some idea about the grave in which the body of Lazarus was placed. However, we would not get any definite information regarding the position of the cave from John's record alone; but if we consult the historical records of that time, we will learn that sometimes graves were in a vertical position with reference to the surface of the earth (of. Luke 11: 44), and sometimes they were in the side of an embankment or hill. Alford thinks that graves in caves were generally in a horizontal position, natural or artificial,—with recesses in the sides, where the bodies were laid. The mention of a cave in the case of Lazarus suggests this arrangement; and if so, it is likely that a large stone, probably in the shape of a wheel, was placed in a groove, and rolled up against the door. It is said that tombs in that country had

to be closely securely, in order to keep wild animals from molesting the bodies which were placed in them.

The Dead and the Voice of the Son of God

(John 11: 39-44)

Jesus saith, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time the body decayeth; for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldst see the glory of God? So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, 7 thank thee that thou hearest me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the multitude that standeth around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me. And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

Some Bible students have wondered why so signal a miracle as the raising of Lazarus from the dead, after he had been in the tomb for four days, is mentioned in the gospel records only by John. We have no direct answer to this question, but the probable reason for the omission of the event by the other three gospel writers, was due to the fact that their records were written during the time when the incident was relatively fresh in the minds of the people of Palestine. And with this idea in mind, Farrar is of the opinion that if the miracle had been recorded during the lifetime of Lazarus, it would again have brought him into prominence, and would have further subjected him to the danger of being put to death. (Cf. John 12: 10, 11.) John wrote his record many years later, and at a time when such a danger was no longer probable.

It should be observed here that Jesus did not do anything in connection with the raising of Lazarus, which the men who were present could do. This principle is easily seen and illustrated in many areas of the economy of God. God provides

soil, sun, rain, grain, et cetera: that which man cannot do; but men must prepare the soil, sow the grain, cultivate the crop, and reap the harvest. (Cf. Matt. 6: 11.) Jehovah has likewise made possible the salvation of the human race; but only those who learn of the plan, believe on and obey the Saviour, can hope for a home with the Father in the world to come. God will do anything which is essential to the welfare of his people, which they cannot do; but beyond that, it is up to the people themselves to do the rest. And even in the days of miracles, super-human power was exercised only when human power was inadequate for the desired results. (Cf. Acts 12: 1-11.) The angel did only that which Peter could not do.

When Jesus asked that the stone be removed from the opening of the tomb, Martha may have thought that the Lord merely wanted to look at the body of his friend; but she was reluctant to have the humiliating ravages of death exposed to the view of those who were present. However, in view of the conversation which she had had with Jesus when he first came near the village, it is altogether possible that she did expect something out of the ordinary to be done; but in her anxiety for decorum, she wanted to avoid the consequences of the open tomb. If this were true, then her faith and her reason were struggling together, which is often the case with many people even today. We believe that which is said in the Scriptures, at least after a fashion; but our reason keeps suggesting that faith cannot succeed against nature. The body of Lazarus had not been embalmed; and, as Martha reasoned, it had already begun to decay.

But Jesus reminded Martha of their earlier conversation, and of the assurance which he had given her at that time. He had tried to create or bring about faith in her heart then, and now he was endeavoring to strengthen that faith. And this, too, is the same principle which is at work in our experiences. The evidence for producing faith has been provided (of. Rom. 10: 17), but our faith, when once we possess it, can be strengthened only by the proper kind of exercise. It is quite certain that Martha did not have a complete understanding of the Lord's words to

her; but if she would only follow his instruction, her faith would soon be transformed into sight: she would indeed see the glory of God. What a wonderful lesson there is in all of this for us!

With the objection which was voiced by Martha out of the way, the stone was removed; and Jesus then looked to his Father in grateful recognition of the fact that he always heard his petitions; but with the added idea that the people standing by should be prepared for the miracle which they were about to witness, to the end that they would be brought to believe that God had sent Jesus as his Son to the earth. The language which Jesus used at the time clearly implies that the prayed continuously; for it was only in that way that God could hear him always. If people could be brought to recognize the relationship which exists between the Father and the

Son, it would be easy for them to understand that God was working through Jesus, and that the latter was indeed the Messiah who had been promised to the people of Israel, and that the power which was being exercised in the raising of Lazarus was supplied by Jehovah. (Cf. John 3: 1, 2.) This, let it be repeated, would demonstrate to the bystanders that there was a direct connection between Jesus and the Father, something which the Jews, generally speaking, had steadfastly refused to believe.

The loud voice which Jesus uttered therefore was not only for Lazarus, but also for the people who had gathered at the place of his burial; and the fact that the dead man came forth at the instant his name was called, would show conclusively that a miracle had indeed been wrought. (Cf. John 5: 25-29.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

In what way does the raising of Lazarus seem to compare with other such miracles?

What was the purpose of such miracles?

What does the raising of the dead in Jesus' day foreshadow?

What assurance do we have that we, too, will experience a resurrection from the dead?

What can you say of the personal relationship of Jesus with the family of Bethany?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?

What three important words did Jesus bring to the attention of Martha?

Why are people, generally speaking, so interested in the ideas which these words represent?

What was Martha's idea of the meaning of the resurrection?

In what sense is Jesus himself the resurrection?

How do we know that Jesus has the power to raise the dead at the last day?

Mutual Grief Visibly Expressed

Under what circumstances did Jesus come to Bethany at the time of this lesson?

Where were he and his disciples at the time the word of Lazarus' illness reached him?

Why did he delay the response to the sisters' call for his presence?

What explanation did he make to his disciples?

What minuteness is noticeable in John's record regarding the things of this lesson?

What was the relationship which existed between Jesus and the family of Lazarus?

How did Mary come to go out to meet Jesus?

What regret did both of the sisters seem to express to Jesus?

What effect did the weeping of Mary and the Jews have on Jesus?

What contrast is expressed between him and them?

What question did Jesus ask and what was the probable reason for it?

Life's Moral Mysteries

What were some of the mysteries which were evidently in the minds of Mary, Martha, and the Jews who were with them?

In what way should we regard the mysteries which come in our religious experiences?

What would have been the general effects, if Jesus had prevented Lazarus from dying?

What is known of the manner of burying people during the times of this lesson, and where was Lazarus buried?

The Dead and the Voice of the Son of God

What possible reason do we have for the fact that only John mentions the resurrection of Lazarus?

What principle did Jesus put into operation on the occasion of this lesson?

In what way is the same principle applicable to us?

What objection did Martha raise to the opening of the grave?

What did this reveal regarding her?

In what way did Jesus reassure her?

What is the lesson in this for us?

Why did Jesus pray to the Father and cry to Lazarus with a loud voice?

Lesson VIII—November 19, 1967

A LESSON IN HUMILITY

Lesson Text

John 13: 1-14

1 Now before the feast of the passover, Je'-sus 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.

2 And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Ju'-das Is-car'i-ot, Si'-mon's son, to betray him,

3 Je'-sus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God,

4 Riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel, and girded himself.

5 Then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

6 So he cometh to Si'-mon Peter. He saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

7 Je'-sus answered and said unto

him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter.

8 Peter saith unto him. Thou shalt never wash my feet. Je'-sus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

9 Si'-mon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

10 Je'-sus saith to him, He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

11 For he knew him that should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

12 So when he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and sat down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

13 Ye call me, Teacher, and, Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

14 If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

Golden Text.—"For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you" (John 13: 15.)

Devotional Reading.—Psalm 138: 1-8.

Daily Bible Readings

November 13.	M.....	Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet (John 13: 1-11)
November 14.	T.....	A Lesson in Humility (John 13: 12-20)
November 15.	W.....	Rewards of Humility (Prov. 22: 1-9)
November 16.	T.....	Commendation of Humility (1 Pet. 5: 1-11)
November 17.	F.....	Humility of Paul (2 Cor. 12: 1-10)
November 18.	S.....	Humility of Jesus (Phil. 2: 1-11)
November 19.	S.....	God's Respect for the Lowly (Psalm 138: 1-8)

Time.—A.D. 30.

Place.—Jerusalem.

Persons.—Jesus and his disciples.

Introduction

With the completion of chapter 12, John's record of Christ's revelation of himself to the world was finished. The next four chapters of his narrative are largely given over to an intimate revelation of himself to his disciples; and this section is followed by his intercessory prayer. All four of the gospel writers record many of the events in the closing

days of the earthly life of Jesus; but John is the only one of them who gives an account of his washing the disciples' feet. This incident took place sometime during the night which separated Thursday from Friday. Jesus and his disciples had gathered themselves together in the upper room for the purpose of eating the final passover supper, before the

passing of the law of Moses; and it was during the time that they were there that the events of this lesson took place.

The twelve disciples, who were his chosen apostles (see Luke 6: 12-16), had followed Jesus for several months, listening to the wonderful words of wisdom which he spoke, and beholding the mighty deeds which he performed; but they had never been able to manifest the proper feeling toward each other, or put into practice the teaching of their Master with reference to himself and one another. They were continually seeking for places of honor in their relation to Jesus; and it appears that the same feeling was present with them on the occasion of the last supper. It may have been in the very manner in which they were surrounding the passover table that caused their minds to dwell on the question of who would be greatest in the kingdom which Christ had told them that he was going to establish.

The Golden Text

"For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you" (No thoughtful person would contend for a moment that the teaching which Christ gave his disciples regarding their attitude toward places of honor and preferment was ineffectual; but there can be little doubt concerning the fact of the convincing weight of the example which they witnessed when he stooped to wash their feet, on the occasion of the lesson now before us. Jesus was, of course, the greatest teacher which the world has ever known, and it is a recorded fact that he continually taught by both precept and example; or, which is the same thing, he not only told people what to do, but he showed them how to do it.

Example alone will not suffice, for the simple reason that we must first have within us some degree of understanding, some basic knowledge of that which will make us better people in the Lord's sight; and when that is present, a forceful example will be a powerful incentive to put into practice that which has been taught by word of mouth, or by the printed page. If this principle of teaching which is reinforced by example is clearly understood, it will

(Cf. Matt. 20: 20-28.) The passage just cited shows that Jesus had rebuked this spirit in his disciples before; but on the night of their final meeting together, he decided to deal with the problem in a different manner.

The question of whether or not the Lord's people should engage in the practice of "footwashing," as a religious ordinance, has been discussed by his professed followers throughout the years since he washed the disciples' feet; but if any one will carefully investigate the record, he will soon see that no body of the Lord's people ever engaged in that practice, as a religious ordinance, at any time, or under any circumstance, by divine authority. It was a custom, pure and simple, and grew out of the practice of people's wearing sandals, and therefore needed to have their feet washed, pretty much as we need to wash our hands, after engaging in various activities.

then be easy for one to see that the process may begin with only rudimentary teaching; and then as the procedure advances, the teaching may be increased in depth, and the example in intensity. No one can read the gospel records without realizing that Jesus continually taught his disciples by both precept and example; but it is doubtful if one could find a more forceful example, with reference to the cultivation of a better attitude toward one another, than the one now under consideration. (Cf. 1 Pet. 2: 21-25.)

When Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, he said, "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another." (Rom. 12: 9, 10.) The original word for "preferring" occurs only here in the New Testament; and its basic meaning is, as pointed out by Vincent, to go before as a guide. All Christians are due respect and honor from their brethren, and it is the duty of every one to take the lead in showing what that honor is and how to bestow it. (Cf. Phil. 2: 3; 1 Pet. 2: 17; 5: 5.) It is in this area of human relations that example is most

effective. Seneca notes that "men trust rather to their eyes than to their ears.—The effect of precept is, therefore, slow and tedious, while that of example is summary and

effectual." And so, in the words of Richard Cecil, "Example is more forceful than precept.—People look at my six days in the week to see what I mean on the seventh."

The Text Explained

The Meaning of Love and Humility Demonstrated

(John 13: 1-5)

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. And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel, and girded himself. Then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Bible students have long been in dispute regarding the exact time when Jesus and his disciples ate the last passover supper, which was authorized by the law of Moses. There are some who think that they ate it a day early, so that Jesus himself could die as the true passover lamb, at the regular time for the feast; while others are of the opinion that they ate the supper at the same time the others did. The first three gospel writers seem to make it clear that Jesus and the disciples ate the supper at the usual time which was designated for it; but there are some who have taken John's statement in the passage now under consideration to mean that the supper was actually eaten a day early, thus implying a discrepancy between John's record and the Synoptists. But Robertson notes that "before" does not necessarily mean twenty-four hours before; and he concludes that "Jesus ate the regular passover meal at the usual time."

Jesus fully realized the significance of the crisis which was before him, and what it meant for him to go to the Father; but all of those things did not keep him from manifesting his love to his disciples. He had

loved them all the time during his personal ministry here upon the earth; and he continued to love them unto the very end of his association with them. One has only to read John, chapters 13-17, in order to see how the culmination of the hour which was before Jesus tended to draw out the fulness of his love for his followers. The act of humility on the part of Jesus, which we are considering at this time, was one of the manifestations of his love for them.

It is essential that we keep in mind the circumstances which surrounded the humble, but loving, service which John represents Jesus as performing for his disciples, if we are to get the significance of that which has been recorded. Thus, in preparing to wash the disciples' feet, Jesus was aware (1) that all authority had been given unto him (Matt. 28: 18); (2) that he was the Divine Son of God (John 1: 1, 14); and (3) that he was soon to return to his former glory (John 17: 5; Phil. 2: 5-11.) And he also knew that one of his disciples, whose feet he was about to wash, was ready to betray him.

