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

Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary

ON
UNIFORM BIBLE LESSONS
FOR THE
CHURCHES OF CHRIST

1971

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

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PREFACE

It is the overall purpose of the publishers of the *Uniform Bible Lessons for Churches of Christ* to provide, especially for those who are consistent users of the series, a panoramic view, as well as the basis for a thorough study of the entire scope of the Holy Scriptures. This, of course, will require diligence on the part of both the teacher and the members of the class. Those who are thoughtful will find many suggestions in the various lessons, which will, in turn, lead them on to other ideas which are not actually developed in the lessons proper. This is as it should be; for no one should be content to limit his own mental powers and possibilities to the thinking and endeavors of others.

The Bible is in reality a great library, and its various parts—the sixty-six individual books—contain a wide variety of literature; and this means that efforts must be made to deal with each type according to its demands. It is, for example, relatively easy for the average person to understand simple narrative and historical records; but when it comes to prophetic utterances, figurative phraseology, and doctrinal reasoning, the situation is changed somewhat. But if the student of the Scriptures will recognize, and adopt, sound principles of interpretation, he can easily test his own efforts, as well as those of others, and thereby ascertain, at least to a large degree, as to whether or not they are in harmony with the revealed body of truth, as it is found in the Bible. The Bible is God's word, and it contains just exactly that which he wants his people, as well as the world in general, to know.

Many people, apparently, are tempted to spend their time on some issue which is set forth in the Scriptures, and in many instances it does not take them long to reach that which they consider to be a sound conclusion: but no one should ever be satisfied that he has learned the truth regarding any subject, as long as there is one relevant truth which he has not considered. This is especially true with respect to those portions of scripture which employ symbols and other types of figurative language. This is to say that no one's interpretation of figurative or symbolical phraseology is correct, so long as there is even one unmistakable truth of the Bible, which is not in harmony with the conclusion that has been reached and accepted. And what has been said regarding figurative language is also true of any other type of phraseology contained in the Scriptures.

The lessons for this year are based on a wide range of subjects, and any person who will use his abilities and opportunities, as he should, will be a better and a more informed individual, when the year comes to a close.

This is the fiftieth annual volume, which the Gospel Advocate Company has published for use by the churches of Christ: and it is the twenty-sixth 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 will make use of it throughout the year.

THE AUTHOR

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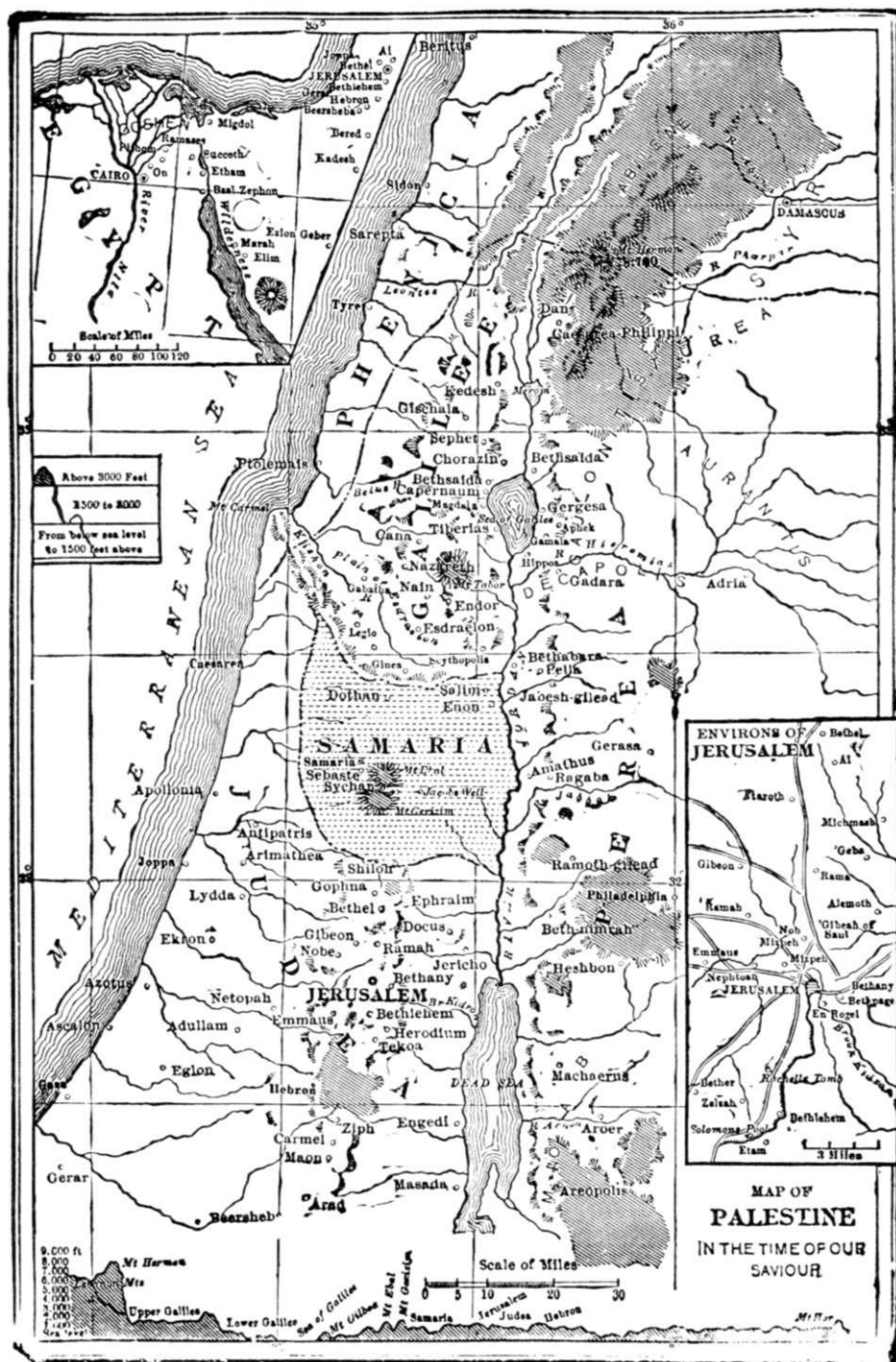
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FIRST QUARTER

TYPE AND ANTITYPE—STUDIES IN LEVITICUS AND HEBREWS

AIM.—*To observe in Christ and in the Christian dispensation the glorious fulfillment and marvelous realization of the bountiful blessings of God's limitless grace first exhibited in the Old Testament in type and in shadow.*

Lesson I—January 3, 1971

THE LAW A COPY AND SHADOW OF BETTER THINGS

Lesson Text

Heb. 10: 1-10

1 For the law having a shadow of the good *things* to come, not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh.

2 Else would they not have ceased to be offered? because the worshippers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more consciousness of sins.

3 But in those *sacrifices* there is a remembrance made of sins year by year.

4 For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.

5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith,

Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not,

But a body didst thou prepare for me;

6 In whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hadst no pleasure:

7 Then said I, Lo, I am come (In the roll of the book it is written of me)

To do thy will, O God.

8 Saying above, Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein (the which are offered according to the law),

9 Then hath he said, Lo, I am come to do thy will. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

10 By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Je'-sus Christ once for all.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The law ... a copy and shadow of the heavenly things."* (Heb. 8: 4, 5.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Heb. 10: 11-18.

Daily Bible Readings

December 28.	M.	Law Given to the Israelites (Deut. 5: 1-21)
December 29.	T.	The Law a Temporary Affair (Gal. 3: 16-19)
December 30.	W.	Christ Came to Fulfil the Law (Matt. 5: 17-30)
December 31.	T.	Law Nailed to the Cross (Col. 2: 14-23)
January 1.	F.	Jews Died to the Law of Moses (Rom. 7: 1-6)
January 2.	S.	The Law a Tutor to the Jews (Gal. 3: 19-29)
January 3.	S.	Christianity, the Better Way (Heb. 8: 1-13)

TIME.—Probably A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACES.—Probably Rome and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Probably Paul, and the Hebrew Christians in Palestine.

Introduction

The first five books of the Bible are attributed to Moses, and are popularly referred to as the Penta-

teuch. This last term is a compound Greek word—*penta* + *teuchos*; and in its plural form literally means five

books. (See Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*.) This "five-volumed book" may very properly be referred to as a literary complex; and it is, of course, one of the most important sections of the threefold Jewish Canon. The third in this fivefold collection is called Leviticus; and it is so called "because it delineates the legislation concerning the priests and Levites—their character, their consecration, and their duties. It is the book of worship, describing the sacrifices, the feasts, and the fasts. It foreshadows the gospel truth of the recovery of guilty man to holiness and God by blood." (The People's Bible Encyclopedia.)

The Book of Leviticus is the least historical of any of the five volumes which make up the Pentateuch. When the late J. W. McGarvey prepared his famous Class *Notes on Sacred History*, for use in his Sacred History classes in the College of the Bible, Lexington, Kentucky, he devoted only a single page to the book now under consideration. This was due, as already indicated, to the scarcity of historical material which it contains. Leviticus is primarily concerned with the laws which were given to the children of Israel, and which were to a large extent, administered by the Levitical priesthood, and their helpers, namely, the Levites. The Ten Commandments, which may be described as the constitution of the law of Moses, along with many of the related ordinances, were given during the period covered by the Book of Exodus; and it appears that the main

purpose of the Book of Leviticus was to go into more detail regarding their purpose and administration. The typical import of the sacrifices of the book now before us, is essential to our understanding of the Book of Hebrews, which we are to study along with Leviticus during this quarter.

The Book of Hebrews occupies a unique place in the New Testament; and it is easy for the thoughtful student to see that there is no other inspired book quite like it, in the design for which it was written. Galatians and Romans, both written on the same general subject, come nearer to being like Hebrews, than any other book of the New Testament; but their purpose was somewhat different from that of Hebrews. Galatians and Romans point out the difference between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ; but it remained for Hebrews to demonstrate the actual transition from the one to the other. The writer of Hebrews, very likely Paul, shows beyond the shadow of a doubt, that Christianity is superior to Judaism; and that the plan of salvation, which is revealed in the New Testament, is the only plan by which the sinner can be saved. The writer's aim therefore was to make known the true significance of Christ and his mission to the earth, along with his work as a continuing priest; and thereby remove from the minds of his readers the suspicion which had haunted their thinking, embarrassed and weakened their faith, lessened their enjoyment, and lowered their vitality.

The Golden Text

"The law . . . a copy and shadow of the heavenly things." The two verses from which the golden text is taken read as follows: "Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve that which is a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses was warned of God when he is about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount." It is in this passage that the writer of Hebrews sets forth the true nature of the Levitical priest-

hood, as well as that of the law of Moses; they both were but a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. This is to say that both the law of Moses and the Levitical priesthood depended on the great archetype for their own existence. Something existed in heaven, of which the old tabernacle and its services were but a copy; and that great prototype was evidently the "sanctuary and . . . the true tabernacle [or church, Eph. 1: 3; 2: 6; Heb. 9: 23], which the Lord pitched, not man." (See Heb. 8: 2.) This is conclusive evidence of the superiority of the high priesthood of Christ, and his minis-

try, over that of those who were after the order of Aaron. It is also proof of the eternal nature of the church; inasmuch as it existed in the mind of God, at the time Moses was receiving instruction regarding the building of the tabernacle. (Cf. Eph. 3: 8-11.)

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 has rolled by. We may be sure therefore that any system, 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-relationship.

The deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, for example, their history during the wilderness wandering, and their entrance into the land of Canaan, are all a type of the salvation which is wrought by Christ; and since Christianity, as revealed in the New Testament, is the very complement of its typology, we know that it must be the religion which God approves for this age of the world. It was no accident therefore that the Israelites were placed in the land of Egypt, where they were enslaved, oppressed, and corrupted; for their deliverance and subsequent history furnish one of the clearest types of the salvation made possible by Christ, to be found anywhere in all the Bible.

The Text Explained

The Moral Impotence of the Levitical Sacrifices

(Heb. 10: 1-4)

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. Else would they not have ceased to be offered? because the worshippers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.

The first two paragraphs of chapter 10 may be looked upon as a summary of that which has been said in the preceding chapters, but it is more than a summary; it is a grand finale. The priesthood of Christ has been established, and it has been proved that the new law is in effect; and the writer now begins to draw toward the final conclusion and application of the propositions, as they affect people today.

The writer of Hebrews, in the closing part of chapter 9, gave the reasons for the one sacrifice of Christ, namely, "It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be

cleansed with these [that is, with the blood of animals]; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us; nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place year by year with blood not his own; else must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment; so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation." (Heb. 9: 23-28.)

The term "for," with which chapter 10 begins, indicates that we are to have a further explanation of that which is set forth in the preceding chapter. The law, says the writer of Hebrews, contained only a shadow, an indefinite and unsubstantiated outline of the good things which are set forth in the new covenant; and it stands therefore in sharp contrast with the *form*

which is expressed in the gospel system.

The ineffectiveness of the legal system was fully demonstrated by the continuous sacrifices, which were offered year by year. No amount of the repetition of the shadow, can ever equal the substance. The law simply had no power to remove sin, in the absolute meaning of that term. The word "perfect" is used in the sense of fully meeting the needs of men, with reference to justification and sanctification. Every informed Jew knew that the yearly sacrifices were offered for the same sins; and the writer's question is, If the sins were forgiven, why the continuous sacrifices for them? Surely the sacrifices for sins, which were forgiven, would cease. But the very fact of the continuous sacrifices for sin proved the existence of guilt.

Sacrifices for sins were made for the people under the law all through the year, that is, special sacrifices for particular sins; but on the tenth day of the seventh month, which was the day of atonement, all the sins of the past were called to mind, or, remembered. This is what people sometimes refer to as rolling sins forward; but it is better, when speaking of that situation, to use the language of the Bible. The fact that sins were annually remembered, shows that they had not been sufficiently atoned for by any past sacrifice. (Cf. Num. 5: 15.)

The statement, "For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins," is a statement of fact, and, as such, it needs no further proof, than that of the inspired penman. Therefore, whatever may be said regarding this question is not proof; it is only an effort to enable frail man to grasp the idea. There is no connection between the physical or literal blood of animals, and the moral offense of man; and no amount of the former could remove the guilt of the latter. (Cf. Mic. 6: 6-8.)

The Defective Character of Animal Sacrifices

(Heb. 10: 5-7)

Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith.

Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not,

But a body didst thou prepare for me;

In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure:

Then said I, Lo, I am come (In the roll of the book it is written of me)

To do thy will, O God.

The section of the lesson text just quoted, is from Psalm 40: 6-8. The entire psalm is not regarded as messianic, but the part quoted here is, that is, it is applied to the mission of Christ. The whole psalm is a sacrifice of praise, and a prayer for help. Its original application was to David, its author; and then, afterwards, to Christ. There are some textual problems connected with the passage; but they will not be discussed here. The point which we need to remember, is that animal sacrifices were never intended by God to atone for sin; and so, in his providence, he prepared a body for the Messiah, that is, the Christ, so that he could be offered as an effectual sacrifice for sin.

The expression, "In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure," must be understood in the light of Jehovah's ultimate purpose regarding the cleansing from sin, on the part of his people. He himself authorized the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices; and he would have been displeased, of course, if his people had refused to offer them, or had even been careless and indifferent toward them. But when such offerings and sacrifices are compared with the higher aim of God, it is not difficult to see that obedience is greater than any animal sacrifices. The inspired prophet said to the disobedient Saul, "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." (1 Sam. 15: 22, 23.) Animal sacrifices, as already pointed out, could never take away sin, and indeed they were never meant to do that; their effectiveness was solely in their typical import.

The words of David regarding his mission were prophetically applied

to Christ. It is as if David had said, and also and more particularly Christ, "Inasmuch as animal sacrifices are wholly and completely unable to remove the guilt of sin, I am come, in accordance with thy will, to accomplish that which they could not do." In ancient times the law was written on skins, or parchments, and rolled up on two wooden rollers. One roller was placed at either end of the parchment, and then the two were rolled toward each other; and when any one wanted to read any portion of the "book," he could find the desired place, by unrolling one end, while rolling up the other. (Cf. Ezek. 2: 9.) The "roll of the book" mentioned here, was probably some portion of the law of Moses, probably the Book of Deuteronomy. The particular quotation is not found in any part of the Pentateuch; but when it is kept in mind that the words are applied to Jesus, it is easy to understand that that is the spirit of the Old Testament Scriptures. (Cf. Rev. 19: 10.)

The Finality of the Sacrifice of Christ

(Heb. 10: 8-10)

Saying above, Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein (the which are offered according to the law), then hath he said, Lo, I am come to do thy will. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The writer of Hebrews proceeds, in this section of the lesson text, to explain and apply the quotation, which he made from David. "Saying above" refers directly to the quotation in question. It should be observed, however, that the writer does not quote the passage verbatim; and he applies it only to Christ. This was done, in all probability, because that was the ultimate meaning of the passage; and the author of Hebrews worded the application, so as to bring out the meaning of the original statement. And too, the application is worded in such a manner, as to cover the whole system of sacrifice; and the writer shows, parenthetically, that

they were all according to the law of Moses.

The statement, "Lo, I am come to do thy will," is placed in contrast with the preceding remark, namely, that which is contained in verse 8. After showing that all the sacrifices according to the law of Moses could not atone for sin, then the writer records the statement regarding the mission of Christ, namely, "I am come to do, according to thy will, that which the law could not do." (Cf. Acts 13: 38, 39.) This is another way of saying that it was never God's will that sin should be removed by the blood of animals; the terrible guilt, which sin imposes upon the wrongdoer, can be removed by the sacrifice of the Immaculate Son of God.

The "first" and the "second" (verse 9b) refer to that which is contained in the two contrasting statements of verses 8, 9a. The first was the whole system of Levitical sacrifices, which could never please God, in the final analysis. They were intended only for a time, until the perfect sacrifice should be offered. The law, or, which is the same thing, the whole legal system, argues the writer of the letter now before us, has fulfilled its purpose, and has been removed; so that the better arrangement can be put into effect.

The "second" system which God established in the place of the first, was his perfect will, which is expressed through Christ. He removed that which did not express his will, that is, animal sacrifices and other legal measures, so that he could establish that which does express his will, namely, the offering of an obedient will. This, as Milligan points out, is made clear by the abstract neutrals—"the first" and "the second"; and by that which follows in verse 10. The whole point in question hinges on two sacrifices: the blood of animals, and the obedient will of Christ.

Verse 10 reads as follows: "By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." This, as already indicated, is further proof that the "second" thing which was established, was the obedient will of Christ; or, to say the same thing in another way, the will of God as ex-

pressed and fulfilled in Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ did not yield to God's will, because he was compelled to; but because it was also his will to do so. "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.) "And he that sent me is with me; he hath not left me alone; for I do always the things that are pleasing to him." (John 8: 29.) "Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father." (John 10: 17, 18.) The Son's sacrifice therefore was both his will and that of the Father; he and the Father were on in this respect.

It was the offering of the body of Christ, as the expression of the perfect will of God, which resulted in or made possible, our sanctification. Had it not been for this great sacrifice, no one could have had access to the Father, in the complete forgiveness of his sins. This is the inspired explanation regarding the fleshly birth and life of Jesus; and this is the divine reason for the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Inasmuch as two of the greatest issues of the New Testament (the *will of God* and the *blood of Christ*) are involved in this lesson, it appears entirely in order that a little more be said about them. We have already seen that it was through the will of the Father and the Son, that our redemption and sanctification were made possible; and it is not surprising therefore that emphasis is placed on this subject throughout the New Testament. We must not only do God's will, if we are to be saved; we must *ourselves* will to do

it. (Cf. Matt. 7: 21; John 7: 17; 2 Cor. 5: 9; 1 John 2: 17.)

There is no greater truth, nor one in which people who desire salvation from sin are more interested, than that which affirms that we are saved by the blood of Christ. (Cf. Eph. 1: 7; 1 John 1: 6, 7.) No one who professes to believe the Bible, as the inspired word of God, will deny the fact that the blood of Jesus Christ was shed for the remission of sins. But while practically all religiously inclined people believe this great truth, there are many among them who are confused, when they are confronted with the further fact that the salvation which is made possible by the blood of Christ, is a conditional salvation. It appears very difficult for some to understand how it is that Christ died for the sins of all men, and yet at the same time there is something which the individual sinner must do, before he can have the forgiveness of his sins. Such people fail to see that there is a direct relationship between the atonement, on the one hand, and conditional salvation, on the other. Salvation has always depended on the shedding of blood. (See Heb. 9: 22.)

When Adam sinned in the beginning, he forfeited his life and was sentenced to die; and the same fate will be the lot of every responsible person from that day to the end of time. The death of Jesus satisfied the demands of the law, and made possible the salvation of every lost person. But if a person is saved through the blood of Jesus, then Jesus is entitled to that life, and the individual becomes a servant of Christ; and he must always remember that he cannot approach God in worship, or live with him in eternity, except in and through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Any one who is redeemed by the blood of Christ, must go to God as a servant of Christ Jesus.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Discuss the place and purpose of the Book of Leviticus in the Scriptures.
In what way, in particular, does Leviticus differ from the other books of the Pentateuch?

Discuss the place and purpose of Hebrews in the scheme of human redemption.

The Golden Text

From what context are the words of the golden text taken?

Of what were the tabernacle and its service a copy?

What important truth do we learn from

the place and purpose of the tabernacle?
 What is meant by the "typical system of the Scriptures" and what lesson do we learn from it?
 Give an illustration of the typology of the Bible.

The Moral Impotence of the Levitical Sacrifices

In what way are the first two paragraphs of Hebrews 10 related to the previous part of the book?
 What are the principal reasons, which are mentioned, for the sacrifice of Christ?
 What does the word "for" in verse 1 indicate?
 Discuss the difference between the "form" and the "substance."
 What primary reason is given for the ineffectiveness of the animal sacrifices, as far as forgiveness of sins was concerned?
 What, then, was their purpose during the age of Moses?
 What was always done annually regarding the sins of the people?
 Why couldn't physical sacrifices bring forgiveness of the sins of men?

The Defective Character of Animal Sacrifices

From where is this section of the lesson text taken and what was the purpose of the psalm?

What is meant by a "messianic psalm"?
 What is meant by saying that Jehovah had no pleasure in animal sacrifices?
 What does he require most of all?
 In what way did the writer of Hebrews apply the quotation he made from Psalm 40?
 What was meant by the "roll of the book"? Illustrate its meaning and use.

The Finality of the Sacrifice of Christ

What purpose did the writer of Hebrews have in this section of the lesson text?
 How is the expression "Lo, I am come to do thy will" applied here?
 What were the "first" and the "second" referred to in this section of the lesson text?
 Why was the one taken away and the other established?
 What was the "perfect sacrifice" which Christ offered? How was it accomplished?
 With what is the perfect will of Christ placed in contrast?
 How does one know that Christ was not compelled to do the will of God?
 How alone, then, can the guilty find remission of sins?
 What are two of the greatest issues of the New Testament, as revealed in this lesson?
 Why is salvation dependent on the will of God and the blood of Christ?

Lesson II—January 10, 1971

THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD

Lesson Text

Lev. 9: 1-7; Heb. 4: 14-16

1 And it came to pass on the eighth day, that Mo'ses called Aar'-on and his sons, and the elders of Is'-ra-el;

2 And he said unto Aar'-on, Take thee a calf of the herd for a sin-offering, and a ram for a burnt-offering, without blemish, and offer them before Je-ho'-vah.

3 And unto the children of Is'-ra-el thou shalt speak, saying, Take ye a he-goat for a sin-offering; and a calf and a lamb, both a year old, without blemish, for a burnt-offering;

4 And an ox and a ram for peace-offerings, to sacrifice before Je-ho'-vah; and a meal-offering mingled with oil; for today Je-ho'-vah appeareth unto you.

5 And they brought that which Mo'ses commanded before the tent of meeting; and all the congregation drew near and stood before Je-ho'-vah.

6 And Mo'ses said, This is the thing which Je-ho'-vah commanded

that ye should do: and the glory of Je-ho'-vah shall appear unto you.

7 And Mo'ses said unto Aar'-on, Draw near unto the altar, and offer thy sin-offering, and thy burnt-offering, and make atonement for thyself, and for the people; and offer the oblation of the people, and make atonement for them; as Je-ho'-vah commanded.

14 Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Je'-sus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

15 For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help *us* in time of need.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity.*" (Heb. 7: 28.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Heb. 7: 26-28.

Daily Bible Readings

January 4.	M.	..... Priests of the Law (Ex. 28: 1-4)
January 5.	T.	..... Consecration of Priests (Ex. 29: 1-35)
January 6.	W.	..... Various Courses of Priests (1 Chron. 24: 1-9)
January 7.	T.	..... Characteristics of Priests (Lev. 21: 17-23)
January 8.	F.	..... The Levites' Portion (Deut. 18: 1-8)
January 9.	S.	..... Priests Who Served as Scribes (Ezra 7: 1-6)
January 10.	S.	..... Christ, Our Great High Priest (Heb. 10: 13-23)

TIME.—Leviticus, 1490 B.C.; Hebrews, A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACES.—Leviticus, in the wilderness before mount Sinai; Hebrews, Rome and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Moses, Aaron, and others; probably Paul and some Hebrew Christians.

Introduction

True religion, in all ages of the world, has been characterized by a priesthood, as may be seen by reading the inspired record; and it will also be seen that the priesthood always included a high priest and common priests. The Levitical priesthood was the one which was authorized by the law of Moses, and it was, as its name implies, exclusively of the tribe of Levi. Aaron was the first high priest, and his sons were the common priests. It was probably the divine intention from the beginning of the age of Moses, that the high priesthood be handed down from father to son. There could, of course, be only one high priest at a time; but there was a plurality of chief priests. "The chief priests included both the high priest and the chiefs of the twenty-four courses or classes into which the priests were divided by David." (1 Chron. 24: 1-19; McGarvey, Commentary on Matthew.)