Notwithstanding the fact that the experience through which Jesus was passing at the time of this lesson belonged to the supreme moment of his earthly ministry, he unhesitatingly turned himself to the work of a slave; and with the very hands into which the Father had put all things he washed the feet of the men who called him Lord, but who were unwilling to do the same thing for him. That which took place in this service has been called the greatest anticlimax in history. Why did Jesus at this time, and in the midst of such glorious feelings, gird himself with a towel and stoop to the work of a menial servant? For one thing, he was about to interpret to his disciples that which may very properly be called the ultimate law of service; and such an interpretation could best be given by deed, rather than by word of mouth. And so, instead of

merely telling his disciples what they should do, as he had done on previous occasions, he translated the principle into concrete form, and made sacred by his own hands that which he expects his followers to do.

When the disciples arrived at the upper room with Jesus, after their walk from Bethany, they needed to have their feet washed, before reclining around the table. The good man of the house had the basin there for that purpose; but no servant had been provided to perform that menial service. One of the disciples, had he possessed the proper spirit, could easily have volunteered his service for the occasion; but it appears that they were all too proud for anything like that. They were looking for higher stations in the kingdom, rather than the humble work of a servant; and one does not have to look very far, even today, to see the same spirit manifested by many professed followers of Christ.

Peter's Reaction to the Lord's Service and Warning (John 13: 6-11)

So he cometh to Simon Peter. He saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew him that should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

Inasmuch as nothing is said about the reaction of the other disciples to the washing of their feet by Jesus, it is fair to assume that they were awed into silence by the strange conduct of their Lord and Master, and were deeply perplexed by what they were seeing with their own eyes. But with Peter, the situation was different; for, being impetuous and impulsive, he could not restrain himself. Or, to state the same thing in another way, while the others held their peace, Peter did his thinking out loud. The contrast between him

and his Lord was too great for the mercurial nature of this outspoken disciple. Greek scholars tell us that the contrast between "thou" and "my" is brought out in the original, by placing the two pronouns next to each other, so that the rendering, as Peter spoke the words, would be, "Lord, dost thou my feet wash?" One can almost see Peter drawing up his feet, as he spoke in his impulsive humility.

The reply of Jesus to Peter shows that there was more in the design of the Lord, than simply washing the feet of his disciples. It has already been pointed out that these followers of Jesus had failed to get the force of his teaching regarding humility, which he had given them from time to time; but now, in a final effort under the most solemn circumstances, the Lord placed the lesson before his disciples again, both by word of mouth, and by an impressive example. Peter, and probably the others as well, did not get the force of the lesson at the time the act was being performed; but we may be certain that they never forgot that which the Lord did. Jesus, however, assured Peter, and probably the others, that understanding would come later. (Cf. 1 Pet. 5: 5-7.)

When Peter told Jesus that he would never wash his feet, it is altogether possible that he was trying to express his deep reverence for his Lord. It evidently appeared to Peter that it was completely out of place for the Master to perform the duties of a servant, or for the Teacher to wash the feet of a disciple. But even though Peter's motive was probably pure, both his attitude and his words were out of place. Jesus assured Peter that what was being done had a meaning, and that he would understand it later; and that should have been enough to cause him to submit to that which the Lord was doing.

But Jesus promptly told his impulsive disciple that if he did not submit to the washing of his feet, he would have no further part with him, that is, he would not be permitted to continue as his disciple, and share in the blessings which would come later. It was necessary that Peter be taught to have confidence in Jesus, and be willing to submit to anything which he said; and this is a

lesson which many people today, even in the church, need to learn. James declares that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all." (James 2: 10.) The term "stumble" means to set aside, or disregard, something which has been commanded; and the lesson is simply this: Any person who will not submit to anything which Jesus commands has no part nor lot with him. (Cf. baptism or anything else which the New Testament authorizes people to do.)

Peter's reply to the Lord's warning to him was further evidence of his impulsiveness, and it plainly showed that he still did not understand that which Jesus was doing; and, as was usually the case with him, he went from one extreme to the other. First, he was determined not to have his feet washed by Jesus, but next he wanted, not only his feet washed, but also his hands and his head! For other instances of his going from one extreme to another, see

(1) Matt. 14: 28, 30; (2) Matt. 16: 16, 22; and (3) Mark 14: 27-31, 66-72.

The Lord's remarks to Peter regarding a complete bath clearly shows that the washing of the feet was an essential practice, and was not done merely as a ceremony. The implication is that the disciples had bathed themselves before coming to the place where they were to observe the passover feast; but their walk into the city from Bethany, with only sandals on their feet, made it necessary to wash them before reclining on the couches which surrounded the passover table. That service had not been performed at the entrance to the room where they were; but Jesus, in order to teach the disciples a lesson in humility, arose from the supper and performed the task. The reference to their not all being clean was to Judas Iscariot, who was preparing to betray Jesus.

The Lesson Brought Home

(John 13: 12-14)

So when he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and sat down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me, Teacher, and, Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then,

the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

The question which Jesus asked the disciples, following the washing of their feet, was his method of preparing them for the lesson which he wanted them to get from the service which he had just performed. They, of course, understood the physical act of feet-washing, but that was not the sole, or even the primary, purpose of that which the Lord had done; there was a meaning behind the deed which he wanted them to see and understand.

It is doubtful if Jesus could have said anything to the disciples regarding the subject of humility, which would have had the effect on them that his example did. He called their attention to the fact that they both recognized and called him Teacher and Lord, which was indeed the truth; but it is evident that they had failed to realize that there was an unmistakable duty on their part which grew out of that relationship. No disciple or servant should ever hesitate or be ashamed to do that which his teacher or lord does; but when it comes to the Divine Teacher and Lord, the demand is infinitely greater. The Lord's example of humility, self-sacrifice, and service to others should forever prevent any professed follower of his from seeking pre-eminence, disputing about places of honor, and shrinking from humble service which he may do for the welfare of others.

The incident now before us furnishes us with one of the most effective illustrations on record with reference to the matter of religious service. It takes an every-day situation like this, where nothing more was meant, than the performance of an act for the cleansing of the feet, which had been exposed to the dusty pathways from Bethany to Jerusalem; and then trying to exalt it into a church ordinance, involving a religious duty to God, while at the very moment refusing to keep those ordinances which are clearly prescribed by divine authority, such as baptism, the Lord's supper, and many, many more. There is no record whatsoever of any instance of feet-washing's being observed as an act of worship. That type of service has never been anything more than a good work,

which one Christian may and should perform for any one who is in need of such service. When Paul wrote to Timothy regarding widows who were to receive special consideration from the church, he said, "Let none be enrolled as a widow under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works; if she hath brought up children, if she hath used hospitality to strangers, if she hath washed the saints' feet, if she hath relieved the afflicted, if she hath diligently followed every good work." (1 Tim. 5: 9, 10.)

Jesus did not institute the practice of feet-washing, but simply took a familiar custom, and used it to teach his disciples a much-needed lesson. The washing of feet as an act of hospitality has never been even a custom among Western people; and to adopt it, especially as a religious ordinance, because of the example and words of Jesus, on the occasion now before us, is to miss completely his lesson in performing the service for his disciples. Furthermore, no one who tries to make this a church ordinance ever washes feet, in order to cleanse them; that was done before the service begins, in which case, according to Jesus in verse 10, there is no need for the washing of those members of the body.

In commenting on the lesson now before us, William M. Taylor calls attention to the spiritual application which Jesus evidently meant for his disciples to understand. For example, his answer to Peter's request that his hands and his head also be

included in the washing, namely, "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all." John then explains that Christ knew the one who should betray him; and it was for that reason that he said, "Ye are not all clean." The expression "He that is bathed" is a translation of the Greek terms *Ho teloumenos*, while "to wash" is from *nipsasthai*. In the words of Taylor: "The one verb denotes the washing of the body as a whole, the other the cleansing of any part of the body as distinguished from the whole. In its literal application it implies that he who has gone fresh from his own bath to the house of his host needs not to be bathed again, but requires only to have removed from his feet the dust which they have contracted in his walk."

And in speaking of the spiritual application, Taylor goes on to say, "But from the expression of the Lord, 'Ye are clean, but not all,' it is plain that he meant the whole sentence to be taken spiritually. And if this be so, then its significance may be thus expressed: He who has been once renewed by the washing of regeneration, does not require to be renewed again. A man is born but once spiritually, even as he is born but once naturally. Regeneration needs not to be repeated. All that one needs after that is to have his feet washed; that is, to have removed from him the impurities which adhere to him in consequence of his having to walk daily through this defiling world."

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

When, where, and under what circumstances did the washing of the disciples' feet take place?

Why was that incident necessary on that occasion?

Why were the disciples so slow in learning the lessons which the Lord taught them?

What application does this have in our case?

The Golden Text

Why are examples often essential to effective teaching of that which God wants his people to do?

What is the basic relationship between oral teaching and example?

Show how the process of precept and example works.

In what way did Paul speak of this procedure?

What is the meaning of "preferring one another"?

Why are many professed Christians today so slow in learning this lesson?

How do people, generally speaking, look upon examples, especially in righteous living?

The Meaning of Love and Humility Demonstrated

When did Jesus and his disciples eat the last passover which was authorized by the law of Moses?

Why is there a difference of opinion on the part of Bible students with reference to this?

Under what circumstances, so far as Jesus was concerned, did he wash the disciples' feet?

What were some of the things of which he was aware at the time?

To whom did feet-washing generally belong?
 What did this illustrate with reference to Jesus?
 Why was that service required at that time and what was the attitude of the disciples toward it?

Peter's Reaction to the Lord's Service and Warning

What must have been the attitude of the other disciples at the time of this lesson?
 Why did Peter react as he did?
 Why didn't Peter want Jesus to wash his feet?
 What reply did Jesus make to him and what was its apparent purpose?
 What evidence do we have that Peter, and probably the others, remembered this act of Jesus?
 How did Peter react to the Lord's warning to him?
 What lesson is there in this for people today?

Why did Peter often go from one extreme to another?
 How do we know that the washing of the disciples' feet was not done as a ceremony?

The Lesson Brought Home

Why, apparently, did Jesus ask the disciples if they knew what he had done to them?
 In what way did he enforce the lesson?
 What is the relationship of disciples and teacher, and servants and lord?
 What important truth does the incident now before us illustrate?
 Why do so many people insist on trying to elevate such things into church ordinances, while at the same time rejecting the plain teaching of the Bible on other subjects?
 How do we know that feet-washing is merely a good work?
 How do we know that Jesus did not institute feet-washing as such?
 What spiritual lessons may we learn from the circumstances of this lesson?

Lesson IX—November 26, 1967

HEAVENLY MANSIONS

Lesson Text

John 14: 1-10

1 Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me.
 2 In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.
 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.
 4 And whither I go, ye know the way.
 5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?
 6 Je'-sus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no

one cometh unto the Father, but by me.
 7 If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.
 8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.
 9 Je'-sus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father?
 10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works.

Golden Text.—"I am the way, arid the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14: 6.)

*Devotional Reading.—*John 14: 11-15.

Daily Bible Readings

November 20. M.....	The Only Way to God (John 14: 1-15)
November 21. T.....	Abiding in Christ (John 15: 1-7)
November 22. W.....	Christ, the Life (John 10: 22-29)
November 23. T.....	Christ, the Truth (John 8: 31-40)
November 24. F.....	Christ, the Way (Heb. 10: 19-25)
November 25. S.....	No Other Name to Be Saved By (Acts 4: 1-12)
November 26. S.....	Blessed Assurance (Isa. 40: 1-8)

Time.—A.D. 30.
 Place.—Jerusalem.
 Persons.—Jesus and his disciples.

Introduction

Comfort for its adherents is one of the cardinal features of the religion of Christ, but many of us do not realize just what is meant by the term. The word "comfort" is a strong word. It suggests the idea of bracing, rather than soothing. It indicates the strength which comes from companionship with the Lord. (Cf. 1 John 1: 6, 7.) This sense is contained in the root meaning of the word itself, namely, "fortitude in alliance with someone"; and when that some one is the Lord, we can begin to see how it is possible for the Christian to be strong and courageous, rather than weak and fearful.

The story is told of a teacher of young men preparing for the ministry who was wont to say to them, "Gentlemen, when you are uncertain, as you will often be, on what subject to preach, you cannot be wrong in following the line indicated by the prophet's cry, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably.' (See Isa. 40: 1, 2a.) For the truest ministry is the ministry of comfort. You are not ordained to give good advice,

but to preach glad tidings." Any thoughtful person will recognize this as being wise counsel; for the gospel is above all else a message of comfort, a declaration of the kindness and love of God, and an assurance that God will not permit his children to be tempted beyond their ability to bear; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that they may be able to endure it.

As was pointed out in a previous lesson, Jesus did not ask the Father to take his people out of the world; but rather to keep them from the evil one. He did not request that the way be made easy for them, but that they be given the strength to bear whatever might come their way, and to perform whatever tasks that might be assigned to them. Jesus plainly told his disciples that hardships awaited them, but they are divinely assured that if they love God and are called according to his purpose, that all things, which includes both the good and the bad, will work together for good. This is the true meaning of the comfort which the Lord gives to his people.

The Golden Text

This part of the lesson, being in the regular text, will be considered in its proper place.

The Text Explained

Grounds for Hope and Confidence

(John 14: 1-3)

The portion of scripture from which this lesson is taken is a part of the discourse which Jesus delivered to his disciples on the night of his betrayal; and it is easy to see that the mind and the heart of the Saviour are in it. It is always as new as the latest sunrise, and the last word in its praise will never be spoken while time continues.

In speaking of the occasion of these remarks, Schaff notes that such an evening occurred but once in the world's history, and that the fulness of eternity itself was condensed into a few fleeting moments. The farewell words of our Lord (13: 31-17: 26) stand alone even in the Book of books. The nearest approach to them may be found in the parting song and blessing of Moses (Deut. 32 and 33), and in the farewell address of Paul to the Ephesian

elders (Acts 20: 17ff). We have in the Lord's remarks more than words, we have things, verities, acts or infinite love going out from God, and going into the hearts of men. Bengel sums up the principal thought of the last address of Jesus in these words: "I came from my Father in heaven, I fulfilled his will on earth; and I return to my Father."

"Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me." It appears that the part of the discourse from 13: 31 to 14: 31 was delivered while Jesus and the eleven disciples were still at the table where they had eaten the passover, and where the Lord's supper had just been instituted. The address began, apparently, immediately after Judas left the room. Many things that evening had conspired to trouble the disciples. For example, he had told them that one of their number would betray him. (John 13: 21, 22.) He

had implied that he was soon to leave them, and had informed them that they could not follow him. (John 13: 33.) He had also told Peter, in the presence of the others, that he was very soon to deny him. (John 13: 36-38.)

It is not strange therefore that distress would overtake them, and Jesus, knowing that, sought to reassure them. Phillips renders the statement in these words: "You must not let yourselves be distressed—you must hold on to your faith in God and to your faith in me." Bible students who understand Greek syntax tell us that the verbs (believe) may be taken either as indicatives or as imperatives; but in view of the hortatory character of the discourse, the rendering in the text is probably the correct one. (See marginal note.)

"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." The disciples were saddened at the thought of being left in the world without their Master, but he assured them that the separation would not be permanent. He further told them that the place to which he was going contains plenty of room, and that he himself is going to prepare a place for his own. All of this shows that a reunion is possible, and that what they looked upon as a calamity was in reality a blessing. He will say more about this later on in the discourse. (Cf. 16: 7ff.)

Heaven is described in the Bible as being the dwelling place of God (1 Kings 8: 30; Matt. 6: 9), and that means that heaven is as real as God. No one who reads the fourth chapter of Revelation can doubt that. The material of our world is not as "real" as is the spiritual. This is clearly implied in the verses now under consideration. Throughout the entire New Testament, heaven is pictured as a place to be anticipated by the righteous. It is a realm of joy (Luke 15: 7) and peace (Luke 19: 38). The names of the righteous are recorded there (Luke 10: 20; Phil. 4: 3); and there the Christian will receive his final reward (Matt. 5: 12).

The Christian life is in Christ, and

it will not end with physical death. The quality of this life in Christ is eternal, and it can no more be destroyed than can Christ. (Col. 3: 3, 4.) It follows therefore that the life of God's people must be continued after death; and that is why Jesus said that he was going to prepare a place for them. The inspired picture of heaven is intended to represent the ultimate triumph of God's purpose in a redeemed people who are made for ever secure in a holy city. It was in this way that the Lord comforted his disciples, and assured them that there was no basis for troubled hearts.

The Way Pointed Out

(John 14: 4-6)

"*And whither I go, ye know the way*" The Lord's destination was the Father, and the route was by way of the cross, the resurrection, and the ascension; and notwithstanding the fact that Jesus had often spoken to the disciples about these matters, they had not perceived his meaning. (Cf. Matt. 16: 21; Luke 18: 31-34; John 7: 33; 13: 33.) It is possible that Jesus made the statement of this verse in order to provoke questions on the part of the disciples, such as the one asked by Thomas. One of the reasons for their failure to understand what Jesus had said about these matters, if not the principle reason, was their idea, along with most of the Jews, that Jesus would set up an earthly kingdom. It appears that his vicarious suffering and death for the race never occurred to them.

"Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?" Thomas appears in the Book of John as a loyal but somewhat dull disciple, whose misapprehensions were used to bring out important truths. (Cf. 11: 16; 20: 24-29.) He is a fair representative of the multitudes today who fail to see the truth of the Bible because of their preconceived ideas. Albert Barnes makes this thoughtful observation: "Had Thomas laid aside his previous opinions—had he been willing to receive the truth as Jesus plainly spoke it, there would have been no difficulty. Faith would have been an easy and natural exercise of the mind. And so with the sinner. If he were willing to receive the

plain and unequivocal doctrines of the Bible, there would be no difficulty; but his mind is full of opposite opinions and plans, occupied with errors and vanities, and these are the reasons, and the only reasons, why he is not Christian."

Jesus was preparing his sorrowing disciples for the terrible sense of loss they would suffer in his impending crucifixion. He told them not to be troubled, because death would not destroy their relationship, but simply move it upward to a higher level. He was not going out into the void, he was going to God. At this point, however, the disciples were bewildered. Thomas who always wanted to understand the truth before he accepted it, said, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; and how can we know the way?" So the question of a doubting man provoked one of the greatest things that Jesus ever said. There in the Upper Room Jesus went far beyond the simple enquiry of Thomas and bequeathed to all believers a promise that answers the deepest longing of the human heart.

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me." Instead of rebuking Thomas for his ignorance (of Heb. 5: 1, 2), Jesus gently taught him, and all others who will listen to him, one of the greatest truths of all times. It is only by obeying the instructions of Jesus, following his example, and depending upon his merits, that any one can reach the Father. Following the paraphrasing of this passage by Thomas a Kempis, we note that without the way, there is no going; without the truth, there is no knowing; and without the life, there is no living. Jesus is the way which we must follow; the truth which we must trust; and the life which we must hope for; because he is the inviolable way, the infallible truth, and the endless life.

The goal of every man's life is to go to the Father. The only way that will bring us to that goal is through Jesus Christ, and that for two reasons. He, as the truth, brings God to men by his revelation, and because he, as the life, brings men to God by his redemption.

The way suggests a road running on to a goal which is life's purpose and God's plan for each of our lives. Every man was created for a purpose and a meaning in the world. We should remember that Jesus is not the Way merely in the sense of his being our pattern and model. He is our Guide, living within us and showing us our way. What each individual needs is a personal inward guidance to enable us to carry ourselves rightly in any situation that may arise. This is what Jesus Christ does for us in his indwelling.

Christ is the Truth, the articulate expression of the thought of God. Christ speaks directly from God. His words are true. What he says has authority. "All things that I have spoken of my Father I have made known unto you." (John 15: 15.) The parables which Christ spoke are a revelation of God's truth. The mighty works which Christ did upon the earth are an index to the character of God or illustrations of the truth. The gift of Christ to redeem a sinful world is the profoundest explanation of God ever given, the evidence of God's love for the world.

To know Christ as the Way and the truth is not enough. We must find him as the Life. The Way is a way to life in God. "I came that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly." (John 10: 10.) The aim of Christ's great sacrifice was not so much, to show God to man, as to give God to man, and to bring man to God. As Godet tersely said: "The truth is God revealed in his essential nature—that is to say, in his holiness and in his love: the life is God communicated to the soul, and imparting to it holy strength and perfect blessedness. Unless our lives are the faithful expression of our convictions, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, we are not in contact with reality at all, and we cannot know him who said, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' This was a staggering claim. There is nothing like it anywhere else—a claim not merely to point the way to God, to bring the truth about God and to show the life in God, but a claim to be the way, to be the truth and to be the life." "No one comes to the Father, but by me."

Jesus and the Father

(John 14: 7-10)

"If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him" Jesus sometimes spoke in this discourse to his disciples as if his glorification was an accomplished fact, and the obvious meaning here is that he spoke by way of anticipation of that event, insofar as the term "henceforth" is concerned. If the disciples of Christ had really understood him, they would have known the Father; for he and the Father are one. But he assured them that the time was coming, and was even now at hand, when they would perceive this truth. Robertson calls this a bold and daring claim to deity; and he continues, "The only intelligible conception of God is precisely what Jesus says here. God is like Christ."

"Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father?" Philip, like Thomas, failed to grasp the meaning of that which Jesus was saying. He did not realize that the Son had come into the world to reveal the Father. Nothing, of course, could be more desired than a vision of the true God; but since there was no access to God apart from Jesus, just so there can be no vision of him apart from the Son. This statement would prepare the disciples for the work of Jesus as the revealer of God.

"Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?"

the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake." Aside from Paul, there is no other writer in the New Testament who dwells more at length on the doctrine of the incarnation than John. The literal meaning of "incarnate" is to embody in flesh (of. John 1: 14); 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 (John 3: 16), and to make possible a way to save them (2 Cor. 5: 18-21).

It should be kept in mind, however, 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. Phil. 2: 5-11; John 17: 5.) 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 of being, which is indicated by the term "flesh." (Heb. 5: 7.) It was in this way that he became the revealer of God and the redeemer of men. This is what Jesus wanted his disciples to believe; but he told them that if they could not believe that which he himself said about it, they could at least accept the testimony of the works which he did. But in either case, whether by words or by works, the source of the testimony was God himself, that is, he did both the speaking and the working through the Son.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What place does comfort have in the religion of Christ?

What is the basic meaning of the term?

What emphasis should be given to comfort in our preaching?

What special request did Jesus make to his Father regarding his disciples?

Grounds for Hope and Confidence

Under what circumstances did Jesus speak the words of this lesson text?

Where was Jesus when these words were spoken?

Why would the disciples need to be comforted?

Show how the words of Jesus in this section would encourage them.

Does the Bible teach that heaven is a real place?

Give reasons for your answer.

Why is heaven essential to the faithful Christian?

The Way Pointed Out

What is the setting of this text?

Where was Jesus going and by what route?

Why did he tell the disciples that they knew the way?

What did Christ mean by the way?

In what manner is Thomas pictured in the Book of John?

Of whom is he a fair representative to-day?
 In what way did Jesus deal with Thomas?
 Show the great significance of the Lord's reply to him.
 How did Christ illustrate the truth?
 What was really the aim of Christ's great sacrifice?

Jesus and the Father

Why didn't the disciples of Jesus know the Father?
 What did he mean by saying, "From henceforth ye know him, and have seen him"?

What bold and daring claim did Jesus make at this time?
 What request did Philip make? and why?
 What would the Lord's answer to him do for the disciples?
 What is the nature of the subject Christ next deals with?
 What is meant by the term "incarnation"?
 What was God's purpose in sending Jesus Christ into the world?
 In what sense was God in the Son, and the Son in the Father?
 What did Jesus ask the disciples to believe?

Lesson X—December 3, 1967

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

Lesson Text

John 15: 1-10

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away; and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit.

3 Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you.

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing.

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples.

9 Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you: abide ye in my love.

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

Golden Text.—"Ye are my friends if ye do the things which I command you" (John 15: 14.)

Devotional Heading.—John 15: 11-15.

Daily Bible Readings

- November 27. M..... Christ, the Vine; Disciples, the Branches (John 15: 1-8)
- November 28. T..... Fruit After Its Own Kind (James 3: 1-12)
- November 29. W..... Working in the Vineyard (Matt. 21: 28-32)
- November 30. T..... Parable of a Vineyard (Matt. 20: 1-16)
- December 1. F..... First Planting of a Vineyard (Gen. 9: 1-20)
- December 2. S..... Fruitbearing Required (Luke 13: 1-7)
- December 3. S..... Vineyard of Jehovah (Isa. 5: 1-7)

Time.—A.D. 30.

Place.—Jerusalem, as they left the upper room.

Persons.—Jesus and his eleven disciples.

Introduction

It is fair to assume from John 14: 31 that Jesus and the disciples left the upper room, where they had eaten the passover supper and where the Lord's supper had been institut-

ed, following the remarks which are recorded in chapter fourteen. There is nothing in the text to indicate just where they went from there; but since they were at the garden of

Gethsemane, at the foot of the mount of Olives less than a mile from Jerusalem (of. Acts 1: 12), a little while later, it is possible that they began the leisurely walk to the garden when they left the upper room. Commentators, however, are not agreed regarding this, and there is no way for us to be sure about it.

Likewise, there is no way for us to know for certain what prompted the remarks regarding the vine and the branches. Some have thought that the discourse grew out of the use of the fruit of the vine at the suppers just referred to; others, that the tendrils of a vine had crept into the room which they had just left; while still others surmise that they may have passed a vine as they walked along, or saw an engraving which suggested the topic. There are many other ideas regarding this question, but in the absence of any definite information concerning it, we should content ourselves with knowing that Jesus did teach his disciples a lesson based on this well known object of nature.

The Golden Text

"Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" There isn't a verse in the gospel records which throws more light on the full humanity of Jesus than the text which we have for this lesson. Jesus made this statement to his disciples in the Upper Room. Christ, the Son of God, needed friends, close companions to double his joys and cut his sorrows in half. Luke tells us that when the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, he sat down at the prepared feast and said: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." (Luke 22: 15.) With tender, solemn thought he had looked forward to it, and he desired the support of their fellowship for what lay before him. Into that suffering he was to enter alone; but he would be with his friends to the last moment possible.

Jesus on the eve of his crucifixion conferred upon the disciples and upon all who obey him the highest honor ever conferred upon men. He, who would soon ascend the throne of heaven, whom the centuries have crowned as King of kings and Lord of lords and whom simply to serve

The portion of the Lord's address which is devoted to the vine and the branches is usually considered by expositors as an allegory, rather than a parable; but the average student may not consider this distinction very important. There is, however, a marked difference between the two forms of speech, and it is probably not out of place to say a few words about that difference for the benefit of those who are interested. The parable differs from the allegory in that there is in the latter a blending of the thing signified and the thing signifying, with the result that the qualities and properties of the first are attributed to the last. Thus, as in the case before us today, Christ at once identifies himself with the figure: "I am the vine." The allegory, unlike the parable, carries its own interpretation with it. The two best known allegories of John are "The Good Shepherd" and "The Vine and the Branches." (Cf. Paul's allegory in Gal. 4: 21-31.)

and obey is a privilege beyond any other, called us to the intimate circle of his friendship. "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you. No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you." (John 15: 14, 15.)