The history of the Levitical priesthood begins with the exodus from Egyptian bondage. The *Speaker's Bible* notes that the priest, as Aaron represented him, was the organizer of the religious life; and this was of the highest importance and value in dealing with a people, who had been thoroughly disorganized and demoralized by the long years of servitude to an idolatrous nation. Aaron shared with Moses, though in a subordinate manner, the glory of having ruled and shaped the course and conduct of his countrymen at a time of unexampled difficulty, but, at the same time,

pregnant with the highest consequences to the religious future of the world. Samuel, when solemnly reviewing the history of his people, placed Moses and Aaron side by side: "And Samuel said unto the people, It is Jehovah that appointed Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt." (1 Sam. 12: 6-8.) And the psalmist sang,

Thou leddest thy people like a flock,

By the hand of Moses and Aaron.
(Psalm 77: 20.)

The functions of the Levitical priests, in general, were (1) to make known God's will to the people, however that will may have been made known to the priests themselves. (Cf. Ex. 28: 30; Ezra 2: 63; Lev. 16: 8.) (2) To teach the law to all of God's people. (Lev. 10: 11; cf. 2 Kings 17: 24-28.) (3) To conduct the worship at the altar, in the tabernacle, and later in the temple. (4) To look after and care for the places of worship. (5) To pronounce the Lord's benediction upon the people. (Num. 6: 22-27.) It also appears that the priests had much to do with writing and preserving much of the composition of the Old Testament. Ezra was a priest (Ezra 7: 21), and it was under his leadership, as president of the Great Synagogue, that the Old Testament Scriptures were revised and put into their permanent form, all of which implies that he was inspired for that work. (See Smith's unabridged Bible Dictionary and other similar works.)

The Golden Text

"For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity." The words just quoted are found in the following context: "For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undented, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needed not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people: for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself. For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the law, appointeth a Son, perfected for evermore." (Heb. 7: 26-28.) This, as the reader can easily see, presented a contrast between the Aaronic priesthood, composed entirely of human beings, and the Son of God.

The principal aim of the writer of Hebrews, throughout the letter, was to present a contrast between Christ, as God's only begotten Son, and all things and people who were related to the work which he came to do. This was particularly true of the Levitical priesthood. The Lord's people, during the age of Moses, had been accustomed to the place and service of the priests; and they had, throughout their experience with them, witnessed many changes among them. This was necessary; for all of the priests whom they had known were subject to death. "And they indeed have been made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing." (Heb. 7: 23.) Those people needed to learn that they, as

well as all men needed a more permanent arrangement in that respect; but they, like most of us today, were so tied to the transient, as to make it difficult to hold their minds on the eternal.

Professed Christians today are not, as a rule, troubled by an inability to distinguish between the law and the gospel; but there are many among them who do not see clearly regarding many things which are temporal, in contrast with things which belong to the eternal realm. That was precisely the trouble with some of the Corinthian brethren, as may be seen by the following statement: "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known. But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor. 13: 9-13.) The passage just quoted was the concluding part of the "most excellent way" which Paul made known unto them; and they should, having learned that, have been able to realize that there are some things in God's dealings with his people, which have infirmity. (Read Ephesians 4: 11-16, in order to see what God expects of his people.)

The Text Explained

The Charge of Moses to the Newly Consecrated Priests
(Lev. 9: 1-4)

And it came to pass on the eighth day, that Moses called Aaron and his sons, and the elders of Israel; and he said unto Aaron, Take thee a calf of the herd for a sin-offering, and a ram for a burnt-offering, without blemish, and offer them before Jehovah. And unto the children of Israel thou shalt speak, saying, Take ye a he-goat for a sin-offering; and a calf and a lamb, both a year old, without blemish, for a burnt-offering; and an ox and a

ram for peace-offerings, to sacrifice before Jehovah; and a meal-offering mingled with oil: for to-day Jehovah appeareth unto you.

The preceding chapter of Leviticus gives the account of the consecration, or, which is the same thing, the setting apart, of Aaron and his sons to the sacred office of priests of Jehovah. The chapter should be read before proceeding further with this lesson; and when that is done, it will not be difficult for one to see just how the Lord regarded the men who served at the altar. The closing verses of chapter 8 read as fol-

lows: "And ye shall not go out from the door of the tent of meeting seven days, until the days of your consecration be fulfilled: for he shall consecrate you seven days. As hath been done this day, so Jehovah hath commanded to do, to make atonement for you. And at the door of the tent of meeting shall ye abide day and night seven days, and keep the charge of Jehovah, that ye die not: for so I am commanded. And Aaron and his sons did all the things which Jehovah commanded by Moses."

Moses was of the tribe of Levi, and it was he who made all the offerings at the consecration of the priests; and the words which Jehovah commanded him to speak, had the effect of impressing upon Aaron and his sons the solemnity of the occasion. They were made to realize that they were in the presence of Jehovah, and that death would be their lot, if they failed to obey the Lord, and manifest the reverence for him, which he requires. In fact, the very next chapter of Leviticus records the death of two of the priests, Nadab and Abihu, the elder sons of Aaron, for the reason just mentioned. Sin is a terrible thing and the whole program of animal sacrifices was intended to impress that fact upon all the people of Israel.

The time had arrived for the newly appointed priests to enter upon the service which God had ordained for them; but they must begin by seeing to it that they themselves were in the favor of God. No servant of the Lord is prepared to plead for the welfare of others, until he is himself in God's favor. Paul wrote to Timothy: "Till I come, give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Be diligent in these things; give thyself wholly to them: that thy progress may be manifest unto all. Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. 4: 13-16.)

To the Ephesian elders, the same apostle said, "Take heed unto your-

selves, 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. I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Wherefore watch ye, remembering that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears." (Acts 20: 28-31; cf. 2 Tim. 4: 1-5; Josh. 24: 31; Judges 2: 6, 7.) Every responsible leader in the service of the Lord has a tremendous obligation resting upon him. And so, in the words of Charles Wesley,

A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify;
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.

To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill—
O may it all my pow'rs engage
To do my Master's will!

Help me to watch and pray,
And on thyself rely,
Assured if I my trust betray,
I shall for-ever die.

Both the priests and the people were commanded to select certain animals for sacrificial purposes, thus indicating that both the consecrated ministers and the congregation were responsible before Jehovah. That lesson should be carefully learned and put into practice today. The preacher, the elders, and other leaders, are indeed under great responsibility; and so are the people. No teacher can save another, if the person in question does not want to be saved, and is not willing to do his part. The various sacrifices which were commanded to be made were clearly specified; and they are clearly described in the law regarding them. But one thing should be noted, namely, Jehovah always required the very best; and that same principle is still applicable to his people now. The Lord will accept neither second place, nor second best, from his people. (Cf. Matt. 6: 33.)

The Priests Begin Their Sacred Duties

(Lev. 9: 5-7)

And they brought that which Moses commanded before the tent of meeting: and all the congregation drew near and stood before Jehovah. And Moses said, This is the thing which Jehovah commanded that ye should do: and the glory of Jehovah shall appear unto you. And Moses said unto Aaron, Draw near unto the altar, and offer thy sin-offering, and thy burnt-offering, and make atonement for thyself, and for the people; and offer the oblation of the people, and make atonement for them; as Jehovah commanded.

It is true that what we have in the first two sections of the lesson text, is a historical record of the laws and customs, which Jehovah ordained for his people; but we should not overlook the fact that it is also "the thing which Jehovah commanded that ye should do." (See verse 6.) No one has the God-given right to do anything in the worship and service which he offers to the Lord, except that which is written. The apostles of the Lord have made this matter exceedingly clear, so that they who run may read, and understand. "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.)

As the first century of the Christian dispensation was drawing to a close, another apostle wrote: "Who-soever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. 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.) After telling the people that they must do as Jehovah had commanded, Moses then assured them that the glory of Jehovah would appear unto them. (Cf. verse 23.)

We should not fail to note, the reverent manner in which the people, along with the newly appointed

priests, appeared before Jehovah. God has always demanded respect from his people; and that can best be seen by their words and their deeds. (Cf. Acts 10: 44, 45; Heb. 12: 18-29.) Any casual observer today can testify to the fact that many congregations of professed Christians conduct themselves, while in the assembly, in such a manner as *not* to suggest that the Lord is among them. (Cf. Matt. 18: 20.) If, however, practically all of the assembled group fails to manifest due reverence toward the Lord, that is no excuse for every individual to behave in like manner. (Cf. Rev. 3: 1-4.)

The lack of reverence just referred to is often responsible for our not seeing the glory of the Lord; and this, in turn, is frequently due to a tendency to substitute a material symbol for spiritual reality. This is to say that faith in Christ may be degraded to confidence, or, which is the same thing, to dependence upon that which we can see and feel with our physical being. But we are certain not to enjoy this glorious experience, unless we seek for it in our own efforts to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The apostle to the Gentiles wrote to the penitent Corinthians these words: "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them. For we preach not our selves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and our selves as your servants for Jesus' sake. Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4: 3-6.)

Concerning the Perfect Priesthood of Christ

(Heb. 4: 14-16)

Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are,

yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need.

One of the purposes of the Book of Hebrews is to present Christ Jesus as the perfect high priest. The people to whom the letter was addressed had been accustomed to the priesthood of the law of Moses, all of their responsible lives; and it appears that many of them had failed to understand that they were in the process of the transition, which would see the perfect substituted for the imperfect. No priest under the old order could claim perfection in any sense; but in the case of the high priest of the Christian system, imperfection, in any and every sense, was completely out of the question. The manner in which he became the perfect high priest is set forth in these words:

"Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation; named of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek." (Heb. 5: 7-10.) All the suffering which came to Jesus in the flesh, fully qualified him to enter into the experience of any one who would put his trust in him, and to meet any need which that person might have. He was and is fully in touch with both God and man, and his special work is to bring the will of God to man, and to lead men to respond favorably to that will. Or, to state the same thing in another way, this perfect high priest had to know both God and man perfectly, and be able to communicate with both in matters concerning the salvation of the race; and that is precisely what the Epistle to the Hebrews claims for him.

Clarence S. Roddy, in commenting on this section of the lesson text, says, "*Our High Priest—His Compassion*. Having lifted Jesus up to the highest heaven he now brings him down to the lowest earth and shows us his perfect compassionate hu-

manity. Compassion is what the ancient world knew little of. How could it? Its religion had little of it. The gods of Greece and Rome were strangers to it. In fact they by their nature could not touch men. The Stoics reasoned that the gods were beyond feeling (*apatheia*). The Epicureans' gods were living in happiness beyond the world and so were completely detached from the world. The Hebrews with their exalted concept of the holiness or 'otherness' of God, while not without the thought of compassion, did not bring it penetratingly into their experience. Jesus, who lived in their midst, revealed the essential sympathy of God. The little prefix *sym* means 'together with,' and that is the new element of the Christ. He is identified with his people. By his incarnation he identified himself with the race. He shared its life. His temptations are made prominent here. Tempted in all points, yet without sin. He was tempted as none other. He was tempted to the full. We are never so tempted because *we yield too soon*. He experienced the full pressure of temptation yet never sinned. 'Which of you convinces me of sin?' He alone really knows what human nature can stand. Therefore, he can sympathize and understand and render a better judgment than any."

And so, the writer of the letter from which this section of the lesson text is taken, as a further encouragement to faithfulness to Christ, as our high priest, assures all who read and accept his testimony that, although now in heaven, he is not out of touch with the feeling of our infirmities. This is true because he experienced, while here on earth, every possible temptation which can come to any of us, yet without once yielding to sin. This, as already noted, makes Christ the perfect high priest. And so, because of the sympathetic nature and understanding of Christ, and his attitude toward us, we can always feel free to approach the throne of grace, whenever we need help in any and every situation. The term "boldness" does not imply arrogance, but with joyful confidence. (See Arndt-Gingrich, in *loco*.)

That which has just been said is not simply a theory to be believed,

but an assurance to be put into practice. "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; cf. James 1: 2-8; Heb. 13: 5, 6.) "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right

hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. 8: 31-34. Read the marginal notes.)

This, as The Interpreter's Bible points out, is our most solid comfort in time of need. Just to know that the Lord Jesus Christ was afflicted with our sorrows, bore them in patient sympathy, and enters into a real fellowship with us, makes it easy for us to call upon him, when the need arises. This is the most that God can do for us, without destroying our will power and freedom of choice; and if we reject this help, we have nowhere else to go. But, as it is, we can come to the eternal throne, with the full assurance that all of our needs will be met. It is indeed such a high priest to whom we have access.

Questions for Discussion

What Is the subject of today's lesson?
Repeat the golden text.
Give times, places, and persons.

Introduction

What has been the place of a priesthood in all ages of the world?
When did the Levitical priesthood come into being and of what did it consist?
Give something of the history of that priesthood.
What, in general, were the functions of the Levitical priesthood?

The Golden Text

In what context are the words of the golden text found?
What principal aim, so far as this lesson is concerned, did the writer of Hebrews have in mind?
What inability seemed to characterize many of his readers?
In what way may the same underlying principle affect us today?
What, then, should we try to do about it?

The Charge of Moses to the Newly Consecrated Priests

What do we know of the setting apart of the first of the Levitical priesthood?
What were they required to do during the time of their consecration?
When and under what circumstances did Moses deliver his charge to the priests?
What great reality did the charge leave upon the minds of the priests?
What was one of the principal purposes of the animal sacrifices which were ordained?
Discuss the effect which all of this should have on the Lord's people today.
What did Paul say about the principle now under consideration?
What charge has been laid upon every child of God in this age of the world?

What particular commandments were given by Moses and what should we learn from them?

The Priests Begin Their Sacred Duties

What important truth should we learn from this section of the lesson text?
How, alone, can one know what he is expected to be and to do in the Lord's service?
What do the Scriptures teach regarding those who disregard this teaching?
What did Moses assure the people would happen when they did as the Lord commanded?
What do we have suggested regarding reverence for God in this place?
Why are so many people and churches lacking in this respect?
Why do we often fail to behold the glory of the Lord in our professed service to God?

Concerning the Perfect Priesthood of Christ

What is one of the principal purposes of the Book of Hebrews?
Why was such a letter needed at the time it was written?
What contrast is presented regarding Christ and the Levitical priesthood?
How did Jesus become the perfect high priest?
What does the New Testament teach regarding his compassionate nature and attitude?
Why were his services as a priest so sorely needed at the time he became a priest?
What blessed assurance is vouchsafed to every faithful child of God?
What should be our attitude toward this assurance?
What should all of this mean to us?

Lesson III—January 17, 1971

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

Lesson Text

Heb. 5: 1-10

1 For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

2 Who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity;

3 And by reason thereof is bound, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

4 And no man taketh the honor unto himself, but when he is called of God, even as was Aar'-on.

5 So Christ also glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but he that spake unto him,

Thou art my Son,

This day have I begotten thee:

6 As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever After the order of Mel-chiz'-e-dek.

7 Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear,

8 Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered;

9 And having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation;

10 Named of God a high priest after the order of Mel-chiz'-e-dek.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"But he, because he abideth for ever, hath his priesthood unchangeable." (Heb. 7: 24.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Heb. 5: 11-14.

Daily Bible Readings

- January 11. M. Our Wonderful High Priest (Heb. 4: 14-16)
 January 12. T. Priesthood of Melchizedek (Heb. 7: 1-10)
 January 13. W. Change in Law and Priesthood (Heb. 7: 11-17)
 January 14. T. Christ, "A Priest for Ever" (Heb. 7: 18-25)
 January 15. F. Christ, Not a Priest on Earth (Heb. 8: 1-6)
 January 16. S. Christ's Offering Once for All (Heb. 9: 11-22)
 January 17. S. Boldness through Christ (Heb. 10: 19-24)

TIME.—Probably A. D. 63 or 64.

PLACES.—Probably Rome and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Probably Paul and some Hebrew Christians.

Introduction

The design of religion, as revealed in the Bible, is to bring the human race back to God; and we should always keep in mind that true religion meets all the needs of men in the flesh. The religion of the Bible, as it was made known in the various ages of the world, took and takes into consideration man, as he existed at the time in question, and as he should be. Man is by nature a creature of worship; and it is as natural for him to worship, as it is for him to eat. In fact, it is impossible for him to live and not worship. He may not always worship the right object, or in the right

way; but he will worship, nevertheless. This is the reason why true religion is absolutely essential, if man is to please Jehovah here, and live with him in eternity.

There have been three major functions, in the economy of God, in his dealings with the human race, in all ages of the world, namely, the services of a prophet, a priest, and a ruler. The prophet was God's spokesman to the people; the priest, as it were, stood between the people and God, and offered man's sacrifice to Jehovah; while the ruler was the governor who sought to regulate the conduct of those who were under his

jurisdiction. All three of these duties, during the first age of the world, were often performed by the same person, as, for example, Noah, Abraham, and others. But when the Jewish dispensation was ushered in, there was a marked difference seen, in that each of the functions mentioned above was performed by a different person. This was the general rule, although the three duties were sometimes performed by a single person, such as Samuel, who was prophet, priest, and judge.

But in the Christian dispensation, all three of the functions, that of prophet, priest, and ruler, are combined in a single individual, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are, of course, referring to those who had the chief responsibilities, in the three areas we are now considering; such as the chief ruler, the high priest, etc. There were, for the most part, more than one prophet, and, as a rule, they were not subject to a central human authority. Prophets were commissioned of God to speak his will to the people, whether making known present truth, or predicting the future. As to the ruler, there were always those who exercised subordinate authority under his over-all direction. A high priest had his place in all

three of the dispensations, and there were also those who functioned as common priests.

There were, as every Bible student knows, various and sundry duties which pertained to the priesthood. For example, they were the organizers, under divine authority, of religion, and took the lead in implementing its precepts. The place and work of the priesthood are probably better known and understood, as the system existed under Moses, than at any other time in the history of God's dealings with his people. The priests were charged with the responsibility of offering sacrifices at the altar, and performing all the other duties of the tabernacle and temple. They were also the teachers of the people, especially with reference to their daily lives and worship, and they were expected to act in all respects as God's ministers of mercy and benevolence. All of this requires that the priests live above reproach, and keep themselves in a state of sanctification, if they were to please God, and be effective in the discharge of their various responsibilities. They were, in a word, set apart for a particular work; and it was essential that they be prepared at all times to approach God, both for themselves and others.

The Golden Text

"But he, because he abideth for ever, hath his priesthood unchangeable." This statement was made by the writer of Hebrews, as he contrasted the priesthood of Christ with that of the Levitical order. The immediate context, in which the words of the golden text are found, is as follows: "And they indeed have been made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing: but he, because he abideth for ever, hath his priesthood unchangeable. Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7: 23-25.) This is to say that the Levites could serve as priests, only so long as they lived, and that made it essential that others of their order succeed them; but it was different in the case of Christ: he did not become a priest,

until after he arose from the dead to die no more.

The Jewish Christians, to whom the epistle now before us was addressed, readily admitted that death was a final factor in the tenure of the priestly office; and with that fact in mind, the writer then showed from their own scriptures that Christ did not become a priest, until after he was raised up from the dead; and that, of course, made his argument regarding the priesthood of Christ conclusive. The writer of Hebrews had already pointed out that a change in the priesthood, made a change in the law necessary (Heb. 7: 12); and it followed therefore, according to the argument in question, that the law of Christ had superseded the law of Moses.

Other books of the New Testament, particularly Galatians and Romans, as pointed out in an earlier lesson, show the difference between the law of Moses and the gospel of

Christ: but it remained for Hebrews to set forth the manner in which the actual transition of the one to the other, really took place. This is the reason why the Book of Hebrews is in a class to itself. The law of each dispensation depended upon the priesthood of that age. This fact is clearly set forth in the chapter from which the golden text is taken; and

if the writer could prove the genuineness of the priesthood of Christ, his task of trying to convince his brethren that they should continue in their loyalty to Christ, would have been accomplished. The golden text, therefore, is a ringing affirmation of that truth; and that means that the priesthood of Christ is *inviolable*. (See marginal note.)

The Text Explained

The Marks of a Good Levitical High Priest

(Heb. 5: 1-4)

For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity; and by reason thereof is bound, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sin. And no man taketh the honor unto himself, but when he is called of God, even as was Aaron.

The text for today's lesson has a direct connection with the closing verses of the preceding chapter, in which the writer points out the kind of high priest the Lord's people today have; and why they should draw near to the throne of grace in every time of need. And as a preliminary consideration to a further study of the perfect high priest, as exemplified in Christ Jesus, the writer of the Hebrew letter calls attention to the qualifications and duties of the Levitical high priest. (1) The high priest was himself a man, and was appointed for men in things which pertain to God; (2) it was essential that he be sympathetic with his fellow men; and (3) he was not self-appointed, but could be a high priest, in the true sense of the term, only by divine appointment.

That which has just been said is clear evidence that the high priest, in the economy of God, was a definite link between God and man. The priest was God's spokesman for man to God; for it was only through such a person that a child of God could approach God in worship. No gift or sacrifice, according to the law, would be accepted, in the absence of a properly constituted

priest. The Lord's people frequently found themselves guilty of various and sundry sins. All of this disrupted the relationship between God and men; and it was the duty of the priest to offer the divinely designated sacrifices, which would result in the restoration of that previous unity. The priest himself, as well as the people, stood in need of those offerings for sin; and this had the effect of continuously reminding the priest of his own limitations, with respect to God and the people.

When a minister in God's service recognizes his true relationship with God and his fellow men, and is also aware of his own inherent infirmities, he will almost certainly manifest the proper feelings of those about him, and especially the "ignorant and erring." A priest who bore gently with the ignorant and erring, was one who manifested a tender and sympathetic attitude toward such people; or, according to Vincent, his attitude toward the unfortunate people, was neither too severe, nor too tolerant. The high priest who met with God's approval, had to see to it that he did not become unduly irritated because of ignorance and sin; but at the same time he had to make certain that he was not weakly indulgent.

The "ignorant and erring" apparently referred to sins which were committed through ignorance. The law of Moses provided for appropriate action to be taken in the case of sins which were committed unawares or accidentally, and sins into which men were betrayed by passion. (See Num. 15: 22-29.) And it further appears that the atonement for sins of ignorance was required by law, as a means of educating the moral sense of the offender; and also to show that sin and defilement might exist unsuspected. (Cf. Psalm 19: 12.) This, of course,

would teach the people that God sees evil, where man does not; and that his test of purity is stricter, than that of human beings and their standards.

The high priest therefore was required to sympathize with those who fell into temptation, or who sinned through ignorance; but in the case of highhanded or presumptuous sin, he was not permitted to show any sympathy whatsoever. "But the soul that doeth aught with a high hand, whether he be home-born or a sojourner, the same blasphemeth Jehovah; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of Jehovah, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off: his iniquity shall be upon him." (Num. 15: 30, 31; read also verses 32-36.) The writer of Hebrews himself called attention to the wilful sin, as may be seen by reading Hebrews 10: 26-31.

One of the great motives for a sympathetic attitude toward the ignorant and the erring, is found in the fact that the minister in question, is himself also compassed by infirmity. Not only was this attitude a requirement of the Old Testament age; it is also one of the basic requirements of the New. "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (Gal. 6: 1, 2; cf. James 2: 13.) The law of Moses required the high priest to present the sin-offering for himself and his house, before he made the sacrifice for the people. (Cf. Lev. 16: 6, 15, 16.) This practice would, among other things, serve to make the high priest more conscious of his own sins, and therefore more sympathetic with the ignorant and the erring.

The statement regarding the appointment of the high priest also has a direct bearing on the attitude which the people should manifest toward him. "And no man taketh the honor unto himself, but when he is called of God, even as was Aaron." This is another essential qualification for the high priesthood; and it was an additional reason why the people should trust in

their high priest. He did not assume the office to satisfy his own ambition; but was divinely called to it, in order to serve God's purpose in restoring men to fellowship with him, that is, with Jehovah. An inspired example of some men's claiming for themselves the priesthood, without being called of God, is found in chapters 16 and 17 of Numbers.

Some professed Bible students have tried to make the "honor," spoken of in the passage now before us, refer to the "Christian ministry," as the work of gospel preaching is often called; but there is no foundation in fact for such an idea. After asserting that "Protestant churches" recognize no priesthood, save that of Christ, and what is commonly called the priesthood of all believers, The Interpreter's Bible goes on to note that there is indeed a "priestly function" in the ministry, in that the faithful minister is constantly to be on the Godward side of his people. The duty of the man in the pulpit is not to proclaim his own opinions, however learned they may be, on the affairs of the day; nor merely to give good advice to those who listen to him. He is to teach the word of God faithfully; and those who sit under the sound of his voice should listen to him, as though God himself were speaking. The deepest need of those who sit in the pew is expressed by the question, What has the Lord spoken to us? and they have the right to expect a straightforward answer to their question. There is also much private teaching and counselling which the dedicated preacher of the gospel can and should do.

But the High Priesthood of Christ
Belonged to Another Order
(Heb. 5: 5, 6)

So Christ also glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but he that spake unto him,

Thou art my Son,

This day have I begotten thee:

as he saith also in another place,

Thou art a priest for ever

After the order of Melchizedek.