Alexander Whyte asks a very interesting question, the answer to which will tell you a great deal about yourself. He says: "Suppose you lived in Galilee in our Lord's day. Would he have made you one of his friends? When chilled at heart, would he have sought you out till he felt himself warmed and comforted and restored as he walked the sands of the Sea of Gennesaret with you? Would he have chosen to tell you the secrets of his heart? When Jesus, after a night of prayer over their names, chose twelve, would he have had your name in the New Testament among them? Would he have asked you to sit among them at the Passover Supper? Would he have asked you to watch an hour with him in the Garden?" True friendship has

an uplifting influence. Tennyson composed his greatest masterpiece to a friend, In Memoriam,

Whatever way my days decline,
I felt and feel, tho' left alone,
His being working in mine own,
The footsteps of his life in mine.

People said that about Jesus. His friendship transformed them, uplifted

them, ennobled them, brought out the best in them, changed uncleanness into purity, weakness into strength, dishonor into integrity and selfishness into love. Christ himself defined the crucial test of friendship when he said in the Upper Room, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

The Text Explained

The Union Between Christ and His Disciples Illustrated

(John 15: 1-3)

"*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*" Here for the last time Jesus, in his training of the apostles, opens the book of nature. This great volume had furnished many illustrations for his parables and discourses during his public ministry, but it is doubtful if any other is richer in suggestion than this of the vine and its branches. As already pointed out, we have no way of knowing what suggested this lovely allegory, if indeed any material thing did, but we do know that it illustrates the living union which must exist between Christ and those who are faithful to him. The lesson which is here taught is substantially the same as that of the Lord's supper, but it is also complementary to it. Both emphasize unity, but in the supper we get the idea of spiritual nourishment, while in the vine and the branches fruit-bearing is suggested.

The Jewish nation (the church of the Old Testament, Acts 7: 38) was often spoken of as a vine (Psalm 80: 8ff.; Isa. 5: 1; Jer. 2: 21), but the people did not live a life in harmony with that emblem; they did not bring forth fruit to God. (Cf. Matt. 21: 33-43.) Now, Jesus, as it were, has been planted in the earth like a fruitbearing vine, to do that which the people of Israel did not do; and he is in that sense the true or genuine vine. He has been planted in the world of mankind and in the soil of human nature, so that our race may yield fruit unto the glory of God. It is possible, of course, that Jesus called himself the true, that is, the genuine vine in contrast with the material vine which may have been in the mind of his disciples. But in keeping with the fact that God is

described as being the husbandman, it appears more likely that the reference is to the spiritual, to Jesus himself as the genuine Messianic vine.

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit." Since God has planted his Son as the true vine, he will himself take care of it, removing every branch, such as Judas, which does not bear fruit, and will cleanse, that is, remove any superfluous condition which would hinder abundant fruit-bearing. This should be an impressive lesson to every member of the church. God did cut off the house of Israel because of their failure to bear fruit, and Jesus declares that his father will do the same to every one of his followers who is unfruitful. But it is encouraging to know that he will help every faithful disciple to bear more fruit.

"Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you." Although God as the husbandman get the vine into the proper condition for effective fruit-bearing, it should be noted that he employs an instrument to that end, namely, the "word." (Cf. John 13: 10, 11.) When people hear, believe, and obey the word of God they are made free from sin, or, which is the same thing, they are made clean. (Cf. Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 37, 38; Eph. 5: 25-27; James 1: 18, 21-25.)

Christians Can Live Only in Christ

(John 15: 4-7)

"*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me.*" The Christian life is both unthinkable and impossible without Christ. The only way for one to remain

clean and in position to bear fruit is to remain in Christ, and that means to do as he commands. While it is possible that Jesus may have had the defection of Judas in mind, it is certain that he was laying down a principle which must be adhered to by every person who expects to please the Lord.

The principle of the necessity of abiding in Christ may be illustrated by a well-known incident in the life of Paul. He was on a ship bound for Rome which was caught in a violent storm, and all hope that any on board would be saved was taken away. It was then that "Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have set sail from Crete, and have gotten this injury and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship." But later on, when the sailors were seeking to flee out of the ship, "Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." This word of warning did not lessen the effect of the promised salvation; for the men heeded the warning and no life was lost. (Read Acts 27: 1-44.)

In emphasizing that his people must abide in him, Jesus is speaking of our spiritual relation to him and of our spiritual life and work. He is the living fountain of all our spiritual energies, and anyone who is severed from him can have no spiritual life and can accomplish no good. Anything which anyone can do in the service of God is the result of the living spirit of Christ which is poured into the human heart, thereby supplying him with energy whereby he lives and works. Paul taught the same general truth in 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27.

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." In verse 1, Jesus declares that he is the true vine, and he now gives the practical application of the relation of the vine to the branches. As long as the branch abides in the vine, God will see to it that it bears fruit;

but if it is severed from the vine, there is nothing for it to do but to wither and die.

Various and sundry efforts have been made to show that the branches are the different religious denominations of our day; but if anyone will only read verse 6 of our text, he will see that individuals and not groups are the branches. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." The Christian religion, in the final analysis, deals with the individual rather than with the group. "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. 5: 10; of Rev. 3: 2, 4.)

In commenting on the severed branch, Edward Hastings notes that every preacher of the gospel is taught sooner or later, however, slow and reluctant he is to learn, the lesson of his own impotence—"for apart from me ye can do nothing." The preacher may set out with laudable ambitions, and perhaps a fairly high opinion of what he can achieve for the kingdom of God; he may have confidence in his way of putting the truth, and in this or that method of Christian work. He no doubt has a measure of faith in Christ and a looking to him for blessings, but mingled with all this there is much of the self-confidence of youth, and what the Bible calls "trust in an arm of flesh." But the conscientious preacher, and any other Christian for that matter, will eventually come to see that he is powerless to do an effective work without Christ. (Cf. Phil. 4: 13.)

The final punishment of the unfruitful and severed branch will be complete. The work of severing the wicked from among the good is not left to men, but to God. (See verse 2.) The Lord expects men to do what they can to keep the two separated, but human fallibility makes it impossible for this to be done in its completeness. This work will be assigned to the angels in the final day. (See Matt. 13: 47-50.)

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Here we learn something of the great results which come from our abiding

in Christ. We also see something of the place in his "words" in the process. No one can abide in Christ and have Christ abide in him who ignores that which Christ teaches. (Cf. Matt. 28: 20; Acts 2: 42.) But if the conditions which are named are met, the Christian has access to God for any blessing which he may desire or need. This is true because the mutual abiding involves such intimate union and harmony with the Divine that nothing will be asked which is out of harmony with the mind of Christ and the will of God. (Cf. Phil. 4: 6, 7.)

O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Ev'rything to God in prayer.

The End in View

(John 15: 8-10)

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples " Although the vine is prominent and of prime importance, it is a fact worthy of note that the vine alone cannot produce fruit. If the branches maintain their connection with the vine and are healthy and vigorous, an abundance of fruit may be expected. This verse emphasizes the great responsibility of the individual disciples. (Cf. Matt. 5: 13-16.) Albert Barnes points out three reasons why fruit-bearing glorifies God. (1) It shows the excellency of his law which requires it.

(2) It shows the power of his word in the lives of his people. (3) It shows that in so doing man again becomes like God in whose image he was originally made. Fruit-bearing is proof of the reality of discipleship—literally, "so shall ye become my disciples." Christian discipleship implies progress and growth. (Cf. John 8: 31.)

"Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you: abide in my love." From the outward evi-

dence of union with Christ, shown by fruit-bearing, Jesus next turns to the inward bond of union which is the cause of the fruitfulness, namely, love. This divine principle has been compared to the sap which passes back and forth between the vine and the branches, and it is kept vital and active by the practical means of obedience. Jesus likens his love for his disciples to the love which the Father has for him, which, of course, is the greatest love possible; and he bids his followers to remain in his love. It is not out of place to call attention to a statement which John made earlier regarding the love of Jesus for his disciples. See John 13: 1. His love for them was great enough for him, in the face of the tragedy of the cross, to humble himself that he might show them the way to true greatness

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." Earlier in this discourse Jesus had said, "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. He that loveth me not keepeth not my words: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me." (John 14: 23, 24.) It is easy to see from these statements that nothing short of loving obedience is acceptable to God. It was by this means that Jesus abides in the Father's love, and that is the standard which is laid down for us. Obedience alone is not enough; there just be loving obedience. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5: 3; of 2 Thess. 2: 10.) The source of all true obedience is love; or, as someone has said, love is the hidden fountain, while obedience is the visible stream. There is no love worthy of the name which does not obey.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Where were the words of this lesson probably spoken?

What may be said regarding the probable reason for the Lord's speaking on the subject now under consideration?

What form of speech did Jesus use in speaking of the vine and the branches?
What is the principle difference between a parable and an allegory?
What are the two well known allegories found in John?

The Golden Text

What is the setting of this text?
Whom did Christ select as his friends?

What is a good test for us to make as to whether we are a friend of Christ?
 What does the friendship of Christ do for people?

The Union between Christ and his Disciples Illustrated

What use did Jesus make of nature in his teaching? Cite some examples.

What can you say regarding his lesson based on the vine and the branches?

What particular thing is illustrated by it?

How is this lesson related to that of the Lord's supper?

What did Jesus mean by calling himself the vine?

In what sense is God the husbandman?

What are his principal duties as such?

Why is this lesson so important to us?

In what way are the Lord's people made clean?

Christians Can Live Only in Christ

What important lesson did Jesus teach regarding our relation to him?

What incident in the life of Paul illustrates this principle? Show that this is true.

Why is it so necessary that we abide in Christ?

How did Jesus apply the relation of the vine and the branches to his disciples?

What are the branches?

Give reasons for your answer.

With whom is the religion of Christ primarily concerned? Why?

Show the futility of trying to serve God apart from Christ.

What is said regarding the final end of the severed branch?

Who will have the responsibility of separating the good from the bad?

What great result does Jesus say will come from our abiding in him?

Why is the Christian assured that all of his prayers will be answered?

The End in View

What fact shows the great worth of the branches?

Why is it true that God is glorified by fruit-bearing?

What does Christian discipleship always imply?

What is the real cause of our fruit-bearing?

To what has the principle of love been compared?

To what does Jesus liken his love for us?

What is absolutely necessary in order for one to abide in Christ?

Why isn't obedience alone sufficient?

Why is it impossible for one to love God without obeying him?

How did Jesus illustrate the manner of our abiding in him?

Why did Jesus speak these words to his disciples?

Lesson XI—December 10, 1967

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES

Lesson Text

John 17: 14-26

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil *one*.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

20 Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word;

21 That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us:

that the world may believe that thou didst send me.

22 And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we *are* one;

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me.

24 Father, I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

25 O righteous Father, the world knew thee not, but I knew thee; and these knew that thou didst send me;

26 And I made known unto them thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them.

Golden Text.—*Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are*(John 17: 11.)

Devotional Reading.—John 17: 1-13.

Daily Bible Readings

December	4.	M.....	Jesus Prays to the Father (John 17: 1-10)
December	5.	T.....	Jesus Prays for the Disciples (John 17: 11-19)
December	6.	W.....	Jesus Prays for All Believers (John 17: 20-26)
December	7.	T.....	Christ, Our Intercessor (Heb. 7: 19-25)
December	8.	F.....	Disciples Not Left Comfortless (John 16: 1-7)
December	9.	S.....	Security through Faith (Psalm 37: 1-7)
December	10.	S.....	Christ, Our Advocate (1 John 2: 1-4)

TIME.—A.D. 30, the night of the Lord's betrayal.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jesus, his disciples, and the Father.

Introduction

After Jesus finished his last discourse to his disciples, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and uttered his great intercessory prayer. But whatever one may choose to call the prayer, it is easy for us to see his purpose in uttering it. (1) He prayed for his own glorification, 1-5; (2) he prayed for his apostles, 6-19; (3) he prayed for the unity of all believers, 20-23; (4) he prayed that his disciples may be with him in eternity, 24-26.

Prayer was ordained by God, and it is his will that all his people pray unto him; and Jesus was no exception to this rule. Those who read the records of his life as they were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, will see him often in prayer. "And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed." (Mark 1: 35.) "And it came to pass in these days, that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God." (Luke 6: 12.) He even prayed while he was on the cross. (See Luke 23: 34.) It was after he had finished a season of prayer, that his disciples

asked him to teach them to pray. "And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, that when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples." (Luke 11: 1.)

The Lord's example should inspire us to pray more; and we will do so, if we truly realize our relation to God. No one can read the prayer which Jesus prayed for his disciples without coming to see his great love for them; but there is no reason for assuming that he loved them any more than he loves his people now. This is implied in the third section of the prayer now before us. And when we realize that he prays for us, even now, it will make a tremendous difference in our lives. Paul tells us that he is at the right hand of God, and that he makes intercession for us. (See Rom. 8: 34; of. 1 John 2: 1, 2.) Jesus told Peter on one occasion that he prayed for him, but the impetuous apostle seemed to think that he did not especially need it (Luke 22: 31-34); and many of us today appear to feel about as he did, judging from our attitude and actions.

The Golden Text

"Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are"
We take our friends so lightly; we accept them without thinking how much they have endured and sacrificed for our sake, how we must have hurt them at times. We rarely ever begin to realize what they have been to us, and done for us, and given us, how they have filled and enriched life for us. It was no wonder that the disciples were drawn to Christ. Somehow our friends like us,

believe in us, and hearten us, and that is a very encouraging thing. Yet how often do we go to God, as Christ did in the Upper Room, and thank him for our friends.

Four times in this brief, sustained prayer found in the seventeenth chapter of John, Jesus offered the same petition in the same words, as though he wanted to impress even upon God the deepest longing of his heart. In the instance of our text he prayed for his immediate disciples, these very human men who re-

mained together so long as he was with them. Because of their different personalities and dispositions they might become antagonistic toward each other and separate after his death. How right Jesus was we can learn from Acts and the epistles how nearly at the start the church came to dividing into a mob of little angry sects, condemning one another and opposing one another. Paul established a church in Corinth, a little fellowship of believers bound together, so he thought, by their faith in one Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, but scarcely had the apostle turned his back than these people began resolving themselves into factions, each calling itself by the name of some man or party. (1 Cor. 1: 11-17.)