Verse 5 furnishes further proof that the "honor," mentioned in the preceding verse, refers to the priesthood, which was ordained of God, and not to the ministry of preach-

ing, as some have claimed. All of God's people today, whether ministers or people, and that without distinction, have a spiritual, rather than a literal, priesthood. (Cf. 1 Pet. 2: 5; Rev. 1: 6.) The sacrifices which Christians offer—their bodies and the fruit of their lips—are spiritual. (Cf. Rom. 12: 1; Heb. 13: 15.) Christ alone had a proper and true sacrifice to offer. (See Heb. 10: 5; 1 Pet. 2: 24.) The sacrifices of the law were typical, while those of Christians are metaphorical; but the sacrifice which Christ, as our high priest, offered, was the basis or source from which all other sacrifices received their meaning. But the writer of Hebrews wanted his readers to know, and the same thing is true of all others throughout the present dispensation, that Christ did not assume the high priesthood "of our confession" (Heb. 3: 1) of his own accord; he was called to the office, just as Aaron was chosen to his post.

The expression "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" is a quotation from Psalm 2: 7, and refers, of course, to the Sonship of Christ, which was fully confirmed by his resurrection from the dead. (See Rom. 1:4.) There is therefore a close connection between the Sonship of Christ, and his priesthood. Indeed, it appears that the appointment to the priesthood was involved in, and resulted from, his Sonship, which qualified the Lord Jesus Christ for the position of high priest in the present dispensation. No one else could fill such an office, as that which had to do with the actual sacrifice for sin. (See Heb. 10: 5-9.) Jesus Christ did not constitute himself the Son of God, and neither did he assume the high priesthood of his own volition; both resulted from the omnipotent will of the Father.

The statement "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek," in verse 6, is a quotation from Psalm 110: 4. That entire psalm is generally understood as being messianic, and the Christ was declared therein, by the decree of Jehovah, to be both king and priest. That means that his position, in those relationships, was independent of fleshly descent, and was superior to the dignity of the Levitical order of priests. The "order" of Melchizedek

means after or according to the rank or manner in which Melchizedek was a priest. Arndt-Gingrich notes that it was according to the nature of, or, which is the same thing, just like Melchizedek, the reference being, not only to the higher rank, but also to the entirely different nature of Melchizedek's priesthood, as compared with that of Aaron. This point of comparison will be discussed further in next week's lesson.

The Manner in Which Christ Became the Perfect High Priest

(Heb. 5: 7-10)

Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation; named of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

When the writer of Hebrews began the discussion of the priesthood, in the first part of the chapter from which the lesson text is taken, he made mention of the fact that the high priest was *chosen* for that work, that is, he did not take the honor unto himself; and he has showed in all three sections of the lesson text, that that was what took place in the case of Christ. It was the Father who, by the word of the oath, appointed his Son to that position. But since Christ was perfect in all the relationships of life, never having yielded to sin or been forgiven of transgressions, how could he "bear gently with the ignorant and erring"? This question is answered in this section of the lesson text; and, as we saw in the last section of the text in the previous lesson, he was thoroughly prepared for that phase of his priestly work. Moffatt notes that "no theoretical reflection on the qualification of priests or upon the dogma of messiah's sinlessness could have produced such passages as this." It was through the obedience, in the midst of all the sufferings which Christ Jesus endured, that gained for him the right to be our high priest, and

qualified him, in all respects, to deal gently with sinful humanity.

The "days of his flesh" refers to the period of our Lord's humiliation and suffering, while he was here upon the earth; and particularly to his experiences in the garden of Gethsemane. The prayers and supplications were his petitions for divine help; and, as already indicated, it was through these humiliations and sufferings, that Christ prepared himself for the duties which the office of the high priesthood demanded of him.

The prayers and supplications which Christ offered, on the occasion referred to in the lesson text, were addressed to God, who was able to save him from death (cf. Gen. 22: 10-12); and the writer of the letter now before us says that the Son was heard for his godly fear. This shows that God can, and does, hear and answer prayer, without giving the exact thing which was requested. Jesus prayed three times that the cup of suffering and death might pass from him; and while the requests which he made were not granted; it is a fact, worthy of notice, that he was given strength and courage to endure the suffering and shame which were heaped upon him. (Cf. Heb. 12: 2.) The apostle Paul had a similar experience (2 Cor. 12: 7-10), with similar results; and we may be certain that God is never indifferent to the prayers and supplications of his people. (See Phil. 4: 6, 7.)

The expression "though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered," must be understood in the light of that which is said about the manner in which Christ became a high priest, that is, he was appointed by God, rather than assuming the office of

his own will. He was indeed the Son of God, but that was not the source of his fitness to perform the duties of the high priesthood; he became a perfect high priest as a result of the things which he suffered. "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily not to angels doth he give help, but he giveth help to the seed of Abraham. Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." (Heb. 2: 14-18.) This is to say that the suffering which the Son endured, was necessary to the end to be achieved; and this is implied in the fact that his prayers and supplications were heard.

Jesus was perfectly equipped for his high priestly work, as a result of the special discipline involved in his suffering; and he therefore became unto all them that obey him, the source, or, which is the same thing, the originator, of their salvation. The marginal reading for "author" is *cause*; and this is enough to show that the salvation which we enjoy in Christ, did not antedate his death, burial, and resurrection, which made it possible. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 1-4.) This salvation was first spoken of by Christ, as may be seen by reading Hebrews 2: 3; Mark 16: 14-20.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

What is the design of religion, as revealed in the Bible?

In what ways has Jehovah always dealt with his people here upon the earth?

How is this principle applied in the Christian dispensation?

What were the special duties which the high priest was expected to perform?

The Golden Text

What was the writer's purpose in penning the words of the golden text?

In what way was the law related to the priesthood and what argument did the writer make?

What was the special purpose of the Book of Hebrews?

The Marks of a Good Levitical High Priest

In what way are the words of the lesson text related to the closing paragraph of chapter 4?

What were the principal qualifications of an acceptable Levitical high priest?
 What was the writer's purpose in listing these qualifications?
 In what way was the high priest related to God and man? Why was this true?
 Under what circumstances does a minister in God's service recognize his own place?
 What was his duty toward the ignorant and erring and who were they?
 What difference is made in the Bible between sins of ignorance and highhanded sins?
 Why show sympathy for the one and no sympathy for the other?
 What circumstance causes a minister of the Lord to manifest the right attitude toward those who fall into sin?
 What fact caused the people to have the proper attitude toward their high priest?
 What important lessons should we learn from the priesthood regarding the Christian ministry?
 But the High Priesthood of Christ Belonged to Another Order
 What further proof does verse 5 furnish?
 What is the nature of our priesthood

today as it related to the former dispensation?
 What is the relationship between the Sonship of Christ and his high priesthood?
 In what way did Christ Jesus become a high priest?
 What was the principal difference between his priesthood and that of Aaron?
 What was meant by the "order" of Melchizedek?
 Who was Melchizedek and what is known of him?
 The Manner in Which Christ Became the Perfect High Priest
 What principal point does the writer of Hebrews emphasize throughout the lesson text?
 In what specific way did Christ become a high priest?
 How was he especially fitted to deal with the ignorant and the erring?
 What is meant by the "days of his flesh"?
 What were the prayers and supplications of Jesus and when and to whom were they offered?
 In what sense were they heard and answered?
 What do we learn from this regarding prayer and the perfect priesthood of Christ?

Lesson IV—January 24, 1971

CHRIST AND MELCHIZEDEK

Lesson Text

Heb. 7: 1-6, 11-17

1 For this Mel-chiz'-e-dek, king of Sa'-lem, priest of God Most High, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,

2 To whom also Abraham divided a tenth part of all (being first, by interpretation, King of righteousness, and then also King of Sa'-lem, which is, King of peace;

3 Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God), abideth a priest continually.

4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth out of the chief spoils.

5 And they indeed of the sons of Le'-vi that receive the priest's office have commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though these have come out of the loins of Abraham:

6 But he whose genealogy is not counted from them hath taken tithes of Abraham, and hath blessed him that hath the promises.

11 Now if there was perfection through the Le-vit'-ic-al priesthood (for under it hath the people received the law), what further need was *there* that another priest should arise after the order of Mel-chiz'-e-dek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aar'-on?

12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

13 For he of whom these things are said belongeth to another tribe, from which no man hath given attendance at the altar.

14 For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Ju'-dah; as to which tribe Mo'-ses spake nothing concerning priests.

15 And *what we say* is yet more abundantly evident, if after the likeness of Mel-chiz'-e-dek there ariseth another priest,

16 Who hath been made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life:

17 For it is witnessed of *him*,
 Thou art a priest for ever
 After the order of Mel-chiz'-e-dek.

* * * * *

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Thou art a priest for ever."* (Heb. 7: 17.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gen. 14: 18-20.

Daily Bible Readings

January 18.	M.	Christ, Priest of Order of Melchizedek (Heb. 5: 1-7)
January 19.	T.	Melchizedek, King of Salem (Gen. 14: 18-20)
January 20.	W.	Priest for Ever (Psalm 110: 1-7)
January 21.	T.	Christ Bore Sins of Many (Heb. 9: 23-28)
January 22.	F.	Christ Bore Our Sins to the Cross (1 Pet. 2: 21-25)
January 23.	S.	A Fearful Thing (Heb. 10: 26-31)
January 24.	S.	Christ Greater Than Aaron (Num. 18: 1-7)

TIME.—Probably A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACES.—Probably Rome and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Probably Paul and some Hebrew Christians.

Introduction

The epistle to the Hebrews is, to a large extent, occupied with showing that the office and work of Christ as the great high priest, is the reality of that which was foreshadowed by the Aaronic priesthood. Christ could not have been a priest after the Levitical order, for the simple reason that he belonged, not to the tribe of Levi, but to the tribe of Judah. This will be discussed further on in the lesson for today. The contrast between the eternal and unchangeable priesthood of Christ, and the ministries of all other earthly priests, is fully set forth in the letter from which these lessons are taken. The earthly priests were mortal men, subject to death; and when they passed away, it was necessary to transmit the office to their successors. But this is not true of Christ; for his priesthood will continue as long as time shall last.

The transition from Judaism to Christianity, was very difficult, as a rule, for the Hebrew people to make. This was largely due to their failure to conceive and understand the true mission of the Messiah; and that failure stood squarely in the way of their accepting Jesus as the promised Messiah. And it was for

this and kindred reasons, that they found it exceedingly difficult to take hold of the idea that Jesus could be a priest. But when once the Hebrew people realized the nature of the priesthood of Christ, it was relatively easy for them to see that a new and better law was necessary for the Lord's people.

The writer of the letter now before us went on to show that Christ not only would become a high priest; but that his priesthood would be of a higher order than that of Aaron. The writer frequently cited the messianic scriptures, in proof of the contention just made. Those scriptures clearly revealed the superiority of the priesthood of Christ, over that of Aaron. The writer's aim was to show that Jehovah promised his people a new order of priesthood, that of Melchizedek; and that the order was superior to the priesthood of Aaron. And when the reasoning of the writer is clearly understood, it will not be difficult for one to see the need for a new and superior law to govern God's people. This also will be further discussed later on in this study.

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

A Brief Description of Melchizedek

(Heb. 7: 1-3)

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and

blessed him, to whom also Abraham divided a tenth part of all (being first, by interpretation, King of righteousness, and then also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither

beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God), abideth a priest continually.

The writer of the Hebrew letter first mentioned the priestly order of Melchizedek in chapter 5, but his discussion of it was interrupted, due to the "infantile state" of his brethren to whom the epistle was originally intended. The subject, however, was skillfully mentioned again at the conclusion of the interpolated admonition (Heb. 5: 11-6: 20); and the discussion was resumed at the beginning of chapter 7. It appears that the principal reason for introducing and discussing the Melchizedek priesthood, was its continuous feature. There were, of course, other reasons for the discussion of that subject, as will be seen in this study; but the one just mentioned seems to have been the chief one. "For this Melchizedek, . . . abideth a priest continually."

The first thing which the writer does in the discussion of the priesthood of Melchizedek, is to give a brief history of Melchizedek himself, based, no doubt, on Genesis 14: 18-20, which reads as follows: "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was priest of God Most High. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be God Most High, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him a tenth of all." Melchizedek is called "king of Salem," which is generally understood to be the same as "king of Jerusalem." (See Psalm 76: 2, where "Salem" and "Zion" are used interchangeably: cf. 2 Sam. 5: 5-7.) Melchizedek was also called "priest of God Most High." Melchizedek was therefore both king and priest; and that is a fact which should be kept in mind.

The chief point in the writer of Hebrews' argument regarding the relationship between Melchizedek and Abraham, is that the former was superior to the latter. "But without any dispute the less is blessed of the better." (Heb. 7: 7.) And in calling attention to this relationship, the writer was laying the groundwork for showing that the priesthood of Christ, is superior to that of Aaron. The student should

make sure that he is thoroughly familiar with the record which has just been quoted from Genesis; and when that has been accomplished, it will not be difficult for him to see that the blessing which Melchizedek pronounced upon Abraham, was not merely a good wish, but was an authoritative intercession as the priest of God Most High; and this is additional ground for saying that Melchizedek was superior to Abraham.

The principal statement which the writer makes regarding Melchizedek is this: "For this Melchizedek . . . abideth a priest continually"; and in between the subject (Melchizedek) and the verb (abideth) the historical facts and their interpretation are listed, namely, (1) king of Salem, priest of God Most High; (2) who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him; (3) to whom Abraham also divided a tenth part of all; (4) (being first by interpretation, King of righteousness, and then also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; (5) without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither the beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God).

When it is affirmed that Melchizedek had no father, mother, genealogy, etc., the idea is that those things were true of him, *so far as the inspired record was concerned*. Or, to say the same thing in another way, Melchizedek, as he appears in history, had neither father, nor mother; and there is no record of his genealogy. The facts just mentioned were evidently intentionally omitted by Moses, so that Melchizedek would be a true type of Christ. This is to say that he was the kind of priest which the inspired penman pictured him to be, by virtue of his own personality, and did not therefore derive his priesthood from any priestly lineage or hereditary right. He became a priest, so far as the record is concerned, simply by the appointment of Jehovah; and that is what happened in the case of Christ.

Robert Milligan, in commenting on the expression "having neither beginning of days nor end of life," says, "This is but a part of the constructive parallelism which the apostle frames here with the view of amplifying his description of Mel-

chizedek in his typical relation to Christ as the great high priest of our confession. Christ, in the sense in which he is here contemplated by our author, had no predecessors, and he will have no successors. He himself will continue to officiate as our royal high priest during the entire period of his mediatorial reign. And so it was with Melchizedek. So far as the record goes, his priesthood, as well as that of Christ, was unbroken, uninterrupted by any changes of succession. All that is here meant by his being made like unto the Son of God, and abiding a priest perpetually (*eis to diēnekes*) is simply this: that like Jesus he completely fills up the entire era of his royal priesthood in his own proper person.

"This period, however short, is intended to serve as a typical representation of the era of Christ's priesthood, and Melchizedek is thus made a more perfect type of Christ than was Aaron or any of his successors. The words *perpetually* (*diēnekes*) and *forever* (*aion*) are relative terms, and are simply exhaustive of the period to which they are severally applied, whether it be long or short. And all that is therefore implied in the words of the text is simply this: that as the shadow, however small it may be, corresponds with the substance which forms it, so also did the priesthood of Melchizedek correspond with that of Christ. Each of them was unbroken, uninterrupted, and relatively perfect in itself. Great care is therefore necessary in dealing with these relative terms and expressions, lest peradventure we give them an extension which is wholly beyond what was intended by the Holy Spirit."

And so, the expression "abideth a priest continually" should be understood in the light of the fact, that there is no historical account of the termination of the priesthood of Melchizedek; and therefore, so far as the inspired record goes, the tenure of his office was uninterrupted. The terms "continually" and "forever," as already indicated, simply mean that they continued for the full period to which they were applied. That has always been true of those expressions: for example, if the terms were applied to the age of

Moses, then whatever was affirmed of them would continue as long as that dispensation continued; and so with the present dispensation. If the reference is to the eternal world, then there will, of course, be no end to it. (Cf. Matt. 25: 46.) Melchizedek therefore was a priest throughout his history, and there is no record whatsoever of its beginning or of its ending. This is another way of saying that the priesthood of Melchizedek did not cease; but if that were literally true, then there are two priests reigning today—Melchizedek and Christ. Any thoughtful person, of course, knows that that is not true; for Christ alone is the high priest of this dispensation. And even his priesthood will end, when his mediatorial reign is over (1 Cor. 15: 24-28); for when the wicked are separated from the righteous, and God's people are safe with him in the glory world, there will no longer be a need for the services of a high priest, or any other kind of priest. (Cf. Rev. 22: 1-5.)

The Superior Nature of Melchizedek's Priesthood (Heb. 7: 4-6)

Now consider how great this man was, unto whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the chief spoils. And they indeed of the sons of Levi that receive the priest's office have commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though these have come out of the loins of Abraham: but he whose genealogy is not counted from them hath taken tithes of Abraham, and hath blessed him that hath the promises.

It is well to keep in mind that the people to whom the Book of Hebrews was addressed, were people who professed to believe in the Old Testament Scriptures, and who had been converted from Judaism to Christianity. But for some reason, probably because of the influence of Judaizing teachers, which was being exerted upon them, they were in grave danger of reverting to their former beliefs and religious practices. The writer of the letter now before us was endeavoring to prove to those people, as well as to all others who will read and study that which he says, that the priesthood

of Melchizedek, who was a type of the high priesthood of Christ, was superior to the Levitical priesthood; and he does that by emphasizing two points which are easily recognizable, namely, (1) Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham, who was the father of the entire Jewish race; and (2) Melchizedek blessed the patriarch Abraham. These facts were drawn from inspired history, and those who read, or heard read, the letter could not deny them; and when this was coupled with the messianic prediction of Psalm 110: 4, the writer's case was conclusive.

The significance of the statement regarding tithing is seen, when it is kept in mind that tithing among the Jews was the result of legal appointment, and did not result in any feeling of superiority or inferiority; for they were all alike children of Abraham. "And they indeed of the sons of Levi that receive the priest's office have commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though these have come out of the loins of Abraham." But, in the case of Melchizedek and Abraham, the situation was different. Abraham, so far as the record goes, was under no legal obligation to pay tithes to Melchizedek; but did so as a tribute to his personal and priestly greatness.

Melchizedek, who had no part in the Levitical genealogy, and therefore no legal right, so far as the law was concerned, to exact tithes, nevertheless took tithes from their greatest ancestor; and that fact clearly demonstrated that he was himself greater than the patriarch Abraham. This truth is further confirmed by the fact that Melchizedek, in turn, blessed Abraham; and "without any dispute the less is blessed of the better." (Heb. 7: 7.) The point which the writer of Hebrews is emphasizing may be paraphrased in these words: Although Abraham had the promises, and was therefore himself a fountain of blessings to all mankind, and the one on whom all succeeding generations must depend for the blessings which are blessings indeed (cf. Gen. 12: 1-3); yet this great progenitor of the faithful was blessed by one who was even greater than he was, that is, by Melchizedek. It was by the

presentation of these facts, and the reasoning which he did in connection with them, that the writer of Hebrews established the fact that the priesthood of Melchizedek was greater than the priesthood of Aaron; or, which is the same thing, the Levitical priesthood.

The Need for a New Priesthood and a New Law Made
(Heb. 7: 11-17)

Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are said belongeth to another tribe, from which no man hath given attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests. And what we say is yet more abundantly evident, if after the likeness of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest, who hath been made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life: for it is witnessed of him,

*Thou art a priest for ever
After the order of Melchizedek.*

When the writer of Hebrews proved that the Levitical priesthood was inferior to that of Melchizedek, he also demonstrated that the former was both imperfect, and incapable of leading those who lived under it to perfection. The term "perfection" is used in the sense of God's aim or purpose in bringing men to the highest goal, in moral and religious attainment. The fact that the Levitical priesthood was unable to reach such a goal, is presupposed in the question which the writer asks in verse 11; and he proceeds at once to prove it.

That which has just been said is another way of saying that the writer of Hebrews challenged the validity of the whole Levitical priesthood, and of the law which inevitably belonged to it. The writer is saying that the day of the Levitical priesthood is over; that a new priest, after another order, has been

brought in; and that the law of this priest, who is both new and eternal, has replaced the law of Moses. We must never lose sight of the fact that the writer of Hebrews was presenting his message by inspiration of the Holy Spirit; and that what he was saying amounted to nothing less than a complete religious revolution. Paul had repeatedly presented the truth regarding a change from the old covenant to the new; but it remained for the writer of Hebrews, who was very probably the apostle Paul himself, to show the process at work.

The apostle Paul had told the Romans that "Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10: 4); and he wrote to the Galatians these words: "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law. But the scripture shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." (Gal. 3: 21, 22.) The law of Moses was sacred to the devout Jew; for it was that which set his people apart from the Gentiles, and gave the people of Israel their reason for existence. To attack the law, therefore, was to threaten the Jews with destruction and disintegration. It is difficult for us today to feel as they did when the change was being made; but the time had come when the old had to give way to the new. (Cf. Heb. 8: 13.)

The very fact that a new priesthood was promised in the messianic scripture which the writer of Hebrews quoted, should have caused the thoughtful and pious Jews to stop and think; but they, like many people today, apparently had trouble in welcoming any kind of a change in their religious beliefs and practices. But when their attention was called to a passage from the Scriptures which they believed to be inspired of God, they should have been willing to accept its conclusion, regardless of what that might have done to their former way of thinking. But human nature remains the same. People today are taught that salvation is by faith, apart from works, as they express the matter;

and when their attention is called to the very words of Jesus Christ himself, or an inspired apostle, in such passages as Mark 16: 15, 16 and Acts 2: 37-39, they promptly reject them as being irrelevant to their needs. And so, the writer of Hebrews reasons, if perfection could have come under the Mosaic economy, it would have to come through the Levitical priesthood, since that priesthood was the "basis" for the law; but inasmuch as that priesthood proved inadequate for the purpose which God had in mind, it had to be replaced by another priesthood, which would become the basis for a newer and better covenant. (Read Heb. 8: 1-13.) The priesthood and the law which is given under it, must stand or fall together.

The "he" of whom these things were said, was the Lord Jesus Christ, who belonged to the tribe of Judah, from which tribe no priest during the age of Moses ever served at the altar, with the Lord's approval. The reference was to the prediction made in Psalm 110: 4, which all informed Jews regarded as referring to the promised Messiah; and it was here, for the first time, that the writer of Hebrews introduces the fulfillment of that prediction. The law of Moses prescribed that the priesthood should be of the order of Aaron; but inasmuch as that priesthood proved inadequate for man's highest good, it became necessary for a new priesthood, not of Aaron's order, to be inaugurated, and a new law to be enacted. The term "order," both with reference to Melchizedek and Aaron, is used in the sense of nature or character. According to the nature of, or, just like Melchizedek or Aaron. "In any case the reference is not only to the higher 'rank,' but also to the entirely different nature of Melchizedek's priesthood as compared with that of Aaron." (See Arndt-Gingrich, *in loco*.)

The writer, in verses 15 and 16, says, "And what we say is yet more abundantly evident, if after the likeness of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest, who hath been made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." There was something which he was saying, which "is yet more abundantly evi-

dent," and the reference is apparently to the statement contained in verse 12, namely, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." There could be no question regarding the change in the priesthood; for that is exactly what the Scripture predicted concerning the Messiah. The writer, earlier in the epistle now before us, had identified the Son as being the priest of whom the psalmist spoke; and the entire testimony of the Scriptures has declared him to be of the tribe of Judah. Melchizedek, as previously pointed out, was both a king and a priest; and that is what the inspired penman affirmed of Christ. "Then will he speak unto him in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure: Yet I have set my *king* upon my holy hill of Zion. I will tell of

the decree: Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee." (Psalm 2: 5-7.) "Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent: thou art a *priest* for ever after the order of Melchizedek." (Psalm 110: 4.) It was from the two psalms just mentioned, that the writer of Hebrews quoted, as may be seen by reading Hebrews 5: 5, 6; and the marginal notes. No priest of the Levitical order was ever a king at the time he served at the altar; but Melchizedek was both, as the writer of Hebrews shows by his quotation from Genesis 14: 18-20. It was Jehovah who said that the new priest would be after the order of Melchizedek; and that settled the question of the fate or destiny of both the Levitical priesthood and the law of Moses.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is one of the principal purposes of the Hebrew letter?
Why wasn't it possible for Christ to be a priest after the order of Aaron?
What are some of the features which the writer introduces in his discussion of the contrast between the priesthood of Christ and the ministries of other priests?
Why was it so difficult for the people of Israel to move from Judaism to Christianity?
Why didn't they accept Jesus as the Messiah?
To what scriptures did the writer of Hebrews appeal in his effort to show that a new priesthood was necessary?

A Brief Description of Melchizedek

What had the writer of Hebrews said regarding Melchizedek prior to the time of this lesson?
Why didn't he continue the discussion when the subject was first mentioned?
What important lesson should we learn from this circumstance?
How does the writer of Hebrews begin the discussion of the priesthood of Melchizedek in today's lesson?
What was his chief point in comparing Melchizedek with Abraham?
What are the principal facts which are mentioned regarding Melchizedek?
In what sense could it be said that he had no father, nor mother, nor genealogy?
What is meant by saying that he had no beginning of days nor end of life?

What were all of these facts intended to prove?
In what sense are the priesthoods of Melchizedek and Christ continually or for ever?

The Superior Nature of Melchizedek's Priesthood

Who were the people to whom the letter to the Hebrews was addressed?
Why was such a letter as this needed in their case and what of its relevance to our day?
What is the writer's purpose in this section of the lesson text?
What two principal points does he mention in this connection?
How do these facts prove that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham?
What were the writer's contrasting points regarding the paying of tithes?
How do you know that the writer established his point regarding the superiority of Melchizedek over Abraham?

The Need for a New Priesthood and a New Law Made Clear

What did the writer of Hebrews prove when he showed that the Levitical priesthood was inferior to that of Melchizedek?
What does he mean, in this context, by the term "perfection"?
What, in effect, was the writer doing regarding the whole Mosaic system?
Why were the Levitical priesthood and the law of Moses imperfect?
What unfortunate attitude toward inspired authority is seen in this connection?
Give a summary of the arguments which are made regarding the priesthood of Christ.

Lesson V—January 31, 1971

THE PRIESTLY OFFERING

Lesson Text

Lev. 9: 8-11; Heb. 7: 22-28

8 So Aar'-on drew near unto the altar, and slew the calf of the sin-offering, which was for himself.

9 And the sons of Aar'-on presented the blood unto him; and he dipped his finger in the blood, and put it upon the horns of the altar, and poured out the blood at the base of the altar:

10 But the fat, and the kidneys, and the caul from the liver of the sin-offering, he burnt upon the altar; as Je-ho'-vah commanded Mo'-ses.

11 And the flesh and the skin he burnt with fire without the camp.

22 By so much also hath Je'-sus become the surety of a better covenant.

23 And they indeed have been made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing:

24 But he, because he abideth for ever, hath his priesthood unchangeable.

25 Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

26 For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

27 Who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the *sins* of the people: for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself.

28 For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the law, *appointeth* a Son, perfected for evermore.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices.*" (Heb. 8: 3.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Lev. 9: 12-24.

Daily Bible Readings

January 25.	M.	Priest's Function in Burnt-Offerings (Lev. 6: 8-13)
January 26.	T.	The Law of the Sin-Offering (Lev. 6: 24-30)
January 27.	W.	The Law of the Trespass Offering (Lev. 7: 1-10)
January 28.	T.	Priest's Portion of Offering (Lev. 7: 28-34)
January 29.	F.	Consecration of Aaron and His Sons (Lev. 8: 1-17)
January 30.	S.	Presentation of Burnt-Offering (Lev. 8: 18-30)
January 31.	S.	Christ, Our Great High Priest (Heb. 4: 1-14)

TIME.—Leviticus, 1490 B.C.; Hebrews, A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACES.—Leviticus, in the wilderness before mount Sinai; Hebrews, Rome and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Moses, Aaron, and others; probably Paul and some Hebrew Christians.

Introduction

The first section of the text for today's lesson is the account of the beginning of Aaron's work as a high priest; and with that in mind, it is probably in order to take a further look at his place in the divine economy. The editor of *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible* points out that Aaron's place in religious history is distinctly measured, in the light of the office to which he was called. He was the first of a long list

of men who were at the head of what was for ages the only true religion in the world. He was the first high priest of God's chosen people. God revealed to Moses just how Aaron was to be consecrated to the newly created office, and what his specific duties were to be; and we should keep in mind that Aaron illustrates the principle, which is also applicable to this dispensation, as the writer of Hebrews clearly states,

namely, that "no man taketh the honor unto himself, but when he is called of God, even as was Aaron. So Christ also glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but he that spake unto him, . . .

Thou art a priest for ever

After the order of Melchizedek

(Heb. 5: 4-6.)

Aaron was inaugurated as high priest, under the direction of Moses, who was stood between God and his people, as the immediate organ of the revelation of the divine will. And if Aaron's consecration was destined to awe the people of Israel, then the high sanctions of his high office would do so still more. It apparently was not long after Aaron became high priest, when his sons, Nadab and Abihu, rebelled against the commandment of Jehovah, and died summarily before him, as did Korah and those with him, who questioned the right of Moses and Aaron to exercise the authority which had been given to them. (See Lev. 10: 1ff; Num. 16: 1ff.) There does not appear to be any other high priest, in the order of Aaron, who made the impression on the people which he made; and when the time came for him to go the way of all the earth, the people of Israel, during the thirty days of

mourning which had been set aside for Aaron, must have felt that the greatest of the Israelites, next to Moses, had been taken from them.

But great as the priesthood of Aaron was, there would come a time when one so much greater than he would stand between the people and God, as to make it essential that he be reckoned after an altogether different order. The purpose of the priesthood of Christ, in this dispensation, is to fulfil the Divine will in the salvation of those who will come unto God through him. The priests, under the Levitical system, were made so "after the law of a carnal commandment"; but our high priest received his appointment "after the power of an endless life." (See Heb. 7: 16.) The expression "after the power of an endless life" is rendered by Williams in these words: "on the basis of a power flowing from a life that cannot end." It was God, who by an oath, as we shall see further on in this study, constituted Christ a priest; and that means that his priesthood was a much more solemn and important relationship, than had ever been the case of the Levitical order. These issues shall be discussed more at length, in the second and third sections of the lesson text.

The Golden Text

"For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices." Service at the altar was one of the principal duties of the Levitical priesthood; and when we take into consideration the typical import of the sacrificial system, it will not be difficult for us to see why so many sacrifices had to be offered. The writer of Hebrews says, "And every priest indeed standeth day by day ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, the which can never take away sins." (Heb. 10: 11.) This, apparently, referred to the daily sacrifices, those offered morning and evening; and when we take into account the various and sundry types of sacrifices which the law of Moses commanded to be made, there was no end to the service at the altar, so long as the law of Moses continued in effect.

But whatever may have been the nature of the sacrifices and offering which were made, according to the

law of Moses, their common purpose was to point to the coming of Christ, and the perfect offering which he would make. "For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. Else would they not have ceased to be offered? because the worshippers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." (Heb. 10: 1-4.) One of the principal purposes of the law of Moses was to make the chosen people conscious of sin; for, unless that was done, they would not have felt the need of a Saviour.

Although not of the Levitical order of the priesthood, Jesus

Christ, when he became a priest, after the order of Melchizedek, was as much under obligation to officiate at the altar, as were the priests of the preceding dispensation. However, it was not at a literal altar that he was to serve, nor was he to offer animal sacrifices continuously, as the previous priests under the law of Moses had done. The writer of Hebrews says, "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith,

Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not,

But a body didst thou prepare for me;

The Text Explained

Aaron and His Sons Begin Their Sacrificial Offerings

(Lev. 9: 8-11)

So Aaron drew near unto the altar, and slew the calf of the sin offering, which was for himself. And the sons of Aaron presented the blood unto him; and he dipped his finger in the blood, and put it upon the horns of the altar, and poured out the blood at the base of the altar; but the fat, and the kidneys, and the caul from the liver of the sin-offering, he burnt upon the altar; as Jehovah commanded Moses. And the flesh and the skin he burnt with fire without the camp.

Jehovah carefully instructed Moses regarding the ceremonial services which were to be performed by the priests; and just what their duties would be, in every particular. If one will read the first eight chapters of Leviticus, he will have all the facts concerning these matters. The consecration of the priests, and the instructions regarding the various offerings which they were to make, may be looked upon as the inauguration of the tabernacle service. The closing chapters of Exodus tell of that which Jehovah told Moses about the building of the tabernacle, and its actual construction; all of which had to be completed, before the service which involved animal sacrifices, such as we are considering in this lesson, could begin. (See Exodus, beginning with chapter 25.)

It is a noticeable fact that the first sacrifice which Aaron, as the first high priest, offered, was the sin offering for himself. No one, not even

In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure:

Then said I, Lo, I am come

(In the roll of the book it is written of me)

To do thy will, O God." (Heb. 10: 5-7.)

Christ offered himself, as we shall see in the closing part of this lesson; and, as the writer of Hebrews says later, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. 10: 14.)

a newly consecrated high priest, can intercede for another, until he has got himself right in the sight of God. This is what the writer of Hebrews teaches regarding the matter, as we shall see in the final section of the text for today's lesson. And, too, it is easy to see that "blood," which was the life of the animal that was being offered, was always prominent in the sacrifices which were made under the Levitical system. The writer of Hebrews says, "And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission." (Heb. 9: 22.) Any careful reader of the Bible can see a "scarlet thread" running throughout the sacred history.

Blessings Which Grow Out of the Superior Priesthood of Christ

(Heb. 7: 22-25)

By so much also hath Jesus become the surety of a better covenant. And they indeed have been made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing; but he, because he abideth for ever, hath his priesthood unchangeable. Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Verse 22 is the closing part of a rather long sentence; and it should be read in the light of its preceding context, which is as follows: "For there is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for

the law made nothing perfect), and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw nigh unto God. And inasmuch as it is not without the taking of an oath (for they indeed have been made priests without an oath; but he with an oath by him that saith of him,

The Lord swear and will not repent himself,

Thou art a priest for ever); by so much also hath Jesus become the surety of a better covenant. (Heb. 7: 18-22.)

The closing verse of the quotation just made, which is the first verse of this section of the lesson text, may be regarded as a kind of summary of the superiority of the priesthood of Christ, which came into being as the result of the oath of Jehovah himself. James Macknight points out that "the apostle's reasoning here is founded on this, that God never interposed his oath, except to show the certainty and immutability of the thing sworn. Thus he swore to Abraham (Gen. 22: 16-18) that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed; and to the rebellious Israelites, that they should never enter into his rest (Deut. 1: 34, 35); and to Moses, that he should not go into the land of Canaan (Deut. 4: 21); and to David, that his seed should endure for ever, and his throne unto all generations (Psalm 89: 4). Wherefore, since Christ was made a priest, not without an oath that he should be a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek, that circumstance showed God's purpose never to change or abolish his priesthood; nor to change or abolish the covenant which was established on his priesthood. Whereas, the Levitical priesthood and the law of Moses, being established with an oath, were thereby declared to be changeable at God's pleasure."

Two of the major blessings which grow out of the priesthood of Christ are listed in verses 24 and 25, namely, (1) He holds the priesthood permanently, because, in contrast with the Levitical priest, he will never die, and thereby make a change necessary. The living priest is qualified in every way to minister to any conceivable need, which any child of God may ever have. The writer of the epistle, in fact, will say

near its close, that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever." (Heb. 13: 8.) The passage just quoted is in keeping with one which Jesus himself made, after his resurrection from the dead, namely, "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28: 20b.)

The adverb "always," in the last passage quoted, separates the Lord Jesus Christ from every other leader and teacher the world has ever seen or known about. He is not here in person, to be sure; but he is as truly with his people in spirit now, as he was when he was here upon the earth. The promise which the Lord made therefore should be regarded as a source of great encouragement to every faithful 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 include bad days, as well as good ones; and there is therefore no time when Christians cannot depend upon the Lord. (Cf. 1 Cor. 10: 13; James 1: 5-8.) The final victory of Christ over the evil world, and all the Satanic powers, is certain; and the promise which we are now considering is both precise and detailed; and so, however long and perilous the journey of life, the Lord's people can always count on having the presence of their Divine Leader with them. He will never fail them, nor forsake them. (Heb. 13: 5, 6.)

The second major blessing which grows out of the priesthood of Christ, is listed in verse 25—salvation to the uttermost. Those who study these lessons should always keep in mind that the epistle to the Hebrews is largely occupied with showing that the office and work of Christ, as the great high priest of the Christian dispensation, is in reality that which was typified by the Aaronic priesthood, notwithstanding the fact that Christ was not after the Levitical order. The passage now before us is one of the many texts which show the contrast between the eternal and unchangeable priesthood of Christ, and the ministries of all other earthly priests, whose office, although of divine appointment, derived their value from the priesthood of the Son of God. The earthly priests were mortal

men, and as they died, one by one, the office was transmitted to their successors. But not so with Christ; his priesthood shall endure as long as the world shall last.

There are aspects of salvation, but the salvation which the human race needs more than any other, is salvation from sin here, and from eternal destruction in the world which is to come. Any one who is familiar with the New Testament is aware of the fact that Jesus Christ was sent to the earth for that very purpose. 'And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall have his people from their sins.' (Matt. 1: 21.) "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19: 10.) When the Scriptures affirm that he is able to save to the uttermost, the idea, as suggested in the marginal note, is that of complete or perfect salvation. This is another way of saying that there is no degree of guilt from which he cannot save—to the uttermost degree of man's need; but the Lord's salvation is conditional: "them that draw near unto God through him." (Cf. John 14: 6; Heb. 5: 8, 9.)

The Lord Jesus Christ, while here upon the earth, spent his time and energies in the interest of the human race; and the passage now before us affirms that he continues that effort. The expression "he ever liveth" is a present participle, and indicates continuous activities on behalf of mankind. The same idea is contained in Romans 8: 34, which says, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Read Rom. 8: 31-39.)

In the expression "them that draw near unto God," the original for "draw near" is also a present participle, and indicates the *habit* of those who draw near unto God, in order to seek his grace. (Cf. Heb. 4: 16.) The practice of drawing near unto God implies (1) *reverence*. Those who draw near unto God, realize that they are continually in his presence. (Cf. Ex. 3: 5.) (2) *Confidence*. No trusting soul has ever been disappointed; for God has never failed to fulfil a single prom-

ise which he made. (Cf. Isa. 26: 3; Phil. 4: 6, 7; Heb. 13: 5, 6.) (3) *Obedience*. No one who really wants to please the Lord will be "disobedient unto the heavenly vision." His one aim in life is to do the will of God. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 9; 1 John 5: 3.)

We must never forget that the drawing near unto God must always be through Christ. (Cf. John 14: 6; Heb. 10: 22; Rom. 5: 1, 2.) The story is told of a little girl whom the Prince of Wales once met out in front of Buckingham Palace. The little girl was crying; and when the prince asked her what her trouble was, she replied that she wanted to see the queen. It was then that the prince graciously took the little girl by the hand, and led her past the guards, and into the presence of the queen; and it was through him that she was introduced to royalty. (Cf. Heb. 4: 14-16; Matt. 10: 32, 33; Rev. 3: 5.)

"A Triumphant Summary"

(Heb. 7: 26-28)

For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people: for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself. For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the law, appointeth a Son, perfected for evermore.

The writer of Hebrews, in giving a summary at this point, does not mean that he has finished his discussion of the priesthood of Christ; for that will not be done until he reaches verse 18 of chapter 10. The writer is simply giving a summary of that which he has said up to this point. His aim, as has been repeatedly stated, is to show the superiority of the priesthood of Christ, to that of the Levitical; and he does that by calling attention to his spotless character and the perfection of the offering which he made. This, says the writer of the Hebrew letter, is precisely the kind of high priest we need; and he describes him as being (1) *holy*, in the same sense that God is holy (cf. Col. 2: 9); (2) *guileless*, without malice or any de-

sire to deceive the unsuspecting; (3) *undefiled*, pure and without spot, which would disqualify him, as was sometimes the case with the Levitical high priests; (4) *separate from sinners*, not only because he was himself without sin; but also because he is exalted beyond the reach of sin or sinners; and (5) *made higher than the heavens*, in a sphere of celestial purity and glory, which qualifies him "to save to the uttermost them that draw near to God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

The high priest, in the previous dispensation, stood between God and the people, and offered sacrifices for their sins. And in a similar way, Jesus stands between a righteous God and our sinful souls; but instead of offering the blood of animals over and over again, our priest offered himself unto God, without spot and without blemish. All of this, of course, made the daily sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood wholly unnecessary, because (1) Christ had no sins of his own to atone for, and (2) the sacrifice which he offered is sufficient for the cleansing of all sins, throughout the entire dispensation. "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." (1 John 2: 1, 2.)

The law of Moses authorized the appointment of high priests, after

the Levitical order; and they all, without exception, were men "having infirmity," which means, being frail, they often fell into sin. One has only to read the Old Testament history of Israel, in order to see how true the statement just made was: no priest was perfect under that system. It is a recorded fact that some of the priests who stood at the altar were both vile and vicious (cf. 1 Sam. 2: 12-17, 22-25), while others made an honest effort to do right; but at best, even those who tried to be pleasing to God, sometimes fell into wrongdoing. All of this, of course, made it necessary for them to offer sacrifices for their own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

But the priesthood of Christ is different. He was appointed to the office, not by the authorization of the law of Moses, but by the word of God's oath, "which was after the law," that is, the oath regarding the priesthood of Christ was made and recorded, after the law was given. (Cf. Psalm 110: 4; cf. Gal. 3: 17.) The oath, coming as it did after the law, clearly shows that the law of Moses respecting the Levitical priesthood, was not sufficient for all time, and therefore needed to be replaced; and that is exactly, as the writer of Hebrews is showing, what took place. And so, instead of appointing men to the priesthood, during the new dispensation, who would be in need of sacrificing for their sins, the word of the oath of Jehovah designated his Son, who is perfected for evermore, to be our continual high priest. (Read again Heb. 7: 11-25.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is contained in the first section of the lesson text for today?
Discuss the place which Aaron, as high priest, occupies in religious history.
What important Bible principle did he illustrate?
Tell something of the inauguration of Aaron as high priest.
In what way did the people of his day regard him?
What is the primary purpose of the high priesthood of Christ?
In what way was he made a priest?

The Golden Text

What was the principal duty of the high priest during the Mosaic dispensation?

What was the purpose of the sacrifices which they offered?
Why did Christ become a high priest?
Give reasons for your answer.

Aaron and His Sons Begin Their Sacrificial Offerings

In what way did the first priests under the law of Moses learn what was expected of them?
What did their consecration and instruction inaugurate?
What was the first sacrifice which Aaron offered and how was the process carried out?
Why was the blood of the sacrifice so prominently emphasized?
In what way is this principle illustrated throughout the Bible?

Blessings Which Grow Out of the Superior Priesthood of Christ
How does the writer of Hebrews go about

summarizing the superiority of the priesthood of Christ?
 What scriptural significance is attached in the oath which was uttered by God?
 What two major blessings grow out of the priesthood of Christ?
 What is signified by Christ's having the priesthood permanently?
 What promise did Jesus himself make in this connection?
 How, then, should the Lord's people feel as they go about their daily living?
 What is meant by salvation to the uttermost?
 What contrast is emphasized between the priesthood of Christ and that of the Levites?
 What is signified by the fact that Christ ever lives to intercede for his people?
 Upon what condition does Christ make intercession for people today?

What is implied in the action of drawing near to God?
 How, alone, may people draw near to God? Give reason for your answer.

"A Triumphant Summary"

What was a summary of the writer's teaching regarding the priesthood of Christ given at this point?
 In what way did he emphasize the superiority of the Lord's priesthood?
 What is implied in the five descriptive characteristics which he listed?
 How does the writer show that the Levitical sacrifices are no longer necessary?
 What always characterized the high priests of the Levitical order?
 What, in that respect, is the chief difference between them and our high priest?

Lesson VI—February 7, 1971

THE BETTER COVENANT

Lesson Text

Heb. 8: 1-12

1 Now in the things which we are saying the chief point *is this*: We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,

2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.

3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is necessary that this *high priest* also have somewhat to offer.

4 Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law;

5 Who serve *that which is* a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Mo'ses is warned *of God* when he is about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount.

6 But now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises.

7 For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second.

8 For finding fault with them, he saith,

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord,

That I will make a new covenant with the house of Is'-ra-el and with the house of Ju'-dah;

9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers

In the day that I took them by the hand to lead them forth out of the land of E'-gypt;

For they continued not in my covenant,

And I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Is'-ra-el

After those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind,

And on their heart also will I write them:

And I will be to them a God, And they shall be to me a people:

11 And they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen,

And every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord:

For all shall know me, From the least to the greatest of them.

12 For I will be merciful to their iniquities,

And their sins will I remember no more.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"He is also the mediator of a better covenant."* (Heb. 8: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Jer. 31: 31-34.

Daily Bible Readings

February 1.	M.	A New Covenant (Heb. 12: 18-24)
February 2.	T.	Book of the Covenant (Ex. 24: 1-8)
February 3.	W.	A Covenant Including Christ (Psalm 89: 20-37)
February 4.	T.	Blood of the Covenant (Ex. 34: 1-28)
February 5.	F.	Old Covenant to Be Removed (Jer. 31: 31-34)
February 6.	S.	Our Better Covenant (Heb. 8: 6-13)
February 7.	S.	The First Covenant Removed (Heb. 10: 1-10)

TIME.—Probably A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACES.—Probably Rome and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Probably Paul and some Hebrew Christians.

Introduction

The Scriptures, as we have them today, contain all that we need to know concerning that which God has revealed to man, regarding his spiritual welfare. (Psalm 19: 1, 2; Rom. 1: 18-21.) This truth is succinctly stated by Moses in these words: "The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." (Deut. 29: 29.) The "secret things" are the things which have not been *revealed*; and the principle is the same in any age of the world. (See Gal. 1: 6-9; 2 Tim. 4: 1-5; Rev. 22: 18, 19; Deut. 4: 2; Prov. 30: 5, 6.)

The unfolding of God's plan for saving the lost implies a progressive revelation; and, looking at the question of revelation from a broad point of view, it may be described as making known God, duty, and immortality. Its method is historical, and its purpose is redemptive and educational. God's great love for lost mankind was the motive for all the efforts, which were put forth for their redemption; but it required forty centuries of time, and a succession of inspired teachers, and martyrs, together with the experiences of the natural realm, to educate the selfish nature of the human race, up to the point of grasping the sentiment of universal love. From local and national limitations, Jehovah continued to unfold his divine philanthropy, until the Holy Spirit, through the apostle Peter, finally announced 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.)

The primary purpose of the Bible, therefore is to reveal the Author's scheme of human redemption; and notwithstanding the fact that this great book covers many centuries of time, and its contents deal with a wide variety of subjects, it is both interesting and profitable to note that its principal theme is never lost sight of. (Cf. Luke 24: 27, 44.) The great plan of human redemption, as revealed in the Scriptures, is naturally divided into three parts, known to us as the patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian dispensations; and if we will carefully study these three epochal stages, we shall be able to mark the progress of divine revelation, as it moves on in the course of its ever-widening development.

There is no record of a written law during the first age of Bible history; but covenants were made, and written laws were given in the other two dispensations. One of the greatest needs of our day, is the ability to distinguish between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. (Cf. John 1: 17; Heb. 1: 1, 2.) Much of the confusion in the religious world today, can be traced directly to a failure to deal with the two covenants, given through Moses and Christ, in the manner in which God intended. The two covenants cover two entirely different areas in God's dealings with his people; and they do not overlap, nor in any way adversely affect each other. This truth must be clearly perceived, if

we are to understand the divine purpose of the two covenants in question.

The first covenant, that is the one which Moses mediated, was made with the people of Israel at mount Sinai; and was intended to meet all their needs of government, both civil and religious, as long as it was in force. The Ten Commandments may be thought of as the Constitution of the theocracy; and all the other statutes and ordinances are based upon, and are entirely in harmony with, that Great Code. Many of the requirements of the first covenant pertained to the fleshly state of Israel; and that fact must be kept in mind, if we are to understand their significance and application.

Paul makes it abundantly clear, in Galatians 3: 15-4: 7, that the Mosaic

law was never intended to last for ever, as that expression is commonly and literally understood. It was a kind of "temporary measure," to continue until Christ should come. The law of Moses was intended for one, and only one, nation; while the gospel of Christ is for all men, of every nation. But we should always keep in mind the fact, that the two covenants cannot be completely isolated from each other, while endeavoring to grasp their meaning and purpose. Every one who would accurately understand the gospel of Christ, must approach it through the old covenant; and he who would discover the full meaning of the Jewish order, must make the writers of the new covenant his commentators.

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 Sphere of Christ's High Priestly Ministry

(Heb. 8: 1-5)

Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this: We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is necessary that this high priest also have somewhat to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve that which is a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned of God when he is about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount.

When the writer began his epistle to the Hebrews, he did so by showing that the Son of God is greater than the angels, Moses, and Aaron, and that the priesthood to which he was appointed is also greater than the one which was presided over by Aaron and his successors. A rather

thorough discussion of the latter subject is contained in chapter 7, as we saw in the two preceding lessons; and so, when the writer reached that which we call chapter 8, where the lesson for today begins, he was ready to state a definite conclusion; or, which is the same thing to summarize that which he had said regarding the Son's priesthood, up to this point. The discussion of that priesthood, as already pointed out, will continue through the eighteenth verse of chapter 10.

In the statement, "We have such a high priest," the writer is saying that we have such a high priest as that which we have been describing, namely, the one whom God had sworn to raise up, after the order of Melchizedek. And furthermore, since this high priest is at the right hand of God in the heavens, he has received the greatest honor and place of service, which is possible for any one to enjoy. (Cf. Eph. 1: 20, 21; Phil. 2: 5-11.) It will be helpful to us, as we endeavor to grasp the significance of the writer's argument, if we try to put ourselves in the place of the original readers to whom the letter was addressed, namely, some Hebrew Christians who had been converted to Christ,

but who, apparently, were in danger of reverting to Judaism.

Many of the early Hebrew Christians did not forsake the law of Moses, when they accepted Christ; for it was their understanding that the gospel of Christ was but an extension of the law of Moses. When Paul went to Jerusalem, following his third missionary journey, he came face to face with this very situation, as may be seen by reading Luke's account in the Book of Acts. After saying that Paul went unto James, and in the presence of the elders, and gave a report of his ministry among the Gentiles, Luke continues: "And they, when they heard it, glorified God; and they said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of them that have believed; and they are all zealous for the law: and they have been informed concerning thee, that thou teachest all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? they will certainly hear that thou art come. Do thou therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men that have a vow on them; these take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges for them, that they may shave their heads: and all shall know that there is no truth in the things whereof they have been informed concerning thee; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, keeping the law." (Read Acts 21: 20-26.)

All of that which has been said shows that people who had been under the law of Moses all of their lives, had to have time, even under apostolic instruction, to adjust themselves to the idea that a change had been made in God's law for his people. (Cf. Heb. 7: 12.) McGarvey thinks that Paul, along with many other pious Jews, had not fully realized the truth regarding Levitical offerings and those under Christ, at the time he was in Jerusalem; but that after he wrote Hebrews, and having fully seen the truth of the matter, he would not have agreed to the suggestion of his Jewish brethren, as set forth in the passage quoted above. But be that as it may, the people to whom Paul wrote the Hebrew letter, had not

fully understood; and it was his aim to set them right regarding the matter. Hebrews is, indeed, the only book in the New Testament which is devoted to the discussion of the actual transition from the law of Moses to the gospel of Christ. Other writings of the New Testament make reference to the question, and deal with it to some extent; but it remained for Hebrews to make the matter complete.