Because he knew their human weaknesses, Jesus prayed that God the Father would keep the disciples in his 'name,' the name of 'Father,' so that their unity would be the uni-

ty of a family in which their love for one another would be stronger than their love for anything that might divide them. "That they may be one," he prays, so utterly and wholly one that he dares to compare what he has in mind for them with the completeness of the unity between God and himself. "Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one."

It is a blessed thought that for us too he is praying, with a like wisdom and perfect knowledge for our needs. "Keep them in thy name which thou hast given me." That name implies that we his children are all members of one family. Christ is praying God to help them keep in mind their relationship to their Father and so to one another. And so Christ's first prayer for his people is that they may be perfectly one in heart and mind and will among themselves.

The Text Explained

The Lord's Ideal for Believers

(John 17: 14-19)

"I have given them thy word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Jesus had already mentioned the fact in this prayer that he had given God's word unto the apostles: "Now they know that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are from thee: for the words which thou gavest me I have given unto them; and they received them, and knew of a truth that I came forth from thee, and they believed that thou didst send me." (Cf. 16: 16-28.) Jesus committed to the apostles the truth of his relation to the Father and of his mission to the earth, and they gladly received the message; but the result was the inevitable hatred of the world. (See 15: 18, 19.)

It has been pointed out before that Jesus and the world are diametrically opposed to each other, and he himself, earlier in his ministry, explained why the world hated him. In speaking to his brethren who did not

believe in him, he said "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that its works are evil." (John 7: 7; of. 3: 17-21.) Ever since sin entered into the world, God's people have had to separate themselves from the world. This is true because, as John says, "the whole world lieth in the evil one." (See 1 John 5: 19.)

Jesus did not request the Father to take his disciples out of the world, but asked instead that they be protected from the evil one, that is, the devil. It is best, in the providence of God, for the Lord's people and the world that they remain in it; for the world is blessed by their presence, and would be destroyed without them. (See Matt. 5: 13-16.) It is God's will therefore that his people conduct themselves in the presence of the world in such a manner as to show them the difference between good and evil. (Cf. Col. 4: 5, 6; 1 Pet. 3: 13-17.) The gospel is God's power to save, and Jesus has authorized his people to proclaim it to the entire world. (See Mark 16: 15; Col. 1: 23; 2 Tim. 2: 2.)

The Lord's petition that his disciples be kept from the evil one was evidently pleasing to the Father; for he has promised to do that very

thing, as the following passages show. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." (1 Cor. 10: 13.) "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even a⁹ 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: 35-39; read also verses 31-34.) The only power which can transfer our allegiance to the evil one is within our own selves. God will do his part to protect us; but if we are not willing to do our part, then the devil will have his way with us. Man is a free moral agent, and not even God will compel him to remain in his favor against his will.

"Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth." The term "sanctify" is used throughout the Old Testament to express the entire dedication and consecration of both persons and things to God. Its basic idea is that of "separateness" or "apartness." (Cf. Lev. 11: 44; 1 Pet. 1: 15, 16.) It would be impossible, of course, for one to be consecrated unto God without endeavoring to live as he directs and seeking to become more like him; and it is in this sense that we think of sanctification as *holiness*. The importance of the subject may be seen from such passages as Hebrews 12: 14: "Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord."

The sanctification for which Jesus prayed is brought about by the truth, that is, the word of God. It is the truth which is embodied in Jesus (John 14: 6), and revealed through his teaching and activity. (Cf. 2 Thess. 2: 13, 14.) This truth both designated and separated the apostles unto their work; and it was the same will of the Father which led Christ to consecrate himself wholly to God. "I can of myself do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is righteous; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." (John 5: 30.) Jesus is the perfect pattern in all things to his people. (Cf. 1 Pet. 2: 21.) It is hardly necessary to say that it is impossible to sanctify any one against his will. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." (See 1 Thess. 4: 3.) In the prayer now before us, Jesus said, "While I was with them, I kept them in thy name which thou hast given me: and I guarded them, and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." This shows that even under those circumstances the apostles still enjoyed the freedom of their will.

"That They May All Be One"

(John 17: 20-23)

"Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me" The mission of the disciples of Christ into the world was a direct result of the mission of Christ. (See verse 18; 20: 21-23; 2 Cor. 5: 18-20.) The mission of the disciples of Christ is intended to make believers, and Jesus in his prayer contemplated the result which he desires, namely, a united and dedicated brotherhood. For Jesus there was no problem in the continued existence of an earthly society of believers after his resurrection; for he himself willed it and prayed for those who should be members of it, through their word.

The unity of the believers throughout the dispensation is not merely a matter of unanimity, nor does it mean that the members of the church lose their identity; it is strictly anal-

ogous to the unity of the Father and the Son. The Father is active in the Son (of. John 14: 10; 2 Cor. 5: 18, 19), and the deeds of the Son are meaningless apart from the Father (John 12: 48-50), and indeed would be impossible (John 5: 19). And, too, the Son is in the Father, is eternally with him in the unity of the so-called Trinity, active alike in creation and redemption. The Father and the Son are one, and yet remain distinct. It is this unity, enlarged and extended so as to include faithful disciples, which makes it a triple instead of a dual unity, which must characterize all believers. The believers are one: they are also in the Father and the Son, and yet distinct from both; and are themselves the sphere of Divine activity. (Phil. 2: 13.) This is the highest conception of unity which is possible.

Thus it can be seen that unity of all believers in Christ is a cardinal doctrine of the New Testament. Jesus does not teach conflicting doctrines; and no one can be pleasing to him who either teaches or adheres to such. Jesus makes it plain in the passage now under consideration that one of the expected results of the unity of believers is the conversion of the world; but it is next to useless to call upon others to accept this divine plan, while those who claim to stand upon the Bible alone ignore its teaching regarding this question. Many of the passages which are commonly used to condemn sectarian division, as that expression is generally understood, were written primarily for the purpose of correcting internal conditions in the church.

"And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected together into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me." The *glory* which is here referred to is probably the honor which God conferred upon Christ in admitting him into union with the Father, commonly expressed by Sonship; and if so, then the Son conferred the same honor, that is, brethren or sons of God, upon all believers who are in him. (Cf. 1 John 3: 1-3; Rom. 8: 29, 30.) In other words he made us

his brethren so that we might be one great household. This kind of unity will not only lead to the conversion of the world, but will also cause men to recognize both the divine mission of Christ and the love of the Father.

The Desire of Christ for His Disciples

(John 17: 24-26)

"Father, I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" This appears to be the Lord's request that his disciples be finally admitted into heaven itself, where they may not only see, but actually participate in, the glory which was his before he came to the earth. (Cf. John 1: 14; Phil. 2: 5-11.) John is probably echoing this sentiment when he says "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." (1 John 3: 1-3; of. Col. 3: 1-4.)

"O righteous Father, the world knew thee not, but I knew thee; and these knew that thou didst send me; and I made known unto them thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them." Wescott observes that the last word of this last recorded prayer for his disciples corresponds with the last word of his last discourse to them, namely, "I have overcome the world." (See John 16: 33.) Plummer notes that "these last words of Christ's mediatorial prayer sum up its purpose. They are the thread which runs through all these farewell discourses. He is going away and yet abides with them. His bodily presence passes away, his spiritual presence remains forever; not seen with the eye without, but felt, as life and strength, within. Having known Christ after the flesh, now they

know him so no more: they are in Christ, a new creation. (2 Cor. 5: 16, 17.)"

Any one who reads the Book of Acts and the Epistles can easily see how sublimely this prayer was realized in the history of the apostles, as Geikie points out. He continues, "It was their common glory to believe that nothing could separate them from the love of God in Christ. The contrast between the dejected, faint-hearted, materializing Galilean fishermen and the peasants of the Gospels, and the heroic, spiritual confessors of Pentecost and after times, is itself a miracle, great beyond all others. The illumination of soul, the grandeur of conception, the loftiness of aim, and the transformation from a lower to an infinitely higher mental and moral condition, as complete as the change from early twilight to noon, can find their only solution in the admission that they must have received the miraculous spiritual enlightenment from

above, which Jesus had promised to send them."

In speaking of the last discourse of Jesus and the ensuing prayer, Barnes says, "This sublime and beautiful discourse is appropriately closed by a solemn and most affecting prayer—a prayer at once expressive of the profoundest reverence for God and the tenderest love for men—simple, grave, tender, sublime, and full of consolation. It is the model for our prayers, and with like reverence, faith, and love we should come before God. This prayer for the church will yet be fully answered; and he who loves the church and the world cannot but cast his eyes onward to that time when all believers shall be one; when contentions, bigotry, strife, and anger shall cease; and when, in perpetual union and love, Christians shall show forth the power and purity of that holy gospel with which the Saviour came to bless mankind. Soon may that happy day arise!"

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Under what circumstances was the prayer of John 17 offered?

Give a general outline of its contents.

What do you know of the prayer-life of Jesus?

What effect should his example in this respect have on us?

What regard does Jesus have for his disciples now?

The Golden Text

What is the setting for our golden text?

How many times in this prayer did Christ pray for unity for his disciples?

Why is unity so important?

Can we please our Father and be divided in heart, mind and will?

The Lord's Ideal for Believers

What was the word which Jesus gave to his disciples?

Why did the world hate them?

What underlying reason caused the world to hate Jesus?

Why are the Lord's people not of the world?

Why does Jesus want his disciples to remain in the world, even now?

What special petition did he make for them in this connection?

What regard does the Father have respecting this plea?

What is the basic meaning of "sanctify"?
Discuss fully.

On what basis did Jesus send the apostles into the world?

How may one be sanctified now?

In what sense did Jesus sanctify himself?

Can one be sanctified against his will?
Give reasons for your answer.

"That They May All Be One"

What did Jesus expect from the mission of his disciples?

In what way are believers made?

In what sense did Jesus pray that his people may all be one?

How can the Father, the Son, and believers all be in each other?

What result did Jesus expect to come from unity? What can you say of the unity of today?

What glory did the Father give the Son? How did he give that glory to his disciples?

What result did he expect to follow the bestowal of his glory on them?

The Desire of Christ for His Disciples

What was the desire which Jesus expressed for his disciples?

What did he mean by beholding his glory? What was his glory?

What was John's probable reference to this in his first epistle?

What is the relation of this prayer to the Lord's last discourse to his disciples?

Show how its closing words sum up its general purpose.

Was the purpose of the prayer realized in the days of the early church? Give reasons for your answer.

What prospects do we have of its being realized in our day?

Lesson XII—December 17, 1967

TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS

Lesson Text

John 19: 4-9, 14-18, 25-30

4 And Pi'-late went out again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him out to you, that ye may know that I find no crime in him.

5 Je'-sus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment. And Pi'-late saith unto them, Behold, the man!

6 When therefore the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him! Pi'-late saith unto them, Take him yourselves, and crucify him: for I find no crime in him.

7 The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

8 When Pi'-late therefore heard this saying, he was the more afraid;

9 And he entered into the Prae-to'-ri-um again, and saith unto Je'-sus, Whence art thou? But Je'-sus gave him no answer.

14 Now it was the Preparation of the passover: it was about the sixth hour. And he saith unto the Jews, Behold, your King!

15 They therefore cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him! Pi'-late saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cae'-sar.

16 Then therefore he delivered him unto them to be crucified.

17 They took Je'-sus therefore: and he went out, bearing the cross for himself, unto the place called The place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Gol'-go-tha:

18 Where they crucified him, and with him two others, on either side one, and Je'-sus in the midst.

25 These things therefore the soldiers did. But there were standing by the cross of Je'-sus his mother, and mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clo'-pas, and Mary Mag-da-le'-ne.

26 When Je'-sus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold, thy son!

27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold, thy mother! And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home.

28 After this Je'-sus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst.

29 There was set there a vessel full of vinegar: so they put a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop, and brought it to his mouth

30 When Je'-sus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us” (1 John 3: 16.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—John 19: 1-3.

Daily Bible Readings

- December 11. M..... The Betrayal of Christ (John 18: 1-11)
- December 12. T..... The Denial of Christ (John 18: 15-27)
- December 13. W..... The Trial of Christ (John 18: 28-40; 19: 1-9)
- December 14. T..... The Crucifixion of Christ (John 19: 17-30)
- December 15. F..... The Burial of Christ (John 19: 31-42)
- December 16. S..... The Sufferings of Christ (Isa. 53: 4-12)
- December 17. S..... The Atonement of Christ (Rom. 5: 1-8)

TIME.—A.D. 30.

PLACES.—Jerusalem and Golgotha.

PERSONS.—Jesus, Pilate, the Jewish leaders, John, the mother of Jesus, and others.

Introduction

After the trial of Jesus before the Jews, where he was found to be guilty of the death penalty, it was necessary for them to take him before the Roman governor to have their condemnation ratified. John reports that procedure in these words: "They lead Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the Praetorium: and it was early; and they themselves entered not into the Praetorium, that they might not be defiled, but might eat the passover. Pilate therefore went out unto them, and saith, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If this man were not an evildoer, we should not have delivered him up unto thee. Pilate therefore said unto them, Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law. The Jews said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying by what manner of death he should die." (John 18: 28-32.)

If the whole procedure before Pilate is carefully considered, it will be seen that he made several efforts to free Jesus, but was never successful. It appears that Pilate was a capable ruler, and as David Smith, (*The Days of His Flesh*) points out, had he been set over another province, he might have proved a successful ruler. But as it was, Pilate had an imperious temper, and was disposed to rule with a high hand and compel obedience. He had greatly mis-

judged the Jews, who were tenacious in their faith and quick to resent anything which seemed to be a slight upon their cherished traditions. He had in the past, according to Josephus and others, been compelled to back down a number of times in his attempts to force his way with the Jews, and that, in part at least, accounts for the manner in which they forced his hand on the occasion now before us.