After showing, in earlier chapters of the epistle now under consideration, that Christ is superior to angels, Moses, and the Aaronic priesthood, the writer comes now to prove that the actual work which Christ came to do, is far above and beyond that which was accomplished by the Levitical priesthood. The ministry of the latter was in the tabernacle which man set up, and which was only a shadow of that which was to come; while the ministry of Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary and "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man."

The "sanctuary," in which Christ ministers on behalf of his people, is heaven itself, the antitype of the most holy place of the tabernacle; or, to say the same thing in another way, it is in heaven where Christ makes intercession for us. (Rom. 8: 34.) When all the facts are considered, it appears quite certain that the "true tabernacle" is the church itself. The high priest, during the age of Moses, ministered in both the holy and the most holy places of the tabernacle; and in a similar manner Christ ministers in both the church (cf. Eph. 1: 22, 23), and in heaven itself. Moses "pitched" the tent of the old tabernacle, while Christ built the church of the new dispensation. (Matt. 16: 18.)

As the writer of Hebrews continues the comparison, and the contrast, of the two priesthoods, the Levitical and that of Christ, he goes on to show that Christ does indeed engage in the functions of the high priest, namely, that of offering both gifts and sacrifices. But he also shows that it is essential that Christ be in heaven, in order to engage in that work. The saying that if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, is equivalent to saying that if he were not in heaven, and the old order were still in force,

then he could not serve as a high priest; for he was not of the priestly tribe and family. (Cf. Heb. 7: 14.)

The statement "seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law," may appear to some to imply that the law of Moses was still in force, when the letter now before us was written; but we know that the law was no longer binding upon God's people. (Col. 2: 14^{ff}; Eph. 2: 15; Rom. 1: 16, 17; 10: 1-4.) The temple in Jerusalem had not been destroyed at the time this letter was written. The Jews continued to make their offerings according to the law.

When the writer of Hebrews called attention to the warning which Moses received, when he was about to make the tabernacle, he was in effect, setting the stage for a clear view of the true nature of the Levitical priesthood and the law of Moses. They were but a copy, and a shadow, of the heavenly things. This is to say that the Levitical priesthood and the law of Moses themselves depended upon the great archetype for their own existence. Something existed in heaven, of which the old tabernacle, and all of its services, were but a copy. The "pattern" referred to was evidently "the sanctuary, and the true tabernacle [that is, the church—cf. Heb. 9: 23], which the Lord pitched, not man." This, of course, is conclusive evidence of the superiority of the priesthood of Christ, and his ministry, over that of those who were after the order of Aaron. It is also further proof of the eternal nature of the church; for it existed in the mind of God, when Moses was receiving instructions regarding the building of the tabernacle. (Cf. Eph. 3: 8-11.)

A Confirmatory and Transitional Statement (Heb. 8: 6, 7)

But now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second.

The more excellent ministry of Christ, over that of the Levitical priesthood, is due to the fact that

his ministry, as has already been pointed out, is in a higher sphere, that is, in heaven and with heavenly things; which is another way of saying that Christ's ministry has to do with the spirit, rather than with the flesh. Here again, as in Hebrews 7: 11, 12, the writer shows that the priesthood, and the law which is based upon it, are inseparably bound together, so much so that a greater ministry implies a greater law. Moses was the mediator of the old covenant (Ex. 20: 18-21; Gal. 3: 19, 20), and it appears that he was succeeded in this position by the high priest; for it was the latter, during the Jewish dispensation, who stood between God and the people, insofar as their worship and service were concerned. But under the terms of the new covenant, Christ, as we gather from Hebrew 3: 1, does the work of both the lawgiver (Moses) and the high priest. The term "mediator" means one who intervenes, or goes between two estranged parties, as an interpreter, an intercessor, or a reconciler. (Cf. 1 Tim. 2: 5; 2 Cor. 5: 18, 19.) The better promises of the new covenant, are the spiritual promises, which stand in sharp contrast with the fleshly aspect of the old covenant. (Cf. 2 Cor. 7: 1; 2 Pet. 1: 3, 4.)

It has been pointed out repeatedly, that the old covenant was the one which was given through Moses; and it is the one which is being contrasted with the one which we are under today. The terms "fault" and "faultless," which are used in the chapter we are now considering, do not imply that the law of Moses had mistakes in it; and that is not the idea which the writer of Hebrews meant to convey. (Cf. Psalm 19: 7-11; Rom. 7: 12.) The law was faulty, in that it was not sufficient to accomplish God's ultimate purpose regarding the human race.

The same idea, just expressed, is also set forth in Hebrews 7: 11, namely, "Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron?" This is another

way of saying that it was never Jehovah's intention, that the law of Moses should be the instrument of man's final salvation. The apostle Paul, in writing to the Galatians, said, "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law. But the scripture shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." (Gal. 3: 21, 22; cf. 2: 16, 21; 3: 11; Rom. 3: 19, 20; Acts 13: 38, 39.) The Jews therefore made the mistake of regarding the old law, as being sufficient to save Israel, according to the flesh. (Rom. 1: 16, 17; 10: 1-3.)

Jehovah, of course, had a purpose in giving the law of Moses; and there is nothing whatsoever, in all the Bible, to indicate that he was, in any way, disappointed in that purpose. The law separated the chosen people from all other peoples of the earth; and it appears that God, during the time the law was in force, was permitting the Jews and the Gentiles to demonstrate two essential truths, namely, (1) He was permitting the Jews to demonstrate that no one can be saved merely by keeping a law, however perfect that law might be. (2) Jehovah was, at the same time, allowing the Gentiles to demonstrate that natural religion, that is, moral religion, or morality, was wholly inadequate for the needs of sinful humanity. (Rom. 2: 11-16.) These two demonstrations issued forth in two definite results: (1) All men are shut up under sin (Gal. 3: 22; Rom. 3: 9, 10, 23; 11: 32); and (2) Jesus Christ, in the fulness of time, was sent into the world to redeem all who would accept his offer of salvation. (Cf. Gal. 4: 4, 5; 1 John 4: 14.)

The More Excellent Ministry of
Christ Implies a Better Covenant
(Heb. 8: 8-12)

For finding fault with them, he saith.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord,

That I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers

In the day that I took them by the hand to lead them forth out of the land of Egypt;

For they continued not in my covenant,

And I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel

After those days, saith the Lord;

I will put my laws into their mind,

And on their heart also will I write them:

And I will be to them a God, And they shall be to me a people:

And they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen,

And every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord:

For all shall know me, From the least to the greatest of them.

For I will be merciful to their iniquities,

And their sins will I remember no more.

The section of the text just quoted, with the exception of the introductory words, is a quotation from Jeremiah 31: 31-34. The "them," with whom Jehovah found fault, were apparently the people, with whom the original covenant was made; "For they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord." (Verse 9.) The history of Israel shows that they, in addition to being unable to keep a perfect law, were continually violating that which they could keep. (Cf. Rom. 8: 3.)

It is interesting to note that apostolic preachers frequently supported their remarks, regarding a new order of things, by quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures. This no doubt caused many of their hearers or readers, in most instances, to react more favorably to that which was being said. (Cf. Acts 2: 14ff.) Fair-minded people would be able to see that that which was being advocated was not, after all, as revolutionary as some might think. (Cf. Acts 17: 1-13.) We have no way of knowing just how the Hebrew brethren reacted to the letter which was sent to them; but it is hoped that they did not manifest the atti-

tude which some in more recent times have displayed. When Alexander Campbell delivered his famous *Sermon on the Law*, the reaction of some of the preachers with whom he had labored, was nothing short of disgraceful and violent.

The very wording of the text now under consideration shows that the new covenant deals with the spirit, or the spiritual needs of men, in contrast with the fleshly aspect of the old law. People in former times were born and reared under the terms of the covenant, and had to be taught the truth regarding it, after they were old enough to understand

it; but under the terms of the new order, people are taught the gospel message, before they are inducted into covenant relationship with the Lord. When people respond to the gospel message, and receive the forgiveness of their sins, they are treated as if they had never sinned. This is what Paul, in the Roman letter, calls "reckoned" or "imputed" righteousness. The writer of Hebrews concludes by saying a "new covenant" automatically implies that the first one is old, and was "nigh unto vanishing away." (Heb. 8: 13.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

How well equipped are people today for doing the will of the Lord, so far as the inspired record is concerned?

What is the testimony of the Scriptures regarding this question?

According to what plan did Jehovah choose to make known his will to the human race?

Why did it take so long for mankind to grasp the message which he sent to them?

What is the primary purpose of the Bible? Why is there so much confusion in the world today regarding God's revelation to man?

What was the nature of the covenant which was given through Moses?

What was the primary purpose of the first covenant?

How was the new covenant made known to the people?

What is essential to the understanding of each or both of the covenants?

The Sphere of Christ's High Priestly Ministry

What plan did the writer of Hebrews follow in the first few chapters of his epistle?

Why did he want to emphasize the greatness of Christ?

What did he mean by saying, "We have such a high priest"?

Why was a letter like Hebrews so necessary to the people to whom it was sent?

What was the attitude of many of the Jewish Christians toward the gospel of Christ?

Why did they manifest such an attitude and how was it eventually corrected?

What appears to be the primary purpose of the Book of Hebrews?

What is the sphere, according to the writ-

ter of Hebrews, in which Christ does his high priestly work?

What are the "sanctuary" and the "true tabernacle"?

Why is it essential that Christ perform his intercessory work in heaven?

What evidence do we have that the law of Moses has been abolished as an authoritative code?

What is implied, regarding the old law, by the high priesthood of Christ?

What warning did Moses receive as he was about to build the tabernacle and its significance?

A Confirmatory and Transitional Statement

Why is the ministry of Christ so much greater than that of the Levites?

What does a greater priesthood imply regarding the law which is based upon it and why?

Why was the law of Moses "faulty" and what does that imply?

How do we know that it did not contain any errors or mistakes, as those terms are generally understood?

Why couldn't the law of Moses make alive or produce righteousness?

What two demonstrations did God apparently permit the Jews and Gentiles to work out?

What definite results followed those two demonstrations?

The More Excellent Ministry of Christ Implies a Better Covenant

Who were the "them" with whom the Lord really found fault? Give reasons for your answer.

What was the history of the Jewish people regarding the old covenant and why?

Why did New Testament preachers quote so often from the Old Testament Scriptures?

What is the primary nature of the new covenant? Discuss at length.

Lesson VII—February 14, 1971

A MORE PERFECT TABERNACLE

Lesson Text

Lev. 8: 10-13; Heb. 9: 1-12

10 And Mo'-ses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them.

11 And he sprinkled thereof upon the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all its vessels, and the laver and its base, to sanctify them.

12 And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aar'-on's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him.

13 And Mo'-ses brought Aar'-on's sons, and clothed them with coats, and girded them with girdles, and bound head-tires upon them; as Je-ho'-vah commanded Mo'-ses.

1 Now even the first *covenant* had ordinances of divine service, and its sanctuary, a *sanctuary* of this world.

2 For there was a tabernacle prepared, the first, wherein *were* the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the Holy place.

3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of holies;

4 Having a golden altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein *was* a golden pot holding the man'-na, and Aar'-on's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

5 And above it cher'-u-bim of

glory overshadowing the mercy-seat; of which things we cannot now speak severally.

6 Now these things having been thus prepared, the priests go in continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services;

7 But into the second the high priest alone, once in the year, not without blood, which he offereth for himself, and for the errors of the people;

8 The Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holy place hath not yet been made manifest, while the first tabernacle is yet standing;

9 Which *is* a figure for the time present; according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect,

10 *Being* only (with meats and drinks and divers washings) carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation.

11 But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation,

12 Nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.*" (Heb. 8: 2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Heb. 9: 23-28.

Daily Bible Readings

February 8.	M.	Financing the Old Tabernacle (Ex. 35: 4-9)
February 9.	T.	Skilled Workers (Ex. 35: 30-35)
February 10.	W.	Work Finished (Ex. 39: 32-43)
February 11.	T.	Tabernacle Raised Up (Ex. 40: 1-16)
February 12.	F.	Furniture of Tabernacle (Ex. 40: 17-33)
February 13.	S.	Presence of Jehovah (Ex. 40: 34-38)
February 14.	S.	Now, a "More Perfect Tabernacle" (Heb. 9: 11-17)

TIME.—Leviticus, 1490 B.C.; Hebrews, A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACES.—Leviticus, in the wilderness before mount Sinai; Hebrews, Rome and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Moses, Aaron, and others; probably Paul and some Hebrew Christians.

Introduction

The writer of Hebrews, as has been noted in the three previous lessons, devoted most of chapter 7 to the high priesthood of Christ, and chapter 8 to the new and better covenant; and now he comes in chapter 9, to a discussion of the ministry of Christ, as high priest, under the terms of the new covenant. The aim of the writer is to make known the true significance of Christ and his work, and in so doing to remove from the mind of his readers the suspicion which had haunted their thinking, embarrassed their faith, lessened their religious enjoyment, and lowered their spiritual vitality.

The Jews who accepted Jesus as the Christ, and the Saviour of the world, had problems to solve and difficulties to overcome, concerning which the Gentile Christians knew nothing. Few men have ever been called upon to make a transition so great, and which involved so much obscurity. It is easy for those who can look back upon the change which the Jewish Christians and especially the Hebrews, made, as an accomplished fact, and note that there was no real breach of continuity between the old religion and the new; but that was not the way that the people who have lived all their days under the law of Moses felt

about the matter. It is probably safe to say that practically all of the days of their Christian experience had been marked by the turmoil and instability, which accompanied the abandonment of old forms, the acceptance of new ideas, and the building upon different foundations.

The ritualism of the Mosaic worship had been before the devout Hebrews for fifteen hundred years; and they had been taught that it had been both authorized and commanded by Jehovah. But it remained true that in their worship at the Levitical altar, and in the earthly tabernacle and temple, they had failed to see that what they were accustomed and devoted to, was only a type of something better. It was therefore a great blow to their faith to have the old order abandoned, and to accept something which, to all intents and purposes, as they viewed the matter, was an entirely new religion. It was indeed new, but it was the very thing which their typical religion had been pointing toward, during the years of its existence. This was what the writer of Hebrews, probably the apostle Paul himself, was endeavoring to get his brethren in and around Jerusalem to see.

The Golden Text

"A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man." No one can be absolutely certain that the apostle Paul wrote the epistle to the Hebrews, but there does appear to be sufficient evidence to lead conservative Bible students to think that he did compose the letter; and if that is the truth of the matter, then it is probably true that the actual writing was done soon after Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment, which was apparently A.D. 63 or 64. As the author neared the close of the epistle, he wrote, "But I exhort you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation: for I have written unto you in few words. Know ye that our brother Timothy hath been set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you." (Heb. 13: 22, 23.) These are not the words of a man who was

being held in prison by the Roman authorities, and whose release depended on the decision of the emperor.

If Paul was the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews, and the date of its composition was A.D. 63 or 64, then the temple in Jerusalem was still standing, and the old order of worship was still being engaged in by the Jewish people who had not accepted Christ. The law of Moses, as an authoritative code of human conduct, had indeed passed away, as was pointed out in previous lessons; but that truth had not gained acceptance on the part of many of the Jews, both in the church and out of it. In addition to the quotation which was made in last week's lesson, from Acts 21, Luke, in writing about the Jerusalem conference, says, "And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of

the church and the apostles and the elders, and they rehearsed all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses." (Acts 15: 4, 5.)

The dullness of the human mind, apparently, was a prominent factor in preventing some of the people from seeing that the old law had been removed, and was being replaced by the new under Christ. (Cf. 2 Cor. 3: 1-18; Heb. 5: 11-14.) And so, it appears that during the period of transition, the Lord, for wise and benevolent reasons, allowed those who failed to see the truth regarding this question, to continue the temple worship for a time, until they had had ample op-

portunity to be taught the difference between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. (Cf. Heb. 8: 4; 10: 11.) When the writer of Hebrews said, regarding the old covenant, "But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away" (Heb. 8: 13), he probably had reference to the complete destruction of the entire Jewish economy, when Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70 which, if the date suggested as the time of writing the epistle is correct, was only six or seven years away. The whole aim in writing the letter was to get the Jewish people who had accepted Christ, but who were in danger of reverting to Judaism, to see that Jesus Christ is a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.

The Text Explained

The Consecration of the Levitical Tabernacle and Priesthood

(Lev. 8: 10-13)

And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them. And he sprinkled thereof upon the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all its vessels, and the laver and its base, to sanctify them. And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him. And Moses brought Aaron's sons, and clothed them with coats, and girded them with girdles, and bound head-ties upon them; as Jehovah commanded Moses.

It is well to note that before anything can be used acceptably in God's service, it must first be sanctified; and this implies that one must understand the meaning of that term, if he is to grasp the significance of the process which leads to sanctification. If one is acquainted with the teaching of the Scriptures on this subject, he is aware of the fact that people, animals, and even inanimate objects, were sanctified in, and to, the service of the Lord. The term "sanctify" literally means to set-apart, or consecrate to the service or use of Jehovah. The process implies a separation from those people, animals, or other objects, which are not sanctified. In was in this sense that the person, animal, or

other object, became holy unto Jehovah.

Thus, before the tabernacle could be used in God's service, and the priests could function in their respective duties, they all had to be consecrated, or, be sanctified to God. And when once those things had been accomplished, both the tabernacle, and all that pertained to it, including the priests who served in and about it, were regarded as being holy in God's sight. The psalmist, as he proclaimed the majesty of Jehovah, closed his song with these words, "Holiness becometh thy house, O Jehovah, for evermore." (Psalm 93: 5.) No priest was allowed to enter upon the service which he was authorized to do, before being washed, properly clothed, and thereby sanctified to the Lord. (Read Exodus, chapters 28 and 29.)

Many of the ceremonial services of the old order had a typical import for the new; and if one is familiar with that which characterized the tabernacle and the priesthood of the Levitical order, he will find that it will be much easier for him to understand that which is said in the Book of Hebrews. (Heb. 10: 19-25.) In Hebrews 12: 14, the writer says, "Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord." The original word for "sanctification" (*hagiasmos*), as used in the New Testament, is used in a moral sense

for both the process, and the result, which must characterize those who are acceptable to God. (See Arndt-Gingrich, in *loco*.) The original word just referred to is found a number of times in the New Testament, in addition to Hebrews 12: 14. (See Rom 6: 19, 22; 1 Cor. 1: 30; 1 Thess. 4: 3, 4, 7; 2 Thess. 2: 13; 1 Tim. 2: 15; 1 Pet. 1: 2.) The verb form (*hagiazō*) occurs twenty-five times in the New Testament. The sanctification of Hebrews 12: 14 is what Westcott thinks may "be most simply described as the preparation for the presence of God." And Barclay notes that "the life of the Christian man is dominated and directed by the constant memory that its greatest aim is to enter into the presence of God." (Cf. Ex. 19: 22; Lev. 10: 1-3; Num. 20: 10-13.)

Harold Lindsell points out that there are two aspects to the biblical idea of sanctification. The first aspect is seen when the believer is converted to Christ, and is thereby set apart from the world, and from self-seeking (cf. Matt. 16: 24), unto God, as his sacred possession (see 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20). The Lord's people, in this sense, have already been perfectly sanctified in God's sight. (Cf. Heb. 10: 10; 1 Pet. 1: 18, 19; Rom. 6: 16-18; Eph. 1: 11-14; 1 Pet. 2: 9; Tit. 2: 14.) The second aspect of sanctification refers to that process of spiritual growth, by which the child of God dies more and more to self and to sin, and lives more and more to Christ and righteousness.

Regeneration and justification are "once for all acts, while sanctification, as it is being considered here, is progressive and continues to the end of one's conscious life. When God justified us, he did something *for* us; for that has to do with our standing before him. In sanctification, God does something *in* us; for that has to do with our conduct and character. The process of sanctification proceeds from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (Cf. 1 Thess. 5: 23; Heb. 2: 11; 13: 12; 1 Cor. 6: 11; Rom. 15: 16.) Negatively, the process implies the putting off of the old (Col. 3: 5-11); positively, it denotes the putting on of the new (Col. 3: 12-17; Eph. 4: 20-24). The ultimate goal of sanctification is to bring us into conformity to Christ, and his way of life (cf.

Rom. 8: 28-30; 1 Thess. 4: 3-7); and if we continue in faithfulness to him, we shall, either at death or at his second coming, be made perfect in holiness; for we shall see him even as he is. (1 John 3: 1-3; Matt. 5: 8; 2 Pet. 1: 4; 2 Cor. 3: 18.)

The Typical Sanctuary of Moses (Heb. 9: 1-10)

Now even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service, and its sanctuary, a sanctuary of this world. For there was a tabernacle prepared, the first, wherein were the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the Holy place. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of holies; having a golden altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was a golden pot holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and above it cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat; of which things we cannot now speak severally. Now these things having been thus prepared, the priests go in continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services; but into the second the high priest alone, once in the year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holy place hath not yet been made manifest, while the first tabernacle is yet standing; which is a figure for the time present; according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect, being only (with meats and drinks and divers washings) carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation.

The writer of the Hebrew letter, as we have already seen, devoted much of chapter 7 to a discussion of the superior priesthood of Christ; and it was in that chapter that we read this statement: "Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the law), what further need was there that another Priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is

made of necessity a change also of the law." (Heb. 7: 11, 12.) The writer left no doubt about the new priesthood of Christ, and he, accordingly, devoted the major part of chapter 8 to the divine proof of the new covenant, or law, which was essential to the new priesthood.

And so, when the writer came to record that which is contained in chapter 9, his aim was to show that that which pertains to the ministry of Christ, under the new order, is superior, in every way to the ministry of the Levitical priesthood, under the old order. A sanctuary, with a holy place and a most holy place, were and are common to both; but, as the writer points out, it is the efficacy of the sacrifices which were offered that makes the difference. The contrast between the new and the old is seen throughout the entire discussion, and now we are to see the service of the earthly tabernacle placed in contrast with that of the new order. The essential point which we shall be able to see, is that which pertained to the old tabernacle was but a mere shadow, type, or figure, of that which characterizes the priesthood of Christ.

The idea just expressed is illustrated, by the writer of Hebrews, in the following manner: (1) A brief description of the Jewish tabernacle, and the furnishings which it contained; (2) a description of the services which were ordained for the tabernacle of the old order, and especially that of the high priest on the day of atonement; (3) an affirmation regarding the typical import of the first tabernacle, thereby demonstrating that the way into the true sanctuary was not revealed, while the first tabernacle was still in use; and (4) the fact that Christ, having become the high priest, according to the messianic predictions of the prophets, must now replace the old priesthood, and thereby make certain that the spiritual blessings which are needed by sinful humanity are available to all who will accept them.

If one will read the instructions which the Lord gave for the building of the ancient tabernacle, and its furniture, along with the services which were authorized in connection with it (see Exodus, chapters

25-40), he will get some idea of the typical import which was intended. Broadly speaking, it is generally understood that the court, the holy place, and the most holy place, have some valuable lessons to suggest. If the holy place is typical of the church, then one would naturally conclude that the court would stand for the world. The most holy place, of course, is typical of heaven itself. While it is never wise nor proper to press figures too far, one can easily see some issues which suggest some important lessons.

One important issue which should never be overlooked, when one comes to study the Jewish and the Christian dispensations is this, the difference between commandments and regulations, and principles. A principle is that which inheres in anything, and determines its nature. The principle of life, for example, which inheres in a grain of corn, determines that which the grain of corn will produce, namely, corn, and corn only; it can never produce a stalk of wheat. Principles are eternal, and cannot therefore be changed; and they are applied to the affairs of men, by means of commandments and other regulations. This is to say that underneath every prominent commandment or ordinance of the Mosaic system, is a principle. Commandments and ordinances are enacted by constituted authority; and they can be repealed by the same authority. But the principles which underlie the commandments and ordinances are not affected. Thus, when Jehovah removed the laws and ordinances of the old covenant, the principles remained; and when the commandments and ordinances of the new order were enacted, they were based on many of the same principles which gave meaning and force to those of the Mosaic order. It was in this way that many of the types and figures of the old have such a vital significance in the new covenant.

Since the Bible specifically says that the candlestick, the table of showbread, and the golden altar of incense, were in the holy place (cf. Ex. 40: 1-8), the statement in Hebrews 9: 3-5, has caused many commentators much trouble in trying to reconcile the apparent discrepancy. The statement referred to reads as

follows: "And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of holies; having a golden altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was a golden pot holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and above it cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat; of which things we cannot now speak severally." The marginal reading for "altar of incense," is *censer*, which some Bible students understand to mean the censer which was used to take the incense into the most holy place, when the high priest entered that part of the tabernacle on the day of atonement. If that is true, then the writer of Hebrews does not mention the altar of incense itself, but only the censer, which may have been kept within the veil of the most holy place, while not in use.

When one takes into consideration the fact that the Mosaic tabernacle was typical in its nature, then it will not be difficult for him to see why the way into the holy place was not made manifest, while the tabernacle was still in service. The "holy place" in verse 8 obviously refers to the most holy place, which was a type of heaven. If one will take a rubber type, in the form of a stamp, press it upon an ink-pad, and then place it upon a sheet of white paper and press downward, he will have a likeness of the type when he lifts the stamp from the paper. But the likeness cannot be seen, so long as the stamp is held in place upon the paper. This is another way of saying that the antitype is not in evidence, as long as the type continues in service.

The Better Tabernacle of Christ

(Heb. 9: 11, 12)

But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.

This section of the lesson text may be summed up in this way: *The difference which Christ has*

made. We saw in the previous section of the lesson text, that the service and offerings of the old covenant could not make the worshipper perfect, that is, could not make him conscious of the fact that the guilt of his sins had been removed. And since that was true (cf. Heb. 10: 1-4), there was only one conclusion to reach, namely, that the tabernacle service of the Mosaic age, was typical in its nature, and pointed to something better in the future. Those Old Testament sacrifices were ordained of God, and they had to be engaged in during the period in question; but they could not touch the inner man, which was defiled by sin. The cleansing of the heart from sin required a living, holy, and spiritual sacrifice; and herein lies the force of the writer's argument in the section of the lesson text now under consideration.

It has already been pointed out that the "more perfect tabernacle" is the church; for it is in and through that sphere of the Lord's ministry, that the spiritual blessings which we need come to us. (Cf. Eph. 1: 3.) Bible students, generally speaking, have had difficulty with the passage we are now considering; because they have tried to make it fit into the imagery of the old tabernacle, that is, they have tried to make it appear that Christ passed through the church, on his way to heaven. But, as Vincent points out, there is no foundation in fact for such an idea. His words are: "It is to be said that this local sense of *dia* [through] emphasizes a subordinate point, of which nothing is made in the epistle; which is not even stated. In other words, nothing in the epistle is made to turn on the fact of the high priest's passing through one place in order to reach another. The emphatic point is Christ's entering the heavenly sanctuary. His passing through the heavens (4: 14) or through anything else, is a mere incident having no typical significance." The church was not established at this time; and it was not possible therefore for Christ to pass through it.

The reference in verse 12 is to that which took place on the day of atonement. (See Lev. 16: 1-34; Num. 29: 7-11.) This was an annual service; but in the case of

Christ, his sacrifice of himself, once for all, obtained eternal redemption for his people, that is, the sins of his people, once forgiven, would never

be brought to remembrance again. And this, as we have seen repeatedly, is in sharp contrast with the provisions of the old covenant.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Give a brief analysis of Hebrews, chapters 7-9.
Why were so many of the early Jewish Christians confused regarding the law of Moses?
Why were they so reluctant to give up the provisions of the old covenant and temple worship?
What was the principal point which the writer of Hebrews was trying to make?

The Golden Text

What evidence do we have regarding the possible author of the Book of Hebrews?
At what time, and apparently under what circumstances, was the epistle written?
Why are so many people so hesitant about accepting truth which they have not seen before?

The Consecration of the Levitical Tabernacle and Priesthood

What was and is always necessary before anything or anybody can be acceptable in God's service?
What is the meaning of sanctification and how was it accomplished in this lesson?
How will an understanding of this truth help one to grasp New Testament teaching?
How important is "sanctification" in God's sight today?
Give a summary of the New Testament teaching on this subject.

The Typical Sanctuary of Moses

What was the next thing that Paul did,

after showing the reality of Christ's priesthood?
Why does the law have to be changed with a new priesthood?
What is the writer's chief aim in this section of the lesson text?
What must we understand about the old, if we are to grasp the meaning of the new?
In what way did the writer seek to make clear his teaching regarding this matter?
Discuss the typical import of the old Jewish tabernacle.
What important truth must we keep in mind in studying the Jewish and Christian ages?
What is a "principle" and what is the difference between a principle and a commandment?
In what way are principles and commandments related in the Bible?
What problem have commentators met with in verses 3-5?
What, apparently, is the proper solution to it?
Why was not the way into heaven made manifest while the first tabernacle was standing?
What important lesson is there in this for us in our study of types and antitypes?

The Better Tabernacle of Christ

How may one summarize this section of the lesson text and why is that true?
What is meant by saying that the gifts and sacrifices of the old covenant could not make the worshipper perfect?
Why was that true?
If the ordinances of the old order could not make perfect, what was their purpose?
Discuss the sacrifice of our high priest in the light of the day of atonement of the old order.

Lesson VIII—February 21, 1971

SORER PUNISHMENT

Lesson Text

Lev. 10: 1, 2; Heb. 2: 1-4; 10: 26-31

1 And Na'-dab and A-bi'-hu, the sons of Aar'-on, took each of them his censer, and put fire therein, and laid incense thereon, and offered strange fire before Je-ho'-vah, which he had not commanded them.

2 And there came forth fire from before Je-ho'-vah, and devoured them, and they died before Je-ho'-vah.

1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that

were heard, lest haply we drift away from them.

2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;

3 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;

4 God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders,

and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will.

26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins,

27 But a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries.

28 A man that hath set at nought Mo'-ses' law dieth without compas-

sion on *the word of* two or three witnesses:

29 Of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

30 For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*" (Heb. 10: 31.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 12: 31, 32.

Daily Bible Readings

February 15.	M.	.....	Possibility of Apostasy (1 Chron. 28: 1-9)
February 16.	T.	.....	Evil Heart of Unbelief (Heb. 3: 1-12)
February 17.	W.	.....	God's Goodness and Severity (Rom. 11: 11-24)
February 18.	T.	.....	Going on to Perfection (Heb. 6: 1-3)
February 19.	F.	.....	Destiny of Wicked (Matt. 25: 31-46)
February 20.	S.	.....	Reject Works of Darkness (Rom. 13: 8-14)
February 21.	S.	.....	End to be Burned (Heb. 6: 4-10)

TIME.—Leviticus, 1490 B.C.; Hebrews, A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACES.—Leviticus, in the wilderness before mount Sinai; Hebrews, Rome and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Nadab and Abihu; probably Paul and some Hebrew Christians.

Introduction

The term "punishment," as used in this lesson, carries with it the idea of inflicting retribution upon those who die in their sins. Paul says, "If so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might." (2 Thess. 1: 6-9.) Jesus himself, as he portrays a scene of the final judgment, says, "And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life." (Matt. 25: 46.) And then the writer of Hebrews, in the third section of the lesson text for today, asks, after stating the destiny of those who rejected Moses' law, "Of how much sorer punishment,

think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10: 28, 29.)

It is interesting to note that a different Greek word for "punishment" is used in each of the three quotations, listed in the previous paragraph, namely, (1) 2 Thessalonians 1: 9—*dikē*, found in the New Testament only here, and in Acts 28: 4 (*Justice*) and Jude 7; (2) Matthew 25: 46—*kolasis*, only here, and in 1 John 4: 18; (3) Hebrews 10: 29—*timoria*, only here in the New Testament. There are also other original words in the New Testament for "punishment," but the ones listed here will give some idea of the variety of terms, which are used in the Greek New Testament to express the idea of the punishment of the wicked. This is a terrible, or, an awe-inspiring subject; and as we enter into a consideration of it, we

should do so with fear and trembling. There is absolutely nothing which can compensate for the loss of the soul. "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.)

Sin is the greatest blight which has ever struck the human race; and it is, of course, the result of the influence of Satan who, so far as is known, was the first to sin against Jehovah. We have no way of knowing when the first violation of God's will took place; but we do have a record of the first time the devil induced mankind to act contrary to that which God ordained. (Gen. 3: 1-8.) The entire history of the Bible, from that day until its close, is a record of the struggle between righteousness, on the one

hand, and wickedness, on the other; and the Book of Revelation, in projecting the future, enables Bible students to have some idea of the continual struggle between the good and the evil, until time shall be no more. If people would only try to see something of the exceeding sinfulness of sin (Rom. 7: 13), they would not only try to avoid it themselves; but would also make every effort they could to keep it out of the lives of others. But regardless of what people think about sin, those guilty of it are going to be punished, if they do not seek the Lord's forgiveness, before they reach the end of their lives; and too, the greater their opportunity to know the will of the Lord, the greater will be their punishment. (Read Luke 12: 47, 48: cf. Lev. 5: 17; Rom. 2: 12-16.)

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

An Old Testament Example

(Lev. 10: 1, 2)

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took each of them his censer, and put fire therein, and laid incense thereon, and offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them. And there came forth fire from before Jehovah, and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah.

It appears, so far as the record is concerned, that the sin of Nadab and Abihu was the first which was committed in connection with the Levitical tabernacle service. It seems fair to assume that specific instructions had been given to these priests with reference to the burning of the incense; and that they therefore knew that which God expected of them, that is, they had been properly taught about that service. If Leviticus 9: 24 and 16: 11-14 are read together, it will be natural for one to get the idea that the priests should have obtained the fire, which they used on the occasion now before us, from the altar which was in the outer court, known as the brazen altar. That fire apparently was kindled by Jehovah, and it would not therefore be regarded as

"strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them." (Cf. Lev. 6: 8-13.)

The presumptuous and flagrant violation of Jehovah's law, on the part of Nadab and Abihu, resulted in their immediate and dramatic death; and the incident should serve to impress upon our minds one of the most important lessons, which the Bible teaches. They simply presumed to do something, about which Jehovah had not commanded them; and the result was sin unto death. (Cf. 1 John 5: 16.) There are multitudes of people today who do not hesitate to inject into the service which they think they are offering to God, those things which he has not ordained; and they appear to be perfectly satisfied to go on with their unauthorized practices, on the theory that the Lord did not say "not to do it." The term "iniquity" in Matthew 7: 21-23 means to do something in professed service to God, which he did not authorize. (Cf. 1 John 3: 4, where the same original word—*lawlessness*—is found.) People who hope to please God must learn to respect his silence, when he reveals his will to us. No one misunderstands that which God com-

mands; but it sometimes happens that the one commanded wants to do it his way. (Cf. 1 Cor. 4: 6; 2 John 9.)

Adam Clarke, in commenting on the expression "which he had not commanded them," offers these judicious remarks: "Every part of the religion of God is Divine. He alone knew what he designed by its rites and ceremonies, for that which they prefigured—the whole economy of redemption by Christ—was conceived in his own mind, and was out of the reach of human wisdom and conjecture. He therefore who *altered* any part of this representative system, who *omitted* or *added* anything, assumed a prerogative which belonged to God alone, and was certainly guilty of a very high offence against the wisdom, justice, and righteousness of his Maker. This appears to have been the sin of Nadab and Abihu, and this at once shows the reason why they were so severely punished. The most awful judgments are threatened against those who either add to, or take away from, the declarations of God." (See Deut. 4: 2; Prov. 30: 5, 6; Gal. 1: 6-9; Rev. 22: 18, 19; cf. Deut. 29: 29.)

Neglect of the Lord's Word Can Also Be Fatal

(Heb. 2: 1-4)

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 words 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; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will.

It is well to keep in mind that the Book of Hebrews was written, in order to convince people of the place which Jesus now occupies in the plans and purposes of God, and to try to persuade them to accept him as their Lord and Saviour. The writer begins the epistle by showing that God now speaks to his people

through his Son, and most of the remainder of chapter 1 is devoted to showing that Christ is greater than the angels, whom God so often used in dealing with the human race. The pious Jews understood that the angels stand in the very presence of God; and if it could be made plain to those people that Jesus is greater than the angels, then they would have adequate reasons for listening to that which he says; and that is the force of the "therefore" with which chapter 2 begins.

The idea of "drifting" is in sharp contrast with the giving of *earnest heed*. A lapse in Christianity is more often the result of inattention, than of design. There are relatively few people who make a deliberate break with the Lord and his cause into which they have entered; instead, those who fall away do so gradually, and with little thought of the consequences, when their downward process begins. The figure which the writer uses, in the passage now before us, is that of people in a boat on a stream of water. It is natural for the boat to drift with the current, and on to destruction, if there is danger in the way. (Cp. a rowboat on Niagara river, drifting toward the falls.) It does not require any effort for one to be lost. A simple neglect of the essential measures which are necessary to his safety, is all that is needed. If one folds his arms, and allows his boat to drift aimlessly down the river, it will not be long before he is beyond the hope of redemption. If, however, one wants to be saved, he must make diligent use of the means which have been provided by the Lord for that purpose, that is, the means which are contained in "the things that were heard."

The "word spoken through angels" was the law of Moses. (Cf. Deut. 33: 2; Acts 7: 53; Gal. 3: 19.) Moses was the mediator between God and the children of Israel, at the time the law was given, but angels were employed in giving the law to him. And the argument which the writer of Hebrews was making, was something like this: If the law which was given through the agency of angels proved steadfast in every respect, what must be expected of the superior law, which was spoken through God's Son?

The word "stedfast" means to be unwavering or unswerving in the design for which it was given; and when applied to the law of Moses, the idea is that it was securely founded in divine holiness, and unchangeable in its principles and obligations. This is to say that not a single departure from the law, on the part of a single individual, was passed by unnoticed. Penalties were visited upon all who in any way violated it, and remained in their rebellion against the Lord. "Transgression" was literally a stepping over, that is, a *positive* violation of the divine law; while "disobedience" was a refusal to hear, and an unwillingness to obey; or, to state the same thing in another way, "dis"-obedience is a *negative* violation of the law. Thus, in the two words, transgression and disobedience, we have the idea of sins of commission, and sins of omission; or, which is the same thing, the two categories into which all sins fall. Every sin against the law of Moses received its just recompense of reward.

The pronoun "we" in verse 3 is emphatic. If those who in any way violated the law which was spoken through angels, were appropriately punished, how shall we, who have the words of the Son of God himself escape, if we disregard them? The idea contained in the term "neglect," is forcefully illustrated in Matthew 22: 5, where the same original word is rendered "made light of it," that is, they paid no attention to it. (Read Matt. 22: 1-6.) The salvation about which the writer is speaking is great, because it is the salvation which is offered through Christ. Verses 3 and 4, in the passage we are now considering, make it possible for us to identify the salvation in question. (1) It was first spoken through the Lord; (2) it was confirmed by them who heard him speak; and (3) it was attested by God through miraculous gifts. No one can be sure that he knows what this salvation is, until he finds all three of these identification marks; but if he will read Mark 16: 14-20, he will soon see that they are all found in that passage.

The original preachers of the word of salvation which Jesus made possible, were not left to their un-

aided memories, knowledge, and abilities, in making known the will of God. The Holy Spirit was sent to direct and guide them; and to enable them to make known the terms of that salvation with infallible certainty. God himself bore witness to their preaching, by miraculous powers. "Signs" were miracles or other facts, which proved their divine mission; "wonders" were miracles which were calculated to arrest attention; manifold, that is, various or many kinds of powers, were miracles which demonstrated the presence of superhuman power; while gifts of the Holy Spirit, were the miraculous powers which were distributed (see marginal reading) to various ones, for the purpose of confirming the word. The same general idea is expressed in 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11. All of this was essential to the progress of truth, during the age of miracles. (Cf. Eph. 4: 8-16.)

The Awful Guilt of Deliberate Apostasy
(Heb. 10: 26-31)

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

This section of the lesson text is a part of the inspired exhortation to stedfastness, which begins with verse 19, and continues through the remainder of the chapter. After approaching the subject from the positive point of view (verses 19-25), the writer skillfully turns to the negative aspect of his plea for constancy (verses 26-31). He links the two paragraphs with the conjunc-

tion "for," which introduces an additional reason for the exhortation contained in verse 25. The writer's purpose in the passage now before us, is to show something of the nature and terrible consequences of the sin of apostasy; and in so doing, he gives another example of the sin for which there is no forgiveness. (Cf. Mark 3: 28-30.) William Barclay notes that "every now and then the writer to the Hebrews speaks with a sternness that is almost without parallel in the New Testament. There are few writers who have such a sense of the sheer horror and terror of sin."

The writer to the Hebrews, in exhorting the Jewish Christians not to forsake their own assembling together, was evidently using the term "forsake" in the sense of *abandon*. Jesus had previously warned of the trying days ahead, when Jerusalem would be destroyed (Matt. 24: 1-28); and the "day" which the Hebrew brethren could see approaching, was apparently the day of the city's destruction. The epistle to the Hebrews was written only a short time before the Roman army, led by Titus, laid siege to the Jewish capital; and the signs of the coming day of terror were clearly visible to the Lord's people. Persecution of faithful Christians had long been the order of the day (cf. Heb. 10: 32-34); and now with fresh "forebodings of the coming disaster, and initial collisions with the Romans which heralded the great war," the temptations to abandon the Christian assemblies doubtless became very great.

The exhortation to steadfastness, which we are now considering was manifestly intended for fully informed Christians; otherwise it would be difficult for us to understand how we can "sin wilfully after that we have received the *knowledge* of the truth." Bengel points out the fact that "after the truth has been *acknowledged*, there is no excuse for ignorance." A *wilful sin* is one which is committed voluntarily, willingly, of one's own accord. Such sins are tacitly opposed to those which are committed inconsiderately, under momentary excitement, or from ignorance and weakness. The present active participle *hamarantonōn* (sin) indicates that the sin

in question is one of habit, deliberately and wilfully persisted in, by people who are in full possession of experimental knowledge; such as is gained by the active application of one's mind to the study of the truth. (See Heb. 6: 4-6; cf. 5: 11-14; 2 Pet. 3: 15-18.) It has already been implied that those to whom the exhortation to steadfastness was addressed, were probably tempted to abandon the assembly of the saints because of fear; and if this is true, the following statement should throw some light on the fate of those who yielded to the temptation:

"But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." (Rev. 21: 8; cf. 20: 11-15.) The Greek word for "fearful" is *deilos*, and, according to Thayer, it is used in the passage just quoted "of Christians who through cowardice give way under persecutions and apostatize." The attitude of the "fearful," in the passage just cited, is in marked contrast with that of "patience" (steadfastness, margin) in 2 Peter 1: 6 which, according to Thayer, is employed in the New Testament to attest "the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest of trials and sufferings." If the Lord will not excuse those who forsake the assembling of his people together, because of *persecution*, then what is his attitude toward those who deliberately miss such assemblies, whenever it suits their convenience? (Cf. James 4: 17; Luke 12: 47, 48.)

The writer of Hebrews enables us to see something of the nature of the wilful sin, along with the manner in which it is committed, when he compares it with the man who "set at naught" the law of Moses, that is, the man who refused to recognize and accept the law of Moses. Any one who manifested this kind of an attitude toward that which was commanded through Moses, died without compassion, if as many as two or three witnesses confirmed the accusation which was made against him. (Cf. Num. 15: 32-36.) But

the sin against the law of Christ is infinitely worse, and will receive a greater punishment. The sin in question involves the very Persons of the Trinity, who were sent to bring salvation to the lost and ruined world. Three distinctive marks of the wilful sin are given in the text now before us, namely, (1) To tread under foot the Son of God, that is, to spurn or treat with insulting neglect (Thayer); to treat with disdain (Arndt-Gingrich). (2) To regard or consider the blood which Jesus shed, and by which the person in question was saved, as being common or ordinary, as distinguished from that which is holy. (Cf. Rev. 21: 27, where the same original word—*unclean*—is found.) (3) To do despite unto the Holy

Spirit, that is, treat with insulting rudeness.

The two quotations from Deuteronomy in verse 30, show that God applies the same principle now, in dealing with his people, that was employed during the age of Moses. Albert Barnes, in pointing out why it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for the purpose of being punished, which is the idea here, says, (1) because he has all power, and can inflict the punishment which pleases him; (2) because he is strictly righteous, and will inflict the punishment which ought to be inflicted; (3) because he lives for ever, and can carry out his purpose in punishment through eternity; and (4) because the actual inflictions of punishment, in ages past, show what is to be dreaded.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

In what sense is "punishment" used in this lesson?
In what way does the New Testament emphasize the question now before us?
Why should much study be given to the subject of sin and its punishment?

An Old Testament Example

When and under what circumstances was the sin of Nadab and Abihu committed?
What was the nature of their sin, or what particular wrong did they commit?
Give reasons for your answer.
How can people today become guilty, in principle, of the same kind of sin?
What impression did their punishment likely make on those who knew of it?
Why is a lesson like this so important for our time?
Why does God refuse to recognize any changes in his will for mankind?

Neglect for the Lord's Word Can Also be Fatal

What was one of the principal reasons the writer had for penning the Book of Hebrews?
What is the principal idea involved in "drifting"?

Discuss the manner in which many people drift away from the Lord and his way of life.

What was the word spoken through angels? Give reasons for your answer.

In what sense did the law spoken through angels prove steadfast?

What ideas are involved in the terms "transgression" and "disobedience"?

What lesson in all of this does the writer bring home to "us"?

In what way does he identify the salvation which people can neglect?

How do we know for certain that we can recognize this salvation?

How was this salvation made known and confirmed for all time to come?

The Awful Guilt of Deliberate Apostasy

What was the purpose of this section of the lesson text in relation to the writer's argument?

What unusual sense of sin did he manifest?

In what sense are Christians not to forsake the assembly of the saints?

What reason did the writer assign for this?

What did he mean by "wilful sin" and how can one be guilty of such a deed?

What is the nature of this sin and against whom is it committed?

Why is it such a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?

Lesson IX—February 28, 1971

REWARD OF FAITHFULNESS

Lesson Text

Lev. 26: 3-13

3 If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;

4 Then I will give your rains in

their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.

5 And your threshing shall reach

unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time; and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.

6 And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid; and I will cause evil beasts to cease out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land.

7 And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword.

8 And five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand; and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.

9 And I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and will establish my covenant with you.

10 And ye shall eat old store long kept, and ye shall bring forth the old because of the new.

11 And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you.

12 And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.

13 I am Je-ho'-vah your God, who brought you forth out of the land of E'-gypt, that ye should not be their bondmen; and I have broken the bars of your yoke, and made you go up-right.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen."* (Heb. 11: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Heb. 11: 13-16.

Daily Bible Readings

February 22.	M.	Endurance Required (Luke 9: 57-62)
February 23.	T.	Suffering to be Expected (John 15: 13-23)
February 24.	W.	A Living Sacrifice (Rom. 12: 1-13)
February 25.	T.	Reward Awaits (2 Tim. 4: 1-18)
February 26.	F.	Blessings of Faithfulness (Rev. 22: 6-14)
February 27.	S.	Patient Waiting Rewarded (Phil. 3: 17-21)
February 28.	S.	A Better Resurrection (Heb. 11: 32-40)

TIME.—1490 B.C.

PLACE.—In the wilderness before mount Sinai.

PERSONS.—Jehovah and the people of Israel.

Introduction

As people continue their journey toward the end of the way, and especially those who are thoughtful, they will be concerned with the truth that they are going to come face to face with the Lord. Most people who are religiously inclined feel that they are making an effort to meet the Judge of all the earth in peace; but unless they are more devoted to the cause of Christ, than the average person appears to be, they will naturally wonder if they are what they can and should be. One of the greatest questions which should confront people, as they move on through life, is that of faithfulness; for faithfulness is much more significant than accomplishment. The idea just suggested is the obvious lesson of the Lord's parable of the talents. The Lord's apparent reason for speaking the parable, was to teach people the need for fidelity with reference to

all their responsibilities; or which is the same thing, to all the obligations which the Lord has placed upon them. The idea on which the parable is based, is that man is a depository of a great trust; and that it is only by faithfulness to that trust, can he be pleasing to his Maker and Saviour.

There is in every normal and responsible person a divine capacity for truth, duty, and righteousness; and in order to guide and strengthen that capacity, as it is developed toward its ultimate potential, God had given his people a code of instruction, which is found in the New Testament. It is by obeying that code, by using the talents which each one has been given, that one can be counted faithful to the Lord. Every man has been given the ability to administer his trust; and when he does his best, he can know that he is pleasing to his Master. The man

with two talents did not possess half as much ability, that the five-talent man had; but it is a noticeable fact that each man received identical words of commendation from his lord, namely, "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (Matt. 25: 21, 23.)

Every form of human gift and opportunity, is a part of the wealth which God has invested in man; and his sole business in this life is to be a faithful steward of the trust which has been reposed in him. If there is any one thing taught in the Bible, it is that God will have a final reckoning with his people. "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.) If one will read the context in which the words just quoted are found, it will be easy for him to see why the apostle Paul, in the preceding verse, said, "Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent [that is, whether alive in our fleshly bodies, or absent from them], to be well pleasing unto him." (See 2 Cor. 5: 1-10.) But the principal thing which will count, when the Lord's reckoning is made, is our faithfulness. We are not merely told to perform certain deeds, or to give certain amounts, but rather to do our best. Thus, let it be repeated, it will be our faithfulness, rather than our accomplishments, which will count in the last great day; or, to say the same thing in another way, our accomplishments in the Lord's service will depend upon our faithfulness. (Read Luke 16: 1-13.)

The Golden Text

"Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen." The term "faithful," when applied to a person in God's service, implies that he is full of faith; and when one reads such passages as Hebrews 11: 6, he naturally wants to know what faith is. The passage reads as follows: "And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." Edward Robinson renders the passage which serves as the golden text in these words: "Faith is confidence as to things hoped for, conviction as to things not seen." Faith may be compared to a substance, which is composed of two elements, namely, confidence and conviction; and they both must be present, in order for faith to exist. Water, for example, is composed of hydrogen and oxygen, in their proper proportions; but if either element is absent, there would be no water. One has conviction, when he is convinced regarding the reality of things not seen; and he has confidence, when he looks forward to receiving the things for which he hopes, the blessings which have been promised to him.

Any one who walks by faith must of necessity be guided by another.

This implies that he has not travelled that road before, and therefore does not know the way. The person who walks by faith, does not walk by sight; but, having absolute confidence in the one who is directing him, he has no doubt regarding the outcome of the journey. Genuine faith makes real that which is not apprehended by the physical senses. Such faith relies upon truth, acts upon it, and is upheld by it in the face of all that seems to contradict it. Faith is the assent to truth, which is made credible by the testimony of God's word; and it is convinced regarding the reality of, and trusts in, that which it does not see, when God speaks.