It will be seen in the passage quoted above that Pilate attempted to throw the responsibility for condemning Jesus on the Sanhedrin, but they shrewdly threw the case back at him by asserting that they did not have the authority to put any man to death. And then at the mention of Galilee, Pilate thought that he saw an opportunity to shift the responsibility to Herod; but Herod, after satisfying his own curiosity and being unable to make out a case against Jesus, sent him back to Pilate. (See Luke 23: 1-12.) And then, as a further attempt to free himself of the fearful responsibility of condemning a man whom he knew to be innocent, he resorted to his custom of freeing any prisoner whom the people desired; and feeling certain that they would prefer Jesus to Barabbas, he gave them the opportunity of choosing between them, with the result that they chose Barabbas. It was following this that Pilate signed the death warrant, and ordered Jesus to be crucified.

The Golden Text

"Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us" There is no better way to learn the meaning of a great truth than by way of example. This is true in any area of life, but how much more so in the spiritual realm. The religion of Christ is based on the principle of love, and "he that loveth not abideth in death." This is to say that no man can please God whose heart and life are devoid of love. "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.)

But no man is capable, in and of himself, of understanding the mean-

ing of love, and so John continues, "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. 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." (1 John 4: 9-11; of. John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 6-8.)

The setting of the golden text sets forth the practical meaning of love, as seen both in the sacrifice of Christ and in the lives of his people. "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 who-so hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and

shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth." (1 John 3: 14-18.) Jesus used the cross to show his love, and so must his followers. (Cf. John 10: 17 Matt. 10: 38.)

The Text Explained

"Behold, the Man!"

(John 19: 4-9)

"And Pilate went out again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him out to you, that ye may know that I find no crime in him. Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold, the man!" In order to understand some of the significance of that which was said and done, as indicated here, we should have before us that which is said in verses 1-3: "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and arrayed him in a purple garment; and they came unto him and said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they struck him with their hands."

It is difficult for us to conceive of the treatment which was accorded Jesus on this occasion. Pilate had been frustrated in his attempt to get the people to choose Jesus instead of Barabbas, and so he made his fifth effort to free Jesus, this time by scourging. "And Pilate spake unto them again, desiring to release Jesus; but they shouted, saying, Crucify, crucify him. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath this man done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him and release him." (Luke 23: 20-22.) It appears that the Romans were accustomed to scourging a criminal before they crucified him, but the governor's evident aim was to let the scourging suffice.

David Smith describes the chastisement in these words: "The scourge was a frightful instrument—whip with several thongs, each loaded with acorn-shaped balls of lead or sharp pieces of bone. Six lictors took the victim, stripped him, bound him to a post, and plied the cruel lash. Each stroke cut into the quiver-

ing flesh; the veins and sometimes the very entrails were laid bare, and often the teeth and eyes were knocked out. It is no wonder that not unfrequently the sufferer expired under the torture. The soldiers led Jesus away and scourged him; and then they took him, faint and bleeding, and compassed him with ribald mockery. Over his lacerated back they put Herod's purple robe; they platted a crown of thorns and put it on his head; and in his right hand, by way of sceptre, they put a reed; then in mock homage they knelt before him and saluted him: 'Hail! King of the Jews.' And they spat upon his face, buffeted him, and, snatching the reed from his hand, smote him on the head, at each stroke driving the thorns into his tortured brow."

There is evidence to support the contention that the addition of the mockery to the scourging went beyond the limits of Roman usage, and amounted to "superfluous barbarity." But Pilate apparently did not restrain them, and may have encouraged them; for it seems to have been his purpose to appease the Jews with this barbarous treatment of Jesus, and thereby cause them through pity, and with the satisfaction of knowing that his influence had been destroyed, to be satisfied with giving up the idea of crucifying him. Or to state the same things in other words, that which is recorded in verses 4 and 5 was an appeal to their compassion; as if to say, Surely the spectacle which you behold is enough to soften you. It was a desperate attempt on the part of Pilate, but the Jews knew that Pilate had been forced to retreat before them before, and they were in no mood to accept a compromise.

"When therefore the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out saying, Crucify him, crucify him!

Pilate saith unto them, Take him yourselves, and crucify him: for I find no crime in him." This was not intended as a grant of permission to crucify Jesus, but was uttered in ironical mockery. Barnes notes that the statement was equivalent to this: "I am satisfied of his innocence, and shall not pronounce the sentence of death. If *you* are bent on his ruin—if *you* are determined to put to death an innocent man—if *my* judgment does not satisfy you—take him and put him to death *on your own responsibility*, and take the consequences. It cannot be done with my consent, nor in due form of law; and *if* done, it must be done by *you*, without authority, and in the face of justice."

"The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." The Jews evidently felt the force of Pilate's implied charge that they were trying to destroy an innocent man, and they sought to justify themselves on the ground that he stood clearly condemned by their law. This was the law against blasphemy. (See Lev. 24: 16; Matt. 26: 63-68.) Pilate was under no obligation to enforce the Jewish law, and it was for that reason that the enemies of Jesus did not prefer the charge of blasphemy when they brought him before the governor, but instead charged him with sedition. (See Luke 23: 1-5; John 18: 29, 30.) And so, when Pilate made his ironical statement, the Jews adduced their real reason for wanting Jesus killed.

"When Pilate therefore heard this saying, he was the more afraid; and he entered into the Praetorium again, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer." This was not fear of the Jews, but apparently fear of Jesus himself. He had already been warned by his wife to have "nothing to do with that righteous man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Matt. 27: 19), and after hearing that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, Pilate probably was made to wonder, in keeping with pagan superstitions and mythological legends, if this extraordinary man who was then before his judgment bar was in reality one of the gods in human form: hence his

question, "Whence art thou?" While their words to Pilate may have produced an effect on the governor for which they were not prepared, it is clearly seen that the Jews had again out-manuevered him.

"Behold, Your King!"

(John 19: 14-18)

"Now it was the Preparation of the passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he saith unto the Jews Behold, your King!" It was pointed out in a previous lesson that Bible students are not agreed regarding the time when Jesus and his disciples ate the passover supper; but as stated then, Matthew, Mark and Luke seem to indicate that they ate at the regular time. If that is true, the statement here does not mean that it was "the Preparation for the passover," meaning the passover supper, but rather the preparation day (Friday) before the sabbath of the passover week. (See Mark 15: 42; Luke 23: 54.) The eating of the passover in John 18: 28 apparently has reference to the feast, that is the seven days (of 2 Chron. 30: 22), and not the pascal supper. This interpretation, as Robertson points out, keeps John in harmony with the Synoptics.

The time reference here was according to Roman calculation. Jewish time was not in use when John wrote. The verses between this section and the previous one tell of Pilate's again being thwarted in his effort to release Jesus, and of his taking his seat again in apparent preparation for the reversal of his decision regarding Jesus. When Pilate said to the Jews, "Behold the man!" he was trying to call forth their sympathy, by showing that he was only a humiliated and suffering man; but when he said, "Behold, your King!" he was being sarcastic, evidently because they had out-smarted him and forced him to act contrary to his best judgment. (Cf. verses 19-22.)

"They therefore cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him! Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. Then therefore he delivered him unto them to be crucified." While Pilate continued his

sarcasm, the priestly group, who did not have the Messianic hope of the Pharisees, not only rejected Jesus, but, in effect, God as their king. (Cf.

1 Sam. 12: 12; 8: 7.) They apparently were willing to do anything to carry their point. The success of their effort is recorded in verse 16. (Cf. Luke 23: 20-25.)

"They took Jesus therefore: and he went out, bearing the cross for himself, unto a place called The place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified him, and with him two others, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst." (For a fuller account, see Luke 23: 26-43.) The three men on the crosses died a different death with reference to sin. One died *in* sin; one died *to* sin; while Jesus died *for* sin.

**"Behold, Thy Son!" —
"Behold, Thy Mother!"**

(John 19: 25-30)

"These things therefore the soldiers did. But there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene Verses 23, 24 tell what the soldiers did. There were other women near the scene of the crucifixion (see Matt. 27: 55, 56; Mark 15: 40, 41), but the ones which John names were "standing by the cross of Jesus," three of whom are clearly identified — the mother of Jesus, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Some Bible students endeavor to make it appear that the sister of the mother of Jesus and Mary the wife of Clopas are one and the same person; but if that were true, we would have two sisters with the same name, Mary.

When we take into consideration some of the peculiarities of John in writing his record, we may have some light on this question. John never mentions his own name, nor that of the mother of Jesus; and if, as many Bible students think, the sister of the mother of Jesus was Salome, the mother of John, he would probably have the same reason for not mentioning her name. Furthermore, only John mentions the fact that the mother of Jesus was at the cross. Among those who were beholding from afar, according to Matthew and Mark, were Mary Magda-

lene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Salome, the mother of the sons of Zebedee. Many Bible students consider the second Mary mentioned here as being the same as Mary the wife of Clopas, the latter being the same as Alphaeus of Matthew 10: 3. If this is true, then we have two of the ones mentioned by John, along with the mother of Jesus; and since Salome is also named by Matthew and Mark as being with the other two, it is reasonable to assume that she was the sister of the mother of Jesus. It is also fair to conclude that the three left their position "from afar," and accompanied the mother of Jesus to a place "by the cross."

"When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold, thy Son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold, thy mother! And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home." The disciple whom Jesus loved was evidently John, and if the relationship existed which has just been suggested, then it was but natural that Jesus would make this gesture regarding the care for his mother. If one should wonder why Jesus did not commit the care of his mother to one of his brothers, the answer is probably to be found in the fact that they were still unbelievers (of. John 7: 5), and would not therefore have the same sympathy toward her that her nephew John would manifest. It appears from the record that John was true to his trust. (See the latter part of verse 27.)

"After this Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst. There was set there a vessel full of vinegar: so they put a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop, and brought it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit." This vinegar is not to be confused with the drugged wine which he refused before his crucifixion. (See Matt. 27: 33, 34; Mark 15: 22, 23.) The hyssop (reed according to Matthew and Mark) was probably three or four feet long, and was used so they could reach the mouth of Jesus with the sponge full

of vinegar. This appears to have been the last thing that was done for

Jesus before he died. Note his last words.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What was the next step for the Jews after they had condemned Jesus?
How does John describe this part of the drama?
What conclusion did Pilate reach concerning Jesus?
Why wasn't he successful in his efforts to free Jesus?
Discuss some of the movements which were made by Pilate and the Jews.

The Golden Text

Show why example is one of the best ways to teach any truth.
Why is love the underlying principle of the Christian religion?
How only may we know the meaning of true love?
What is the practical meaning of love in the life of Christians?
What is the true significance of cross-bearing?

"Behold, the Man!"

What was Pilate's purpose in saying, "Behold, the man!"?
What was done to Jesus before this? and why?
What was the Roman method of scourging a prisoner?
Why did the soldiers mock Jesus as well as scourge him?
Why didn't Pilate restrain them?
How did the Jews react to Pilate's dramatic move to enlist their sympathy?
Why did the governor tell them to crucify Jesus, since he judged him to be in-

nocent of the charges against him?
What reply did they make to him? and why?
Why hadn't they mentioned their charge of blasphemy before?
How was Pilate affected when he heard of this phase of the question?
Why was he the "more afraid"? and what was his reaction?

"Behold, Your King!"

What is the meaning of "it was the Preparation of the passover"??
What is the difference between "Preparation for the passover" and "Preparation of the passover"??
When was the "sixth" hour?
Why did Pilate say, "Behold, your King!" instead of "Behold, the man!"?
What was the reaction of the Jews to this? and with what result?
Where was Jesus crucified? and how did he get there?
What was the difference in the deaths of the three men who died there?

"Behold Thy Son!—Behold, Thy Mother!"

What did the soldiers do to Jesus? and why?
Who were the women who were standing by the cross of Jesus?
What difference is noted between John's record, and that of the Synoptics?
Which disciple was standing by the mother of Jesus? Give reasons for your answer.
Why did Jesus commit his mother to the care of this disciple, rather than to one of his brothers?
What was the last act performed for Jesus before he died?
What were his last words?

Lesson XIII—December 24, 1967

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Lesson Text

John 20: 1-10, 19-23

1 Now on the first *day* of the week cometh Mary Mag-da-le'-ne early, while it was yet dark, unto the tomb, and seeth the stone taken away from the tomb.

2 She runneth therefore, and cometh to Si'-mon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Je'-sus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him.

3 Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb.

4 And they ran both together: and the other disciple outran Peter, and came first to the tomb;

5 And stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths lying; yet entered he not in.

6 Si'-mon Peter therefore also cometh, following him, and entered into the tomb; and he beholdeth the linen cloths lying,

7 And the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself.

8 Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, who came first to the tomb, and he saw, and believed.

9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

10 So the disciples went away again unto their own home.

19 When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Je'-sus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you.

20 And when he had said this, he showed unto them his hands and his

side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord.

21 Je'-sus therefore said to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit:

23 Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

Golden Text.—“*I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore*” (Rev. 1: 17, 18.)

Devotional Reading.—John 20: 11-19.

Daily Bible Readings

December 18. M.....	Resurrection Predicted (Matt. 12: 38-45)
December 19. T.....	The Empty Tomb (John 20: 1-10)
December 20. W.....	Jesus Appears to Mary (John 20: 11-18)
December 21. T.....	“Doubting Thomas” (John 20: 19-29)
December 22. F.....	Jesus Appears to Several Disciples (John 21: 1-14)
December 23. S.....	Message of the Risen Christ (Rev. 1: 10-20)
December 24. S.....	Fruits of the Resurrection (1 Cor. 15: 12-22)

Time.—A.D. 30—the glorious first day of the week; the Lord’s day.