The entire chapter from which the words of the golden text are taken, contains some of the basic teaching of the New Testament on the subject of faith, both with reference to its definition and application. The kind of faith which pleases God, is more than mere intellectual assent; it is trust in God, which leads to unquestioned obedience to his will, whatever that will may include. The faith which pleases God, is belief which has been reduced to a way of life. The truth of Christianity has long been established, and no power will ever be able to over-

throw it (cf. Dan. 2: 44; Matt. 16: 18; Heb. 12: 28); but if Christianity is to benefit humanity, it must have a practical application in the lives of those who embrace it. This is to say that if Christianity is to be a force in the world, instead of simply

a form, it must not only impart truth and engender faith; it must also motivate to action. The vital question is not, Is our faith tenable? but rather, Does it lead us to action, the kind of action which will please God?

The Text Explained

The Promise of Plenty

(Lev. 26: 3-5)

If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give you rains in their seasons, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the solving time; and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.

There has never been an age in the world's history, when God was unwilling to see to it that his people had that which was essential to their physical welfare; but he has frequently, throughout the history of his dealing with them, when he has stopped, as it were, to teach his people the need for putting their trust in them. There is no greater example of this last named effort, than that which is contained in the Lord's sermon, which we know as the Sermon on the Mount, and especially in the closing part of Matthew 6. Our Lord makes it clear that God knows the physical needs of his people, and he has both the power and the goodness to see that those needs are supplied. There is no better commentary on this phase of our lesson for today, than the words of Christ in Matthew 6: 24-34.

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you. Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being

anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

The first words of the section of the lesson text, which we are now considering, are: "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give" you the blessings which you need. This is substantially that which Jesus says, in the passage just quoted: "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things [food, drink, and clothing] shall be added unto you." This is another way of saying that God's blessings in the realm of our physical needs are conditional. It is true that Jehovah promised, after the flood, that "while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8: 22); but that does not say that there will not be times when, because of sin and disobedience, God will not seek to make men realize that their very existence depends upon him.

Jehovah rules in the natural world, which is the habitation of the

physical man; and if one is willing to consider the facts in the case, it will not take him long to see that one of God's purposes is to make the human race realize something of his greatness, or, which is the same thing, why man should put his trust in God; and why he cannot afford not to do that very thing. (Read Nah. 1: 2-8; cf. 2 Pet. 3: 10-12.) Even the strongest of men know how helpless they are in the path of a hurricane, a tornado, a paralyzing snowstorm, the onrushing waters of a mighty river at flood-stage, a prolonged drought, and many other conditions which nature often imposes upon the human race; and if people who suffer these great calamities will only stop and think, they can easily see the greatness of him who makes such natural demonstrations of power possible.

While it is unquestionably true that God employs the threat of punishment, or its actual visitation, as a means of bringing men to repentance; it is also true that that is not the only method he uses for that purpose. The apostle Paul asks, "Or despisest the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom. 2: 4.) We saw in the preceding paragraph that many of the natural phenomena are calculated to bring men to a recognition of the greatness of Jehovah's power and majesty; but there is another side of the picture.

Who but God could make possible the glories of a sunrise and a sunset, or mix the colors of the rainbow? Who but God could give us the four seasons of the year, and make the earth the delightful habitation of man, that it is? Who but God could stretch the north over empty space, and hang the earth upon nothing? (See Job 26: 7.) It was Jehovah who asked Job if he had entered into the treasuries of the snow, or had seen the treasuries of the hail. (Job 38: 22.) Who but God could color the forests with "yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red," and fill them with birds of every hue? So far as is known, no one has ever seen two snowflakes, two leaves from the trees, or two fingerprints of people, which were identical in shape; and it is certain that only

God could create so many beautiful designs. And last, but not least, he continues to keep the earth beautiful. And so, in the words of the psalmist,

Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised:

He also is to be feared above all gods. (1 Chron. 16: 25.)

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

The Promise of Security

(Lev. 26: 6-9)

And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will cause evil beasts to cease out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand; and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. And I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and will establish my covenant with you.

Freedom from the fear of hostile people, and ferocious beasts, is essential to the peace and happiness of people, in any age of the world. Jehovah, of course, knows this; and

it was for this reason that he made his gracious promise, involving this freedom, to his people who would remain faithful to him. When the children of Israel were crossing the wilderness, on their way to the land of Canaan, Jehovah frequently spoke to them regarding this matter. While still in the wilderness before Sinai, he said this:

"I will send my terror before thee, and will discomfit all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. And I will send the hornet before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee. I will not drive them out from before thee in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land. And I will set thy border from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness unto the River; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me; for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee." (Ex. 23: 27-33.)

The promise made in this section of the lesson text, was a repetition of the one which had been made to them earlier, and it was repeated afterwards (cf. Deut. 7: 20-24); but the sad fact remains that the people of Israel not only did not do their part to drive out the heathen people from before them, but actually joined themselves unto them, in their idolatrous worship. (Cf. Judges 2: 1-3; cf. Josh. 23: 11-13.) One has only to read the history of the people, especially during the period of the judges, in order to see the suffering and humiliation which they had to endure, all because they were not faithful in following the instruction which Jehovah had given to them, and in not claiming the promises which he made unto them. Although the term "providence" does not occur anywhere in the Scriptures, with reference to God (cf. Acts 24: 2), the word neverthe-

less does point to a truly biblical doctrine. Providence has been defined as that foresight and arrangement, in advance of actual happenings, by which God accomplishes the ends which he purposed beforehand. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28.) This, of course, does not rule out human responsibility and action; but when the Lord's people are truly faithful to him, they can rely upon him to oversee their lives, and overrule all things for their ultimate good. A forceful example of this is found in Exodus 34: 23, 24: "Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before the Lord Jehovah, the God of Israel. For I will cast out nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou goest up to appear before Jehovah thy God three times in the year." Adam Clarke, in commenting on the fact that no man would desire their land, says: "What a manifest proof was this of the power and particular providence of God! How easy it would have been for the surrounding nations to have taken possession of the whole Israelitish land, with all their fenced cities, when there was none left to protect them but women and children! Was not this a standing proof of the Divine origin of their religion, and a *barrier* which no deistical mind could possibly surmount! Thrice every year did God work a special miracle for the protection of his people; controlling even the very *desires* of their enemies, that they might not so much as meditate evil against them. They who have God for their protector have a sure refuge; and how true is the proverb, '*The path of duty is the way of safety!*' While these people went up to Jerusalem to keep the Lord's ordinances, he kept their families in peace, and their land in safety."

The Promise of the Divine Presence (Lev. 26: 10-13)

And ye shall eat old store long kept, and ye shall bring forth the old because of the new. And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people. I am Jehovah your God, who

brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen; and I have broken the bars of your yoke, and made you go upright.

The idea expressed in verse 10, appears to be something like this: The people would store up food and wine, following their harvest; but before they could use all they had, another bountiful harvest would be reaped, and they would, accordingly, bring out that which they had stored up and use it; for there was no need to keep it longer. In the words of Dodd, "This is a nervous and beautiful promise of such entire plenty of corn and wine, that before they could have reaped and threshed their corn the vintage should be ready; and before they could have pressed out their wine it would be time to sow again. The prophet Amos. 9: 13, expressed the same blessing in the same manner: *The plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed.*" (Cf. 2 Cor. 8: 1-9: 15.)

The reference to the setting of the tabernacle among them probably had its original fulfillment, when the Jewish tabernacle, along with the worship ordained for the people, was set up; but, in the opinion of Adam Clarke, the promise was more far-reaching, and had its ultimate fulfillment in the incarnation of God's eternal Word. But be that as it may, we know that God does dwell among his people, when they are faithful to him; and when he is with them, there is nothing for them to fear. Soon after the Lord's resurrection from the dead, and while talking with his disciples on the mountain in Galilee, he made this

promise: "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28: 20.)

Zerr, in commenting on the immediate promise, in the text now before us, says, "The tabernacle was to be the visible evidence of God's presence. Its existence, accompanied with the blessing of the Lord, would be a constant incentive for them to continue as a righteous people, and to depend on the divine government for their prosperity in both religion and national life. All of this was related with the one great fact at the beginning of their service as a people. They had been delivered out of the bondage to the Egyptians. There they not only were forced to serve the kings over them, but were led into such service as disrespected their own God."

God's people today, as the New Testament clearly teaches, have been redeemed from a greater bondage than that of Egypt; and they have the assurance that the Lord is ever among them. "Even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Read 2 Cor. 6: 14-7: 1.) But the greatest promise of all is this: "And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God; and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away. And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." (Rev. 21: 3-5.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What great thought should always be in the minds of people as they journey through life?

Why is faithfulness such an important subject? Give reasons for your answer. In what way did Jesus emphasize the question of faithfulness?

How can every child of God know for certain that he is faithful to his Lord?

Why must all responsible people meet God in judgment?

What will be the standard by which our faithfulness is determined?

The Golden Text

What is the meaning of the term "faithful"?

How does the New Testament define the word "faith"?

Why is faith so essential to one's life?

How alone can faith be pleasing to God?

The Promise of Plenty

What has always been God's attitude toward the needs of his people?

What does Jesus say about this question?

Upon what condition does the Lord promise to supply the physical needs of his people?

What does God continue to do to affect mankind's attitude toward him?

What two basic methods for this work does he employ?

How, then, do we know that Jehovah always rewards obedience with his blessings?

What is true prosperity? Give reasons for your answer.

The Promise of Security

What is the fundamental meaning and significance of "security"?

What promises did Jehovah make to Israel regarding this issue?

What is the meaning of the term "providence"?

Cite some examples.

How did God demonstrate his providential care in the case of the children of Israel?

The Promise of the Divine Presence

What idea is expressed in the first part of the section of the lesson text?

How did this fit into the promise of plenty for God's people?

Do the Lord's people today have the right to trust in the Lord for the physical blessings which they need? Give reasons for your answer.

What significance did the setting of the tabernacle among the people have?

What application do the Lord's people today have in this respect?

What specific promise did Jesus give to his people before he ascended to heaven?

What effect should such promises have on all of us today?

Why should Christian people continuously rejoice in the Lord's service?

What future relationship has God promised them?

Lesson X—March 7, 1971

SABBATH REST

Lesson Text

Lev. 25: 1-7; Heb. 4: 9-13

1 And Je-ho'-vah spake unto M 6' - ses in mount Si'-nai, saying,

2 Speak unto the children of Is'-ra-el, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto Je-ho'-vah.

3 Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruits thereof;

4 But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath unto Je-ho'-vah: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard.

5 That which groweth of itself of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, and the grapes of thy undressed vine thou shalt not gather: it shall be a year of solemn rest for the land.

6 And the sabbath of the land shall be for food for you; for thee, and for thy servant and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant and for thy stranger, who sojourn with thee.

7 And for thy cattle, and for the beasts that are in thy land, shall all the increase thereof be for food.

9 There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God.

10 For he that is entered into his rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from his.

11 Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience.

12 For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.

13 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.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God.*" (Heb. 4: 9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Heb. 4: 1-7.

Daily Bible Readings

March 1.	M	God Rested (Gen. 2: 1-3)
March 2.	T	Rest Days of Moses (Ex. 23: 8-13)
March 3.	W	Our Lord Rested (Mark 6: 31, 32)
March 4.	T	Rest Denied Some (Heb. 3: 17-19)
March 5.	F	God's Promises Dependable (Psalm 121: 3-8)

March 6. S. Heaven, Home of Righteous (John 14: 1-13)

March 7. S. Future Inheritance (2 Cor. 5: 1-10)

TIME.—Leviticus, 1490 B.C.; Hebrews, A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACES.—Leviticus, in the wilderness before mount Sinai; Hebrews, Rome and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Moses, and the Israelites; probably Paul and some Hebrew Christians.

Introduction

The subject which we have for consideration today, is vital for two basic reasons, namely, (1) it involves a specific and positive command of Almighty God, and (2) it has a direct connection with the constitution of mankind; or, which is the same thing, man's fundamental nature. And, as we shall see further on in this study, it also involves lower forms of creation, both animate and inanimate. David, in speaking of himself, and the same thing is true of others of like nature, expressed the matter in this way: "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." The words just quoted are found in this context:

For thou didst form my inward parts:

Thou didst cover me in my mother's womb.

I will give thanks unto thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made:

Wonderful are thy works;

And that my soul knoweth right well.

My frame was not hidden from thee,

When I was made in secret,

And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

Thine eyes did see mine unformed substance;

And in thy book they were all written,

Even the days that were ordained for me,

When as yet there was none of them.

How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!

How great is the sum of them!

If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand:

When I awake, I am still with thee.

(Psalm 139: 13-18.)

The sum and substance of the passage just quoted is this, Jehovah is our Maker, Preserver, and Director; and it is only by conforming to

his revealed will that one can please God, and achieve that which is possible for him to be and to do, so far as the Lord is concerned. As David expressed the matter, When he was in his mother's womb, Jehovah took charge of him, and brought him to the reality of a human being, who was capable of continual growth and development, until he could eventually awake in God's likeness, and be with him for ever. Such knowledge, he said, was too wonderful for him (Psalm 139: 6); but it was made available for him to meditate upon. But unless such knowledge is guided and controlled, its end can be disastrous. And so, in the words of Tennyson,

We have but faith; we cannot know,

For knowledge is of things to see;

And yet we trust it comes from thee,

A beam in darkness; let it grow,

Let knowledge grow from more to more,

But more of reverence in us dwell;

That mind and soul, according well,

May make one music as before.

—*In Memoriam.*

As Tennyson saw the issue, it is only through faith that human beings can discover the eternal purpose of God, and gain any conception of the truth of immortality. It is not possible, as Jeremiah expresses the matter, for human beings to direct their own steps (Jer. 10: 23); and that means that some one above them must furnish them guidance. The only one who can guide man into the way which he can go, is God (Isa. 55: 8, 9; Prov. 3: 5, 6); and any one who reads the Bible knows that he does that by telling him what to do. That is the purpose of the inspired revelation; but the Scriptures are so

arranged, as to make it necessary for one to search them, in order to find that which God wants him to know. This is to say that, generally speaking, all the truth on any one subject is not ordinarily found in one place. But whatever is contained in that which God has spoken regarding man's duty, is always best for him. "And now, Israel, what doth Jehovah thy God require of

thee, but to fear Jehovah thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve Jehovah thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of Jehovah, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" (Deut. 10: 12, 13.) The law of the sabbath was given by Jehovah; and it was, of course, designed for man's good.

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 Sabbath of the Seventh Year

(Lev. 25: 1-7)

And Jehovah spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto Jehovah. Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruits thereof; but in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath unto Jehovah: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. That which groweth of itself of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, and the grapes of thy undressed vine thou shalt not gather: it shall be a year of solemn rest for the land. And the sabbath of the land shall be for food for you; for thee, and for thy servant and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant and for thy stranger, who sojourn with thee. And for thy cattle, and for the beasts that are in the land, shall all the increase thereof be for food.

That which may very correctly be spoken of as the law of the sabbath, is much broader than simply observing a period of time, known as the sabbath day. The law of the sabbath is based on a principle which is eternal, and which is an expression of the nature of God himself. God is the creator of all things, the material and the spiritual; and it is a recorded fact that he has never turned the universe, with all that pertains to it, over to man, and allowed him to use it as he chooses, with no control left in the hands of the Lord. "The earth is

the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," is an expression frequently found in the Scriptures; and that implies that God still maintains a claim to that which he chooses to govern.

The section of the lesson text now before us proclaims the truth that man is dependent upon God for his very existence; and that he must be trained, by means of the sense of God's presence, and his overruling providence, to trust in him for his needs, while giving attention to the needs of others. God wants all of his people to benefit from his blessings (Matt. 6: 24-34); but it frequently is necessary to restrain those with the advantage, so that they can see how God feels toward the less fortunate. No one has the right to use all the time which God gives him, nor all the natural resources and gains therefrom, with no thought for God and his fellow man, to say nothing of his own welfare. This is a lesson which we need to learn today; and it has been God's will to reveal his teaching concerning it in all parts of the Bible.

There was a fundamental reason why the law of the sabbath, including all of its relationships, such as the sabbath day, the sabbatical year, the sabbath rest for God's people, etc., was given; and it was to this truth that Jesus referred, when he said, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: so that the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath." (Mark 2: 27, 28.) It has been said that a subject is half argued, when it is clearly stated; and inasmuch as this statement is evidently true, it should be our aim, just here, to determine the

precise meaning of the terms "sabbath" and "man," as Jesus used them in the passage just quoted.

The first fact to be noted is that the definite article is before "man" in the original, and this means that a literal reading of the passage would be, "The sabbath was made for *the* man, and not *the* man for the sabbath: so that the Son of *the* man is lord even of the sabbath." Greek scholars, such as Thayer, Robertson, et al, tell us that when the article is used before man, in the case just cited, the meaning is generic, that is, "so as to include all human individuals" (Thayer); or, as Robertson has it, "mankind." (Cf. Matt. 4: 4; John 2: 25; Rom. 7: 1, where the article is before "man," and where the reference is obviously to mankind in general, that is, to all men within the limits of the context.) If Thayer and Robertson are correct in their comments here, and there does not seem to be any reason for calling them in question, then Jesus says that the sabbath was made for the human race, or, mankind.

That which has just been said tells us who the "man" is, for whom the sabbath was made; but it does not specify the sabbath which was made for him. The term "sabbath" was used to designate the seventh day of the week, during the Jewish dispensation; and that idea has become so firmly fixed in the minds of people, as to make it practically impossible for the average person to think of the word "sabbath," without applying it to the age of Moses. But what are the facts in the case? Keeping in mind the truth expressed by Jesus, when he said that the sabbath was made for mankind, or the human race, the following may throw further light on the question:

The sabbath of the law of Moses was for the Jews only;

The sabbath of which Jesus spoke was not for the Jews only;

Therefore the sabbath of which Jesus spoke was not the sabbath of the law of Moses.

It will be necessary, if we are to appreciate the significance of the analysis just presented, to distinguish between the *principle* of the sabbath, on the one hand, and the *application* of the principle, on the other. When Jesus said that the

sabbath was made for *the* man, that is, mankind, he was not speaking about the application of the principle of the sabbath to the Jewish people; but rather of the principle itself. B. W. Johnson, in commenting on the Lord's statement, cited above, says, "The Sabbath rest; that is, a rest of one day in seven was made for man, not for Jews only. This implies that it is to be a universal institution; that the good of man requires it, and that it is not an arbitrary enactment, but a wise and benevolent provision for the welfare of the race. Experience shows that men are happiest, most moral, most prosperous and healthiest, where it is devoutly observed."

The basic idea in the term "sabbath" is *cessation*, as may be learned from any reliable Hebrew lexicon, as well as from the use which inspired writers of the Bible made of the word. "And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day, . . . and hallowed it; because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made." (Gen. 2: 1-3.) The Hebrew word for "rested" is *shabath*; and it is from this term that we have the word "sabbath"; and if one will read other passages in which the original word is found, it will not be difficult for him to see the fundamental meaning of the term. (Cf. Gen. 8:22—"shall not cease," this is, *shall not keep shabath*: Josh. 5: 12.) W. E. Vine, in commenting on the use of the word in the New Testament notes that "the double b has an intensive force, implying a complete cessation or a making to cease, probably the former. The idea is not that of relaxation or refreshment, but cessation from activity." (Cf. Isa. 58: 13, 14.)

The whole idea in the term "sabbath" is that one ceases to do one thing (his own activities), in order that he may do another (that is, turn his thoughts, words, and deeds to God). The sabbath of the law of Moses was for the Jews, and the Jews only; and no one under Christ could observe the seventh-day sabbath, while remaining loyal to Christ. (Cf. Col. 2: 16, 17.) Further-

more, the day designated for Christians, known as the Lord's day, does not owe its origin to the law of Moses, but to the authority of Christ; and its observance is regulated by him, and not by the ordinance of a former dispensation. If the question is considered in the light of that which Jesus says in Mark 2: 27, 28, it will be easy for one to conclude that the devotion of the day, that is, the Lord's day, to the Lord, is for the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual good of the Lord's people.

The messianic prophet Isaiah, in looking to the kingdom of Christ, says, "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. . . . The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and the dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah." (Isa. 65: 17-25; cf. 2: 2-4; 11: 1-10.) The "new heavens and the new earth," referred to by Isaiah, constitute the new order under Christ; and the prophet concludes his message by saying, "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith Jehovah, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith Jehovah." (See Isa. 66: 22-24.) "All flesh" was never commanded to worship Jehovah on the Jewish sabbath: but under the new order, from week to week, shall all flesh—Jews and Gentiles—worship before God.

Concerning the Rest Which Remains for the People of God

(Heb. 4: 9-11)

There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from his. Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience.

This section of the lesson text can best be understood in the light of the preceding verses of the chapter, from which it is taken. They read as follows: "Let us fear therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they: but the word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard. For we who have believed do enter into that rest; even as he hath said,

As I swear in my wrath,

They shall not enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he hath said somewhere of the seventh day on this wise, And God rested on the seventh day from all his works; and in this place again,

They shall not enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some should enter thereto, and they to whom the good tidings were before preached failed to enter in because of disobedience, he again defineth a certain day, To-day, saying in David so long a time afterward (even as hath been said before),

To-day if ye shall hear his voice,
Harden not your hearts.

For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken afterward of another day." (Heb. 4: 1-8.)

The historical allusions, in the passage just quoted, have reference to the failure of the children of Israel to enter into the land of promise, due to their lack of faith in God's promise, and their consequent disobedience. The faltering Hebrew Christians, to whom the letter from which the lesson text is taken was addressed, were similarly situated, with reference to the heavenly rest.

The writer of Hebrews clearly shows that the sabbatical rest of the Old Testament, nor the rest in Canaan, could be the rest which is referred to in the section of the text we are now considering; and the inevitable conclusion is that there is a rest which will be the lot of those who are faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. They shall cease from their toils and labors of this life, just as God ceased from his works of creation, and the Israelites, from their

wilderness wanderings, and enter into the glorious rest which God has promised to his people. Robert Milligan, in commenting on the promise of verse 9, of the passage now before us, says, God "instituted the Sabbath—(1) for the purpose of commemorating his rest; (2) for the benefit of mankind, by giving them rest from physical labor, and leading them also to higher measures of spiritual culture and enjoyment (Mark 2: 27); and (3) that it might be a means of foreshadowing the heavenly rest, which even then he had in his eternal counsels provided for his faithful and obedient children. Nor was this the only Old Testament symbolical representation of God's rest. The idea of a future sabbatism was afterward greatly intensified by sundry legal observances, such as the rest of the seventh year and the year of Jubilee. And even in the promise of Canaan to Abraham and to his seed for an everlasting possession, there was implied also a promise of heaven, and of a heavenly rest to all who have the faith of Abraham. (See Gen. 12: 7; 13: 14-17; 15: 18; 17: 8; 24: 7; 26: 4; Ex. 33: 1, etc.) And hence it is that in Psalm 95: 11, the word *rest* is substituted for *land*, as in the original form of the oath is given in Numbers 14: 28-30." There is every reason, as verse 11 of the text indicates, why we should strive to enter into the heavenly rest. No one should fall after the same example of disobedience, as that manifested by the unfaithful Israelites.

The Character and Power of God's Word

(Heb. 4: 12, 13)

For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Jehovah, speaking through an Old Testament prophet, says that his word that goeth forth out of his

mouth, shall not return unto him void, but that it shall accomplish that which he pleases, and shall prosper in the thing whereto he sent it. (See Isa. 55: 10, 11.) It is not difficult to see that in the statement just referred to, and the section of the lesson text now under consideration, that God's word works two ways, namely, (1) it encourages faithfulness on the part of his people; and (2) it discourages disobedience on their part. The word of the Lord, as contained in the Scriptures, is all that one needs in the way of instruction, in order to please God (cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17; 2 Pet. 1: 3, 4); and it is also sufficient to restrain any one from evil, who will listen to it. (Cf. 2 Cor. 2: 14-17.)

There are several things affirmed regarding the word of God, as seen in the passage now before us. The Speaker's Bible notes that if there is anything upon which professed Christians are agreed, it surely is that in Scripture the voice of God is heard with a directness and authority, which is altogether unique. The writer of Hebrews says that the word of God is (1) living, and active; (2) sharper than any two-edged sword; and (3) pierces and divides to a degree unheard of in any area of human experience. And when all of those facts are duly considered, it is not surprising to read that there is absolutely nothing which can be hidden from his sight. And inasmuch as "we have to do" with God, we cannot afford to be indifferent to him in any respect; for "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." We saw in the first section of the lesson text that God commanded that the land enjoy its sabbatical year; but when the disobedient people refused to heed that instruction, they were required to spend seventy years in captivity, "until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths: for as long as it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years." (2 Chron. 36: 20, 21.) This is just one example of the absolute certainty that God will do that which he says; and that lesson is one which we cannot afford to ignore. (Cf. Heb. 2: 1-3.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is the study of this lesson so important to Christian people?
How broad was the sabbath law of the Mosaic system, that is, what all did it include?
Why is the law of the sabbath so vital to the human race?
How should the Lord's people feel about the knowledge which is available to them?
How must people approach the study of God's word, if they are to understand his purpose?
What are the basic requirements which God makes of all responsible people?

The Sabbath of the Seventh Year

What was the relation of the law of the sabbath to the eternal principles of God?
How is the truth that the earth and its fulness is God's related to this lesson?
What reason can you see for the law of the sabbath for the land?
What is meant by the providence of God?
Why was it essential that man's use of time be regulated?
What lesson does Jesus teach regarding God's plan and purpose for the sabbath?
What is the basic idea in the term "sabbath"?
What, then, does one do when he keeps sabbath?

What lesson do we learn from Isaiah regarding the application of the principle of the sabbath?

Concerning the Rest Which Remains for the People of God

In what context is this section of the lesson text found?
To what do the historical allusions in the passage refer?
What is the rest which remains for the people of God?
How does the writer of Hebrews go about proving that the rest is yet in the future?
What further lessons do we learn from this regarding the symbolical nature of the sabbath?
What is the chief value to us which comes from a study of the law of the sabbath?