Places.—The tomb of Jesus and the house where the disciples were.

Persons.—Jesus, Mary Magdalene, the angels, and the disciples.

Introduction

When Jesus died upon the cross, no group of people could have seemed more abjectly weak, more pitifully hopeless, and more absolutely doomed to scorn and extinction, than the disciples whom he had gathered around him. When he was arrested and brought to trial, the boldest of his followers vehemently denied that he even so much as knew him, and all of those who had been closest to him left him and fled for their own safety. Only John, it seems, was willing to walk with any degree of confidence, into the palace of the high priest where the trial was being conducted, and he appears to have been the only one of the apostles who was near the cross where Jesus had been crucified.

A statement is found in the prologue to John’s narrative regarding the influence which Christ has exerted upon the human race. Goodspeed renders the passage in these words: “It was by him that life came into existence, and that life was the light of mankind. The light is still shining in the darkness, for the darkness has never put it out.” (John 1: 4, 5.) John’s words were written long

after the effort was made to extinguish that light by the crucifixion, but it was still shining when he penned his message. Something had happened, as Clement of Alexandria later expressed it, which “changed sunset into sunrise,” and the world could never be the same again. About thirty-five years after Jesus had been put to death, the Roman historian Tacitus, in expressing both his astonishment and indignation at the continuous progress of the Christian movement, noted that the “pestilent superstition though checked for the time being, broke out afresh, not only in Judea, where the mischief started, but also at Rome, where all manner of horrible and loathsome things pour in and become fashionable.”

Thus, from the very beginning, it seemed incredible to a scholar like Tacitus that the flame kindled by Christ should go on burning. But here is the marvel of history, not that the world is dark—it always has been—but that we have a radiant spiritual heritage, coming down to us across the centuries, which all the evil of the world has never been

able to destroy. The triumph of Christ will forever guarantee the ultimate outcome of the right. We have seen enough to know that many of the best things of life get crucified and put in a tomb; but they

always have their third day. There will always be darkness, crucifixion, and the tomb; but over and above them the light will continue to shine; for the darkness can never put it out.

The Golden Text

The setting for our golden text is an awe inspiring one. John on the Isle of Patmos tells of seeing Christ when he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. John heightens the impression of the awesomeness of it by writing that at this sight of Christ in all his glory that he fell at his feet as if he were dead. Christ placed his right hand on him and told him not to fear that "I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore." (Rev. 1: 17, 18.) Christ calls himself the first and the last, a title similar to that given God, the Alpha and the Omega, which is a further indication that Christ is not greatly different from God himself in glory and power.

Christian faith at its richest involves this assurance that Christ gave the apostle John: "I am the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore." No wonder the Apostles, having this assurance, were bold to make their great affirmation, and hastened to proclaim to all the world the gospel of the living Christ. No wonder they were ready to die for it, for in the light of it death itself had shrunk to insignificance, and all things had become new. "Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood can never lose its power." But how do we

know? What warrant have we for believing that the blood of Calvary's cross will be effectual to the end of time? This is our warrant—that he who died there rose again. He is able to save unto the uttermost because he ever liveth. He who was dead is alive for evermore, and has the keys of death and of the grave.

This is the inmost secret of the Christian life. Jesus lives. It was not possible for death to hold him. His tomb was empty. He is Lord of the invisible and of the visible, and for him there are no intervening barriers or closed doors. He is the Christ who reigns on high and he is Christ "in us" the hope of glory.

Jesus, then, wants us to meet all of our fears with the assurance that he is the living one. "I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore." Not only was he with God at the beginning and with God at the end, a Creator who made the world and everything therein and will step into view again at the last day to judge and punish and reward; but he is the Living one from first to last, the giver and sustainer of our life, if we cling fast to him. All things will be ours—life and death, the present and the future, height and depth, because we are Christ's and Christ is God's.

The Text Explained

The Risen Lord

(John 20: 1-10)

"Now on the first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, while it was yet dark, unto the tomb, and seeth the stone taken away from the tomb." Matthew (27: 56) and Mark (15: 40) tell us that Mary Magdalene was accompanied by two other women, Mary the mother of James the less and Salome. Luke adds that there were also other women with them. (Luke 24: 10.) John mentions Mary Magdalene only. She was the most active and forward in this visit to the tomb, and she seemed to have

more affection for her Lord; much was done for her, therefore she loved much. (Mark 16: 9.) She had shown her affection to him while he lived by ministering to him of her substance. (Luke 8: 2, 3.) She came early on the first day of the week as soon as the sabbath was over. She came to the sepulcher, bringing the spices which she had prepared. Those spices in her hands show how completely vanished her faith and hope. She had come not to greet a living Saviour, but to embalm a dead one; her love outlived her faith. If he were no longer her Saviour, he was still her friend. So may love

live, even when faith is dead. Faith is of God, but love is God. Faith is God's gift; but love is God's self and substance. "He that abideth in love abideth in God, and God in him." Faith is of value to us, therefore, just in proportion as it helps us to love him with all our hearts. So if we hold fast our love we shall recover both faith and hope.

"She runneth therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. And they ran both together: and the other disciple outran Peter, and came first to the tomb; and stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths lying; yet entered he not in." This story is the beginning of the wonderful story of the triumph of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It was Christ's resurrection that made the church and that transformed a group of dispirited and frightened men into that valiant band that were ready to do anything and go everywhere telling the story. When the women found this fresh calamity of an empty tomb Mary Magdalene ran in haste to tell the leaders of the little band of broken men who had been Christ's disciples of this new outrage committed against their friend. She went first to Peter. Peter had confessed and repented of his denial of Christ and would not allow himself to be exiled from Christ and Christ's friends by his own failure. He had taken his old place again among them and would still yet prove that he was for Christ. Next she went to "the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved," whom we know to be John.

Peter took the lead. The moment he heard the sorrowful news he was up and away and running hard. The other disciple followed after, and perhaps being younger outran Peter. John stooped down and looked into the tomb and saw the discarded graveclothes, but did not go in.

"Simon Peter therefore also cometh, following him, and entered into the tomb; and he beholdeth linen cloths lying, and the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place

by itself. Then entered in the other disciple also, who came first to the tomb, and he saw and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. So the disciples went away again unto their own home." There is something indescribably impressive in the very simplicity of this story. He saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. There was no hurry when he discarded the useless graveclothes, and laid each one in a separate place apart. Christ had died for a sinful world, one that had persecuted him and nailed him to a cross. He had faced and overcome the powers of hell that could not hold him. Yet this is the first action of the risen Lord! Dora Greenwell said: "The Christian must be friends with every day, with its narrow details, its homely atmosphere; its loving correction must make him great. Is there not the very life-core of Christianity in this picture, the broken tomb and the risen Christ, the angels in their shining garments, the linen clothes folded, and laid in a place by themselves?"

The Appearance to the Apostles

(John 20: 19, 20)

"When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had said this, he showed unto them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord."

It has already been pointed out in this lesson that the Lord's first appearance after his resurrection was to Mary Magdalene. His other appearances while on the earth seem to have been in the following order:

(2) to the other women on their way to tell the disciples, Matt. 28: 9, 10; (3) to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, Mark 16: 12, 13; Luke 24: 13-32; (4) to Simon, Luke 24: 33-35; 1 Cor. 15: 5; (5) to the ten apostles, Thomas being absent, Luke 24: 36-43; John 20: 19, 25; (6) to the eleven apostles, Mark 16: 14; John 20: 26-29; (7) to the seven dis-

ciples at the sea of Tiberias, John 21: 1-24; (8) to the eleven apostles and the five hundred brethren on a mountain in Galilee Matt. 28: 16-20; 1 Cor. 15: 6; (9) to James the Lord's brother, 1 Cor. 15: 7; and (10) to all the apostles at the ascension, Mark 16: 19, 20; Luke 24: 44-53; Acts 1: 3-11. There were also some appearances of Jesus after the ascension, namely, (1) to Stephen, Acts 7: 54-60; (2) to Paul, 1 Cor. 15: 8; Acts 26: 11-19; and (3) to John, Rev. 1: 9-20.

As may be seen from the list of appearances just given, the appearance of the verses now under consideration was the fifth which Jesus made on the day he arose from the dead. John is very specific about the day—"on that day, the first day of the week." Looking at the word "evening" in the light of Luke 24: 29, 33, 36, it is probably fair to assume that the meeting now under consideration took place during the early part of the night, which according to Jewish time, would not be on the first day of the week. But John appears to have been using Roman time, and if so, it was still the first day of the week, and would be until midnight.

We have no means of knowing where Jesus was during the time between his several appearances to his disciples, and the question does not concern us; for it is quite evident that the period of his usual visible association with his disciples was over. He simply appeared to them at his will, and for the purposes which he had in mind.

While there is nothing definite about the location of the place where the disciples were at the time Jesus appeared to them, it may have been in the upper room mentioned in Acts 1: 13. However, we are told that they were careful not to expose themselves, because of their fear of the Jews. No reason is assigned for the absence of Thomas. David Smith suggests that it may have been that he fled the farthest in the panic occasioned by the arrest of Jesus, and had not yet returned. We are also not told who the others were "that were with them" (Luke 24: 33), but we are told that Jesus had appeared to Simon. This was the meeting the two disciples from Emmaus entered, and gave their report about the

Lord's third appearance of that day; and it was while they were speaking these things that Jesus entered the room, and said, "Peace be unto you." It is easy to understand why the disciples were glad, when they saw the Lord. And for us, it is enough to know that he lives forever!

The Risen Christ's Gifts to His Friends

(John 20: 21-23)

"Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace be unto you: and the Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive the Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained"

This was the social greeting of the time of Christ, "Peace be unto you," but the fact that Christ repeated it after telling them in the upper room "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you" shows that he had more in his mind by far than simply that; what he meant was peace in their own hearts and consciences. It was a strange bequest coming from a man who stood in a situation that was anything but peaceful. Outside in the streets of Jerusalem a raging storm of disaster threatened to batter the breath out of his body and the very life out of his soul. Inside the hearts of the disciples pounded with fear and grief until the atmosphere was electric with tension. Yet here he is offering them peace; but Christ himself possessed this inner peace. We see him in Gethsemane, rising from his prayer, calm and serene, perfectly poised to do the will of God. We see him on trial before the high priests, never blundering, but bearing himself throughout the ordeal with self-possession and fearless dignity. We see him before Pilate with fearlessness. As the end approaches, we see him on the cross in a gesture of composure as he shouts, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." This is the peace that Christ bequeathed to his disciples. And because Christ died, because he went to the cross and returned to his Father, he has made it possible for us to appropriate through faith this strange bequest of his own peace.

The supreme legacy that Jesus be-

queathed to his disciples was the promise of the Holy Spirit. He will not leave them as a flock untended,

but will pray the Father and he shall give them the Holy Spirit. (John 14: 16.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Tell something of the circumstance of the disciples when Jesus died.
Discuss the influence which Jesus has had on the world of mankind.
Why is all this true?
What great lesson do we learn from these things?

The Golden Text

What is the setting of our text?
How do we know that Christ is the Living one?
How should we meet all of our fears?

The Risen Lord

Who came first to the tomb of Christ?
What did they find upon arriving?
What was the purpose of their visit?
Who was the most expressive of the group? Why?
How may we define love? Faith?
Of what value to us is faith?
Who did Mary Magdalene go to upon discovering the empty tomb?
What was the reaction to her news?
What did they find when they went inside the tomb?

How may we apply the first actions of our risen Lord to our daily lives?

The Appearance to the Apostles

What do we know regarding the various appearances of Jesus between his resurrection and ascension?
Which one of these appearances is recorded in this section of our lesson?
At what time of day did he come to the apostles?
Where were they? and why?
Give the principle facts regarding this appearance.
Which one of the apostles was not present on this occasion?
What message did Jesus give to them when he appeared?
How did they react to his appearance?
What great significance does all of this have for us?

The Risen Christ's Gifts to His Friends

What did Christ mean by his greeting to his apostles?
Why was his bequest a strange one?
What situations illustrate the perfect inner peace of Christ? Why did he have such a peace?
How may we make this peace our own?

Lesson XIV—December 31, 1967

JESUS AND PETER

Lesson Text

John 21: 1-17

1 After these things Je'-sus manifested himself again to the disciples at the sea of Ti-be'-ri-as; and he manifested *himself* on this wise.

2 There were together Si'-mon Peter, and Thomas called Did'-y-mus, and Na-than'-a-el of Ca'-na in Gal-i-lee, and the *sons* of Zeb'-e-dee, and two other of his disciples.

3 Si'-mon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him. We also come with thee. They went forth, and entered into the boat; and that night they took nothing.

4 But when day was now breaking, Je'-sus stood on the beach: yet the disciples knew not that it was Je'-sus.

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.

8 But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from the land, but about two hundred cubits off), dragging the net *full* of fishes.

9 So when they got out upon the land, they see a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

10 Je'-sus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now taken.

11 Si'-mon Peter therefore went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, the net was not rent.

12 Je'-sus saith unto them, Come *and* break your fast. And none of the disciples durst inquire of him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

13 Je'-sus cometh, and taketh the bread, and giveth them, and the fish likewise.

14 This is now the third time that Je'-sus was manifested to the disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

15 So when they had broken their fast, Je'-sus saith to Si'-mon Peter, Si'-mon *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.

16 He saith to him again a second time, Si'-mon, *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.

17 He saith unto him the third time, Si'-mon, *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. Je'-sus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"This is the disciple that beareth witness of these things: and we know that his witness is true"* (John 21: 24.)

DEVOTIONAL HEADING.—John 20: 30, 31.

Daily Bible Readings

- December 25. M.....Peter Becomes a Disciple (John 1: 35-42)
- December 26. T..... Sent Out As an Apostle (Luke 6: 1-14)
- December 27. W..... Peter Present at the Transfiguration (Matt. 17: 1-8)
- December 28. T..... Peter Denies Christ (Luke 22: 31-34, 54-62)
- December 29. F..... Peter Is Restored (John 21: 15-19)
- December 30. S..... Peter Is Rebuked (John 21: 20-23)
- December 31. S..... Peter Writes of His Death (2 Pet. 1: 12-18)

TIME.—A.D. 30—sometime between the resurrection and the ascension.

PLACE.—At the sea of Tiberias.

PERSONS.—Jesus, Peter, and six other disciples.

Introduction

There is nothing pertaining to the life of Christ that is not both interesting and instructive. John tells us (20: 30, 31) why he wrote the things which are contained in the book which bears his name; and when we consider that which is said in the closing verse of that book (21: 25) we are impressed, not only with the enormous volume of the Lord's words and deeds, but also, and chiefly, with the great importance of the things which were recorded by John.

The story of the breakfast by the sea, and the things which happened in connection with it, are among those highly important incidents

which were chosen and recorded by the apostle whom Jesus loved. So graphic is his narrative of the things under consideration at the time of this appearance that we almost feel as we read it that we are there with the Lord and the seven disciples as they experienced these things there by the sea which they knew and loved so well.

The first four verses cover the setting of the lesson. And although there were seven disciples in the group, it is obvious from the verses which follow that the story was selected by John primarily for that which is said about Peter.

The Golden Text

"This is the disciple that beareth witness of these things: and we know that his witness is true" After Peter had denied Christ, Jesus has just restored him in the scene which is given us by the lakeside. He tells him what his work is to be, and then the Lord goes on to speak of the manner of Peter's death. Drawing a contrast between the glory of youth and the weakness

of age, the liberty of freedom and the constraint of imprisonment, he said that a day should come when his servant would stretch forth his hand, and another should gird him and carry him whither he would not. It was in that very moment, so solemn and hallowed, that Peter caught sight of his fellow-disciple John, and turned to Jesus with the question, "Lord, and what shall this man do?"

Jesus replied, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."

At the close of John's record of the gospel he tells this touching story of what took place between Christ and Peter and added his own authentication: "This is the disciple that beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his witness is true." It is the story of his beloved Master which he is ending in a sort of cadency. He is not ashamed to put his name to it; even though he did not sign it, we know that he was the one "that beareth witness of these things." He wrote upon his own knowledge and not by hear-say. The penman of this history was a disciple, a beloved disciple, one that had leaned on Christ's breast, that had himself heard his sermons and had seen his miracles, and the proofs of his resurrection. This is he who testifies what he was well assured of. The supreme aim of the gospel is positive, a faith-creating witness to Jesus as the divine Son, in order that

the readers may be brought into possession of that life eternal which is promised in his name. It is testimony to the greatness and majesty of Christ, the Word made flesh. Everything in it bears the impression of the writer's own individuality.

John speaks of himself in the plural number, "we know that his witness is true." He seems to do this for modesty-sake as in 1 John 1: 1, and 2 Peter 1: 16. The gospel writers were entirely satisfied of the truth of what they testified and handed down to us. They do not ask us to believe what they did not believe themselves for they know their testimony was true. They ventured both this life and the other upon it, of what they wrote and spoke. It was first published by word of mouth before it was committed to writing. What they wrote, they wrote as an affidavit, what they would abide by. Their writings are standing testimonies to the world of the truth of Christ's doctrine, and will be testimonies either for us or against us, according as we do or do not receive it.

The Text Explained

The Appearance Beside the Lake

(John 21: 1-4)

"After these things Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and he manifested himself on this wise. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also come with thee. They went forth, and entered into the boat; and that night they took nothing. But when day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach: yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus." The beautiful lake is called Tiberias here as in John 6: 1, but nowhere else in the gospel records is it called that. Six of the disciples joined Peter in a night of fishing and caught nothing. This is the only place in the book of John where the sons of Zebedee are mentioned. The "two other disciples" who are not named might well be Andrew and Philip who are named together in John 1: 44. In the gray light of the dawn Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not recognize him as their Master.

The Miraculous Draught of Fishes

(John 21: 5-8)

"Jesus therefore saith unto them, Children, have ye ought to eat? They answered him, No." Many Bible students have wondered why these disciples of Jesus went fishing that day. It is known that at least some of them had followed that trade before they became the constant companions of Jesus (of. Luke 5: 1-11), and some have hastily concluded that they probably felt that their work as apostles of Christ was over, and that they would return to their old occupation. But in view of the Lord's previous appearances to them, it is more reasonable to suppose, with David Smith, Farrar, and others, that they were merely endeavoring to earn a livelihood while waiting further developments. Jesus had sent them word that he would go before them into Galilee, where they would see him, and that no doubt accounted for their presence there. (See Matt. 28: 7.)

The form of address used by Jesus in speaking to his disciples is not found elsewhere in John. An entirely different word is used from the one found in 13: 33. The term used here

is a colloquial expression, such as "My boys," and was probably used often by men on the shore who wanted to buy fish or who were simply asking about the success of the fishermen. The same word is used by John in his First Epistle (2: 13. 18). The Lord's question to them was framed so as to expect a negative answer, and it may be expressed in these words: "You haven't anything to eat, have you?" Greek scholars tell us that the substantive used here by Jesus signified something to eat which was added to bread at a meal, as in this case, fish. Their answer was short and to the point, "No."

"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." There is no reason assigned for casting the net on the *right* side of the boat, but the disciples did as they were instructed, and their success was beyond their great expectations. This experience must have caused them to think of a similar one, when they were called to become the constant followers of Jesus. (See Luke 5: 1-11.)

"That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord." The disciples must have understood that this was a miracle, and its similarity to the one just referred to evidently caused John to take a closer look at the man on the shore. Those who are acquainted with the history of Peter and John will agree that while Peter usually *acted* before John did, the latter generally *understood* quicker than his more impetuous fellow-apostle.

"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. But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from the land, but about two hundred cubits off), dragging the net full of fishes." The impulsive Peter who had stripped himself to his undergarment (see marginal note) acted in character. In his eagerness to reach the Lord, he cast himself into the water and either waded or swam to the shore. It was only about one hundred yards. The others, however, with more restraint, came in the

boat and dragged the net which was filled with fishes.

A Breakfast by the Sea

(John 21: 9-14)

"So when they got out upon the land, they see a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread."

The fire, the bread, and the fish which the disciples saw on the shore were in all probability miraculously provided by the Lord, and were in sharp contrast with their failure to procure anything to eat during the night. It is also possible that the Lord meant to teach them a lesson regarding providential care for them in their service for him.

"Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which we have now taken. Simon Peter therefore went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, the net was not rent." At the command of Jesus, Peter went aboard (see marginal note), and drew the net to land. John's probable reason for recording the exact number of fishes was to show the magnitude of the miracle, both as to quantity of the catch and the strength of the net. (Cf. Luke 5: 6.)

"Jesus saith unto them, Come and break your fast. And none of the disciples durst inquire of him. Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord." Alford thinks that this implies that they sat down to eat in silence, and he quotes Chrysostom as saying that "they no longer had their former confidence, . . . but in silence and much fear and reverence they sat down, looking on him: . . . seeing his form changed and very wonderful, they were much amazed, and wanted to ask him respecting it, but their fear, and their knowledge that it was no other than he himself, hindered them."

"Jesus cometh, and taketh the bread, and giveth them, and the fish likewise." Whether Jesus himself ate with the disciples, we are not told; but so far as the record is concerned, this was the last time they were together for a meal. The giving of bread to those with him had been a familiar scene to the disciples. (Cf. John 6: lift; Luke 24: 30.)

"This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after that he was risen from

the dead." This statement does not say that this was the third time that Jesus was *manifested* since his resurrection, but the third time that he was manifested to *his disciples*, that is, the disciples as a group. We have already seen that he appeared to Mary Magdalene, and to the other women as they left the tomb; and we also know that he appeared to the two disciples as they journeyed toward Emmaus, and to Simon. These four appearances took place on the resurrection day, before he appeared to the ten apostles later that evening. And then, one week later he appeared to the eleven apostles; and now, "after these things" (21: 1) he appeared to the seven at the sea of Tiberias. This was his seventh recorded appearance, but his third to the apostles as a group. Inasmuch as this was the *third* manifestation to the disciples as a group (of. 20: 19, 26; 21: 1), it is certain that it occurred before the appearance mentioned in Matt. 28: 16f, which, apparently, was his eighth appearance. We are not told when he appeared to James; but since Paul places it *after* the appearance to the five hundred which probably took place on the mountain in Galilee (of. Matt. 26: 32; 28r 7, 10, 16) along with the eleven apostles, it must have taken place between that appearance and the one at the ascension, hence number nine. (See 1 Cor. 15: 5-8.)

Love Claims Its Own

(John 21: 15-17)

It matters not how sorry our actions may have been toward the Lord, he never ceases to love his people. "Jehovah appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. 31: 3.) This was spoken to Israel after all their adulterous rebellion against Jehovah which resulted in their captivity; and if God loved them in that way how much more them who belong to Christ! (Cf. Rom. 5: 6-8; 8: 31-39.)

Just before his betrayal, Jesus warned Peter that he and his fellow-disciples were in grave danger, but the Lord assured Simon that he had prayed for him that his faith would not fail. (See Luke 22: 31-34.) It appears that Peter did not take the

Lord's message very seriously, and evidently did not feel any particular need for prayer on his behalf. But Jesus loved his mercurial, temperamental, and impulsive disciple, and knew that in time he would become as stable as the rock; and he could not therefore do less than make the effort to restore him to his rightful place.

"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 unto 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 saith 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." Some commentators think that the comparison which Christ had in mind had reference to Peter's love for Christ and his love for *these fishes* which they had just caught which, of course, involved the fishing business. Before the Lord's arrest and crucifixion, Peter had implied that his love for Christ was superior to that of the other *disciples* (of. Mark 14: 27-31); and some think that, apparently, was what Jesus had in mind.

"Although *Simon* would become "Peter" (John 1: 42), it should be observed that when the Lord addressed him on the occasion now before us, he did not call him Peter, nor even Simon Peter, but simply Simon. And when the apostle replied to Jesus, all of his boastfulness was gone. His simple reply was, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." As may be seen from the marginal reading, two' different words are used for "love" in the passage now under consideration; and that must be kept in mind, if we are to get the force of the lesson.

The word for "love" which Christ used in addressing Simon in his first two questions is *agapao*, the meaning of which is, have a preference for, appreciate, a feeling which would

lead one to give himself up for the good of another, whether friend or enemy. This is the stronger word for love, and it results, not from mere sentiment, but from moral choice; and it is loftier and less impulsive than the other term. The word for "love" which Peter used is *phileo*, which expresses natural affection, such as a parent feels for a child, or one close friend, for another. This word is based on emotion, and is willing to give itself up *to* another, while the other kind of love will give itself up *for* another.

In the first instance, Jesus used the stronger word, while Simon replied with the weaker one. In his second question Jesus omitted any idea of comparing Peter's love with that of others, and simply asked if he loved him, again using the stronger word. This time Jesus seems to have implied, "Simon, do *you really* love me?" Simon's reply was identical with his first one, using the weaker word. But when Jesus asked him the third time regarding his love, he himself used the weaker word, the one which Simon had been

using, and that was what grieved the apostle. His third reply was, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Yes, Jesus did know all things, including Simon's boastfulness and his three denials of him; but he also knew Peter's heart, and very likely remembered his prediction regarding him in John 1: 42.

It is a noticeable fact that each time Peter confessed his love for Jesus, the Lord told him to do something: "Feed my lambs"; "Tend my sheep"; "Feed my sheep." No one can read the New Testament without being impressed with the idea that love always is the inspiration for service. (Cf. John 14: 15, 21; 1 John 5: 3.) It is impossible therefore for one to love the Lord without serving him; and that includes service to one's fellow men. (Cf. 1 John 3: 14-18; 4: 20, 21; Rom. 13: 10.) When people begin to question that which the Lord commands, either in the matter of becoming Christians or in living the Christian life, that is a sure indication that their love for him is not what it should be.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What implications do we have from John regarding the life and teaching of Jesus?

Who were present at the gathering by the sea of Tiberias?

What probable reason did John have for recording this incident?

The Golden Text

What is the setting of this text?

What is the supreme aim of the gospel record of John?

How was John a witness of these things?

Why do you think that John spoke in the plural number "we"?

The Miraculous Draught of Fishes

What probable reason did the disciples have for going fishing?

In what sense did Jesus use the word "children" in addressing his disciples?

What did he mean by "ought to eat"?

What did he say when they gave him their answer? and why?

What did this experience probably cause them to remember?

Who was the first to recognize Jesus? and why?

What noticeable difference do you see between Peter and John?

What happened when Peter learned that the Lord was on the shore?

A Breakfast by the Sea

What did Jesus have waiting for the disciples? and why?

What probable reason did John have for recording the details of the miracle of the draught of the fishes?

Why did not the disciples ask regarding the Lord's identity?

This was the Lord's third appearance to whom?

Show how we may determine the order of all of his appearances.

Love Claims Its Own

What is always the Lord's attitude toward his people, regardless of what they do?

Give a brief resume of Peter's general attitude before the death of Jesus.

What was the point in the Lord's comparison regarding Peter's love?

How did Jesus address his erstwhile and boastful apostle?

What must we recognize in order to get the force of Christ's words to Peter?

Give the meaning of the two words for "love."

How were the two words used in the first question and answer?

What difference did Jesus make in the second question?

Was there a difference in Peter's answer?

Why was Simon grieved when questioned a third time?

Why did he say that Jesus knew all things?

What did Christ say to Peter following each of his professions of love?

What does genuine love always imply?

How may one learn something of the true index of a person's heart?