The Character and Power of God's Word

What has Jehovah promised regarding his word?

What effect should this have upon people who stop and think?
What does the Bible teach with reference to the character and power of God's word?
What particular things does the writer of Hebrews say that it accomplishes?
What effect should all of this have upon true believers and upon the disobedient?
What happened when Israel failed to allow the land to enjoy its sabbaths and what truth did their conduct illustrate?

Lesson XI—March 14, 1971

PRESS ON UNTO PERFECTION

Lesson Text

Heb. 6: 1-10; Lev. 19: 35-37

1 Wherefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

2 Of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

3 And this will we do, if God permit.

4 For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit,

5 And tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come,

6 And *then* fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

7 For the land which hath drunk the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whose sake it is also tilled, receiveth blessing from God:

8 But if it beareth thorns and thistles, it is rejected and nigh unto a curse; whose end is to be burned.

9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak:

10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister.

35 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in measures of length, of weight, or of quantity.

36 Just balances, just weights, a just e'-phah, and a just hin, shall ye

have: I am Je-ho'-vah your God, who brought you out of the land of E'-gypt.

37 And ye shall observe all my statutes, and all mine ordinances, and do them: I am Je-ho'-vah.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."* (2 Pet. 3: 18.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Phil. 3: 12-15.

Daily Bible Readings

March 8.	M.	Growth in Grace (2 Pet. 3: 14-18)
March 9.	T.	Paul's Growth in Grace (Phil. 3: 12-15)
March 10.	W.	Supplying Christian Graces (2 Pet. 1: 5-10)
March 11.	T.	Some Failed to Grow (Heb. 5: 11-14)
March 12.	F.	Perfect in Every Good Work (Heb. 13: 18-21)
March 13.	S.	Seek Things That Are Above (Col. 3: 1-4)
March 14.	S.	Love, the Bond of Perfectness (Col. 3: 12-17)

TIME.—Leviticus, 1490 B.C.; Hebrews, A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACES.—Leviticus, in the wilderness before mount Sinai; Hebrews, Rome and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Moses, and the Israelites; probably Paul and some Hebrew Christians.

Introduction

The term "perfection," as used in the text now before us, has reference, as the marginal reading suggests, to the *full growth*, or, which is the same thing, to the state of maturity in the life of the Christian, in contrast with the elementary condition of the Hebrew Christians, as described in the preceding paragraph of the letter now before us, namely, "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 [*perfect*, margin] men, even those who by reason of use have their sense exercised to discern good and evil." (Heb. 5: 11-14.)

This was the writer's way of saying that the people to whom he addressed the epistle had been going backward, instead of forward; and they had deteriorated to the point where they had need of milk, rather than of solid food, which they would have needed, had they gone on to maturity, as they should have done. That, of course, was an unfortunate condition; but, as any thoughtful

observer is aware, it was by no means limited to the people to whom the letter to the Hebrews was addressed. The same situation is often seen today; for no one can stand still in the Christian life. He will either go forward, as God intends that he should; or he will find himself drifting with the current. (Cf. Heb. 2: 1-3.) It is easy for the thoughtful reader of the epistle now before us to see that the writer is never far away from practical daily living. Those who profess to follow Christ must either give close attention to that which he says; or they will find themselves getting closer and closer to the point of no return. We must either go on to perfection, that is, to maturity; or we will revert to our infantile state. (Cf. Rev. 2: 4, 5.)

The apostle Peter tells us exactly what must be done, if we are to go on to that state of maturity which is pleasing to God. He first presents God's side of the issue, namely, "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; cf. 2 Tim. 3:

16,17.) The promises of God are the motives which he uses in his efforts to actuate people to a way of life which is pleasing to him. (Cf. 2 Cor. 7: 1; Rom. 2: 4.)

The apostle Peter next presents the human side of the process which leads to maturity: "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." (2 Pet. 1: 5-11.)

The Golden Text

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The adversative "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 much easier for one 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 beforehand, 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.*" (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 and Saviour Jesus Christ; but, being already in his favor, and possessing some knowledge of his will, we are urged to continue our growth *in* that favor and understanding. The soul of man is the most important truth

about him. This is true, 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 basic 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 information which we may gain through the study, and practice, of God's 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 and favorable 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 item 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 Ephesians 4: 11-16. (4) *Periods of rest*. The Christian life is both active and meditative; and one is as important as the other. (Cf. Mark 2: 27, 28.) These laws, if carefully observed, will result in a soul which is pleasing to God.

The Text Explained

Perfection Lies Beyond First Principles

(Heb. 6: 1-3)

Wherefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the teachings of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do, if God permit.

Progress, in a very real sense, is the watchword of Christianity; and it goes without saying that no faithful child of God can afford to relax in his efforts to please God. Some one has pointed out that the religion of Christ created the passion for progress; and that the nations of the earth have been progressive, in proportion to their acceptance of the teaching of Christ. The historical comparisons, just referred to, show that the more nearly a people approached the spirit of the primitive faith of the gospel, the safer and more rapid has been their progress, in most of the higher areas of their experience.

Those who are familiar with the writings of Paul, are aware of the fact that he often presents the doctrine of Christianity in the form of an epitome. (Cf. Tit. 2: 11, 12.) The section of the lesson text, now before us, is another example of the epitomical method of teaching the truth of the gospel. The writer, as we have already seen, had just drawn a contrast between babes and fullgrown men; and now he is ready for a lesson on progress in Christian living.

The idea in the injunction in verse 1 is, according to Thayer, to leave the subject matter which the writer mentions, in the sense of not discussing it for the time being. The writer is urging that progress is taking additional steps; and not simply remaining with the first things which were learned. If one dwells on the fundamental principles of the system of truth which he has learned, he will certainly neglect other and equally important lessons, which he should carefully consider and endeavor to learn. The "principles" which are men-

tioned in the passage now under consideration, belong to the basic teaching regarding Christianity, which was given at the beginning of their instruction concerning it.

That which has just been said is another way of saying that the doctrine referred to, has always characterized the gospel of Christ—the issues are fundamental. They are the foundation principles of Christianity, which may very well be spoken of as a system of truth, as it is in Christ. Therefore, when those who are going on toward perfection leave these principles, they do so in the sense that one leaves the alphabet of the language he speaks; or the four great principles (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division) upon which the entire science of mathematics is based. And so, having laid the foundation, or having learned the principles which underlie the system, one goes on to perfection in the Christian life, by building thereon.

The foundation principles which are to be left behind, as listed in the text now before us, may be regarded as illustrative of the writer's proposal to proceed to the exposition of the doctrine of the priesthood of Christ. (Cf. Heb. 5: 11, and the verses immediately preceding it.) Christian maturity, which certainly includes knowledge of many basic issues beyond the fundamental doctrines named, can never be attained by a continuous return to the subjects which belong to the earliest state of Christian instruction. There are six issues included in the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, and they should be considered in the order listed in the text.

The first two, repentance from dead works, and faith toward God, should be studied together, not only because of the close relationship which exists between them, but also because of certain erroneous doctrines which have been taught regarding them. Some people, upon reading a passage which mentions repentance before faith, immediately jump to the conclusion that repentance must precede faith in the plan of salvation. (Cf. Mark 1: 15; Acts 20: 21.) When those statements were made, people had long

known of God, and had sinned against him; but some of them had never heard of Christ. They therefore were called on to repent toward God, or, which is the same thing, get themselves right with God; and then believe on the Christ whom God had sent to save the people from their sins.

Not only is that which has just been said true, but it is impossible to get faith and repentance in the wrong order in actual life. A man repents *because* a new belief or a new way of thinking has entered his mind. This is clearly and forcefully illustrated by the prodigal son, as may be seen by reading Luke 15: 17f. The dead works which are mentioned in connection with repentance, were not only sinful works, as that expression is generally understood; but rather works without the element of life, which comes through faith in the living God. There is therefore a sharp contrast between dead works and faith; and this truth was among the very first which would have to be taught a Jew, who was being urged to accept Christianity. (Cf. Tit. 3: 5.) The Jewish people had been taught to rely upon works for their salvation. (Cf. Eph. 2: 8-10.) They therefore would have to change their minds regarding those dead works, before they could believe in Jesus Christ.

The teaching of baptisms evidently had reference to both literal and metaphorical baptisms, since the "baptisms" belonged to the doctrine of the first principles of Christ. There is only one literal baptism, that in water; but there are several figurative baptisms referred to in the New Testament. (Cf. Luke 3: 15-17; Mark 10: 38, 39.) The laying on of hands had a prominent place in the New Testament church. (Acts 6: 1-6; 13: 1-3; 1 Tim. 4: 14.) To lay hands upon a person indicated that he would act on behalf of those in question. The resurrection of the dead and the eternal judgment will take place on the last day of history; and the eternal judgment will be meted out to all who are resurrected at the last day.

No one can read the New Testament without being made aware of the fact that its writers always took into account the will of God. (Cf. James 4: 13-17; Acts 18: 21; 1 Cor.

16: 7.) Milligan notes that we must have God's help in going on unto perfection; and the writer of Hebrews well knew that they could not have God's help, unless they took his will into consideration, and did their best to conform their lives to it. Jesus makes it plain that we can do nothing apart from the Lord. (John 15: 5.) It was for this reason that the writer of Hebrews, while urging his brethren, by all the high motives of the gospel, to give greater diligence in making their calling and election sure, not to forget the absolute necessity of submitting themselves to the will of God, in all things.

The Danger and Awful Consequences of Apostasy (Heb. 6: 4-6)

For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the land which hath drunk the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whose sake it is also tilled, receiveth blessing from God: but if it beareth thorns and thistles, it is rejected and nigh unto a curse; whose end is to be burned.

The description of the saved, which is given in this section of the lesson text, is parallel to that which is contained in the first two verses of the chapter, although the parallel is not carried out in detail. But the same end is in view, in both cases; and if progress is continued, as God has ordained, then the same result will be enjoyed in both instances, namely spiritual perfection or maturity.

Albert Barnes, in commenting on the passage now before us, says, "There is a regular gradation here from the first elements of piety in the soul to its highest developments; and whether the apostle so designed it or not, the language describes the successive steps by which a true Christian advances to the highest stage of Christian experience. The mind is (a) enlight-

ened; then (b) *tastes* the gift of heaven, or has some experience of it; then (c) it is made to partake of the influences of the Holy Ghost; then (d) there is experience of the excellence and loveliness of the Word of God; and (e) finally there is a participation of the full 'powers' of the new dispensation; of the extraordinary energy which God puts forth in the gospel to sanctify and save the soul."

But notwithstanding all these marvelous blessings which come to those who accept the gospel of Christ, the fact remains that the Christian can lose his inheritance. This is, indeed, one of the many passages in the New Testament which teach that it is possible for the truly converted people of God to fall from his favor, to the extent that they will finally be lost eternally. (Cf. Heb. 4: 11; 2 Pet. 2: 20-22.) The inspired writer of the passage now before us says that it is *impossible* to renew the fallen, such as he describes, again unto repentance.

The original word for "impossible" is *adunatos*, and it is the identical term which is found in such passages as Romans 8: 3; Hebrews 6: 18; 10: 4; 11: 6, where the meaning is unmistakable. Vincent notes that it is impossible to dilute the word into *difficult*, while Milligan observes that "when the cord of life and love that bind the true believer to Christ, has been once completely severed, the parties so separated can never again be reunited. The case of the apostate is as hopeless as that of Satan himself." (Cf. Heb. 10: 26-31.) The fruitless land, along with its thorns and thistles, is as certain to be destroyed, as that the Lord uttered the word against them. (Cf. John 15: 1-6.)

A Word of Encouragement and Some Specific Injunctions

(Heb. 6: 9, 10; Lev. 19: 35-37)

But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak: for God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister.

The seriousness of the situation in which the Hebrew Christians were

involved, made it imperative that the writer of the epistle issue a grave warning regarding the danger of apostasy, which confronted his brethren. They were in danger of drifting away from the things, which they had been taught; and the warning regarding the impending destruction, if they did so, was in order, before he encouraged them, in the hope that they would do something about the danger which confronted them. There was absolutely no time for delay; for they apparently were fast approaching the "rapids," and the eternal falls were only a short distance away.

The writer of Hebrews, in saying that God would not forget their past deeds of love and benevolence, which they had manifested toward him and his people, apparently meant to impress upon their minds the absolute dependability of God, and that they therefore should have no fear that he would desert them. But even so, Paul wanted them to know that they themselves would have to give attention to the things which accompany salvation. God has always done his part, and he will continue to do so; but man must also do that which the Lord requires of him. The means of saving the lost, and of keeping the saved with the Lord, has been amply provided; but the individual Christian must work out his own salvation. (Cf. Phil. 2: 12, 13.)

Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in measures of length, of weight, or of quantity. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. And ye shall observe all my statutes, and all mine ordinances, and do them: I am Jehovah.

One of the principal meanings of the term "righteousness," as used in the Scriptures, is that of one's proper relationship toward his fellow man; and with that idea in mind, *unrighteousness* would indicate a lack of such a relationship; or, a failure to maintain right relations with those about him. We read in 1 John 5: 17, for example, that "all unrighteousness is sin"; and Thayer, in commenting on the meaning of the word "unrighteousness," says

that it is "a deed violating law and justice, an act of unrighteousness." Or, to express the same thing in another way, *unrighteousness* includes every breach of duty, and everything that comes short of the requirements of justice; or, it is "the wrong of depriving another of what is his." (See Thayer, on 2 Cor. 12: 13 where a favor is ironically called *adikia*.)

It is interesting to note that the same original word "unrighteousness (*adikia*)" is found in the Septuagint Version (the Greek Version of the Hebrew Old Testament) of the passage now under consideration. This is another way of saying that God said to his people, through Moses, you must not deprive any one of that which is justly his, as, of course, would be done by the use of false weights, measures, quantities, et cetera. No one who listens to

God's word will be guilty of such conduct. (Cf. James 5: 1-6.)

The story is told of a minister who went to visit some members of the church, who lived about five miles from the church building. The man of the house was not at home, but finding the wife, the minister began to talk with her. He said, "I saw you at the service on Sunday, and you seemed very attentive—what do you remember about the sermon?" "I do not remember anything," was her reply. "Surely you remember something; what was the text?" "I cannot tell." "I wonder, then," he said, "that you would go so far to the service, and back again, and get no good from it." "But I did get good, sir." "But how can that be, when you do not remember a word that was spoken?" "Ah," said the woman, "but I came home and burned the bushel!" She had been using a false measure!

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

What is the meaning of the term "perfection," as used in the text for today's lesson?

Why were the people to whom the letter was written in need of such an exhortation?

How can the lesson be applied to our day?

What is God's means to such an end and what are its two sides?

The Golden Text

What does the conjunction "but," with which the golden text begins, indicate?

In what was the growth, which they were urged to manifest, to consist?

What are the basic laws of all such growth?

Perfection Lies Beyond First Principles

Give reasons for thinking, or not thinking, that progress is the watchword of Christianity.

In what way did Paul frequently express the basic facts of Christianity?

What did the writer of Hebrews mean by leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ?

What were those first principles? Discuss each one of them.

Why is the order of faith and repentance often confused?

What are those principles so vital to Christianity?

The Danger and Awful Consequences of Apostasy

What was the writer's aim in this section of the lesson text?

How did he describe the growth and development of a Christian?

What are the "powers" of the age to come and what age is meant?

How do you know that a true child of God can lose his inheritance?

Why is it impossible to renew an apostate to repentance?

What is the certain fate of the unfruitful? Why is this lesson so important to us?

How do you explain the indifference which is so often manifested on the part of professed Christians?

A Word of Encouragement and Some Specific Injunctions

Why did the writer of Hebrews warn his brethren so severely?

Why should such warning precede encouragement?

What is the greatest danger involved in drifting?

In what way did the writer of Hebrews seek to encourage the faltering Christians?

Why must God's people always do their part in the matter of salvation?

Discuss the part which the Lord's people must perform in this respect.

What is the fundamental meaning of the term "unrighteous"?

In what way are the two parts of this section of the lesson text related?

Show some ways in which it is possible for the Lord's people to be unrighteous toward their fellow men.

Lesson XII—March 21, 1971

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Lesson Text

Lev. 25: 8-12; Heb. 12: 22-24

8 And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and there shall be unto thee the days of seven sabbaths of years, even forty and nine years.

9 Then shalt thou send abroad the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month; in the day of atonement shall ye send abroad the trumpet throughout all your land.

10 And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a ju'-bi-lee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.

11 A ju'-bi-lee shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of

itself in it, nor gather *the grapes* in it of the undressed vines.

12 For it is a ju'-bi-lee; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field.

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.—"*Proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.*" (Lev. 25: 10.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Heb. 12: 1-17.

Daily Bible Readings

March 15.	M.	Solemn Jewish Assemblies (Ex. 23: 1-8)
March 16.	T.	First Fruits of Harvest (Ex. 23: 9-14)
March 17.	W.	Sets Feasts of Jehovah (Lev. 23: 33-38)
March 18.	T.	Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23: 39-44)
March 19.	F.	Assembly at Judgment (Matt. 25: 31-46)
March 20.	S.	Lord's Day Assembly (1 Cor. 16: 1, 2; Acts 20: 7)
March 21.	S.	The General Assembly (Heb. 12: 22-29)

TIME.—Leviticus, 1490 B.C.; Hebrews, A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACES.—Leviticus, In the wilderness before mount Sinai; Hebrews, Rome and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Moses, and the Israelites; probably Paul and some Hebrew Christians.

Introduction

The term "assembly" is found many times in the Scriptures; and when the gathering together was of a religious nature, there was always interest and importance attached to it. The assembly might have been large or small, depending upon the people who were involved, and the purpose for which it was called. This is to say that a few people, out of a larger group, could gather themselves, or be called, together; or the leaders or representatives of the people as a whole, could get together on behalf of the rest, or to

attend to some business, or engage in some service, which would affect the people as a whole. But when a general assembly was convened, that, in and of itself, would indicate both interest and importance on the part of the people, as well as for the purpose for which the assembly was called.

The word "assembly" is frequently used in the sense of a *congregation*; and that whether large or small. "And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the

wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron in the wilderness: and the children of Israel said unto them, Would that we had died by the hand of Jehovah in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger." (Ex. 16: 1-3; Judges 21: 8-16.) The term *ekklesia*, the Greek word for "church," is rendered *assembly* in Acts 19: 32, 39, 41. (Cf. Heb. 2: 12; 12: 23.)

But when an assembly is called by the Lord, or by his authority, of whatever size it may be, he expects his people, who are involved, to be there. One of the most forceful examples of this, is found in Hebrews 10: 25, "Not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the

day drawing nigh." This exhortation is coupled with the paragraph which follows it, by the conjunction "for"; and it is easy to see from the language of Hebrews 10: 26-31, that the one who wilfully forsakes, that is, abandons the assembly of the saints, is in grave danger of being for ever lost.

The "general assembly" which we are considering today has reference to God's people in the aggregate; or, to all of God's people at the time the assembly was applicable. This is to say that all of God's people, during the time of Moses, were referred to as the assembly, that is, the general assembly, (cf. Deut. 5: 22-27; Acts 7: 37, 38); and in a similar manner, all of God's people in Christ are also referred to as the general assembly, as we shall see further on in this study. But there will be a general assembly, in which all the people who have ever lived upon the earth will be present. (Matt. 25: 31, 32; Rev. 20: 11-15.) Faithfulness in smaller assemblies, will ensure security in the greatest of all assemblies.

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 Year of Jubilee

(Lev. 25: 8-12)

And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and there shall be unto thee the days of seven sabbaths of years, even forty and nine years. Then shalt thou send abroad the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month; in the day of atonement shall ye send abroad the trumpet throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of the undressed vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall

eat the increase thereof out of the field.

Although there was no general assembly in connection with the year of jubilee, in the sense of a literal or physical gathering together; yet the law which governed the year in question did affect the nation as a whole. The Hebrew word from which we have the term "jubilee," is *yōbēl*; and it occurs in the Old Testament twenty-seven times, namely, twenty times in Leviticus 25: 10-54; 27: 17-24; five times in Joshua 6: 4-13; and once each in Exodus 19: 13 and Numbers 34: 4. The word "jubilee" literally means, according to some Hebrew scholars, "a loud trumpet blast"; or perhaps more specifically, that which the trumpet blast signaled. This appears reasonable, when we take into consideration the fact that the original term *yōbēl* is rendered *ram* or *ram's horn* in the passage in Joshua. (Cf.

the marginal reading in Josh. 6: 4 —*jubilee trumpets.*)

The Hebrew *yōbēl*, in Exodus 19: 13, is translated *trumpet*, while the marginal reading is *ram's horn*. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, in their *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, call the year of jubilee the "*year of the ram's horn*)." The use of the word *yōbēl* in Numbers 36: 4 was in connection with the famous case of the inheritance of the daughters of Zelophehad, which shall be referred to later in this study. It appears that one of the prophets of the Old Testament period referred to the year of jubilee, as the year of liberty. (See Ezek. 46: 17.)

One has only to read the record in order to see that the observance of the year of jubilee was, in reality, a part of the over-all regulations imposed by the general law of the sabbath. It is doubtful if Jehovah ever gave a law for his people, which was purely arbitrary; or, was not designed in some way for their good. This was certainly true of the law governing sabbath observances. God wanted his people to know then, just as he wants them to realize now, that he alone is God, and that the world and all that is in it, including people, belongs to him. The main-stream of his efforts, since the fall of man in the garden of Eden, has been to bring the human race back into fellowship with him.

Practically all of the requirements which God has made for his people as a whole, are, in one way or another, related to his promises, which are designed as motivations for obedience. "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.) "Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. 7: 1; cf. 1 John 3: 1-3.) There were some very definite promises made in connection with the year of

jubilee, as we shall presently see, and they must have brought a great sense of hope to the people who lived under that law.

The law which was to regulate the observance of the year of jubilee, is given in Leviticus 25, beginning with verse 8, with some references to it in chapter 27, beginning with verse 17. In the first paragraph of chapter 25, the law regarding the sabbatical year was given, which required that the land remain fallow for the entire year and then, after seven such periods had passed, or, after forty-nine years had elapsed, the next year, which was the fiftieth, was to be celebrated as the year of jubilee. We are not told when the first such year of liberty was observed, but if we are to understand that they would have to cultivate their land for the period of forty-nine years, exclusive of the sabbatical years, then it could not have been before they had been in the land of Canaan for at least fifty years. Furthermore, if the people of Israel did not begin to cultivate the land, until they had driven out the former inhabitants, then it was about seven years after they crossed the Jordan, before their agricultural activities began. But be that as it may, Jehovah gave the law regulating the observance of the year of jubilee, and it contained three specific provisions, namely:

(1) *Liberty was proclaimed to all Israelites, who were in bondage to any of their countrymen.* The law also provided that the price which was paid for a slave should vary, according to the proximity of the jubilee year, which is to say that the price of a slave would be more near the beginning of the forty-nine year period, that it would be nearer the close of that period. (2) *There was to be a return of the ancestral possessions to those who, for any reason, had been compelled to sell them.* This regulation applied only to possessions outside walled cities, and to property owned by the Levites. The land in Canaan belonged to Jehovah, and he had given it to the several tribes; and this feature of the law was designed to keep people from selling their possessions in perpetuity, and thereby depriving their heirs of the possessions which God had given to their ancestors. It

was to this regulation that reference was made, when a decision had to be made concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, because they had no brothers. (Read Num. 36: 1-13.) The price of the land which was sold was regulated on the same principle, which governed the acquisition of slaves.

(3) *Rest for the land.* Inasmuch as the last year of each seven-year period was the sabbatical year, when the land had to enjoy its rest, that means that both the forty-ninth and the fiftieth years were seasons when the land had to remain fallow; and when one remembers that there would be no reaping on the fifty-first year, until a crop could be grown, it is easy to see why the people would wonder about their food for those three years. The Lord, however, did not leave them in doubt regarding the matter. "And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase; then I will command my blessing upon you in the Sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for the three years. And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat of the fruits, the old store; until the ninth year, until the fruits come in, ye shall eat the old store." (Lev. 25: 20-22.)

When Jesus returned to Nazareth, soon after his baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist, he went into the synagogue; and when the Book of Isaiah was handed to him, he read from the first part of what we know as Isaiah 61. Luke's report of what took place is as follows: "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; and a fame went out concerning him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.
Because he anointed me to preach
good tidings to the poor:

He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,

And recovering of sight to the blind,

To set at liberty them that are bruised,

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." (Luke 4: 14-21.)

Some Bible students are of the opinion that the reference to "proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord," was to the year of jubilee; and if that is true, then it is not out of place to say that the typical import of that great year had its fulfillment in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not to say that the reference is exclusively to the year of jubilee; but rather it included all that had been done to make possible the time when God is willing to receive all who are held in bondage to sin, and who are willing to come to him through the terms of the gospel of Christ, so that they may receive forgiveness, and again find fellowship with the Father. (Cf. 2 Cor. 6: 2.)

The Contrast between the Old and the New

(Heb. 12: 22a)

But ye are come unto mount Zion, . . .

Notwithstanding the plainness of the teaching of the Scriptures regarding the subject, many people find it most difficult, if not indeed practically impossible, to distinguish between the Old and New Testaments. Attention has been called to this question throughout the quarter, which is now nearing an end; but the subject cannot be brought to our attention too often. When the writer began the letter from which the last two sections of the lesson text for today's study is taken, he did so by stating, "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son." (Heb. 1: 1, 2.) And those who read the epistle carefully, are aware of the fact that the contrast between the two ages or dispensa-

tions, is emphasized time and again.

The mount to which the people of Israel came, and which is placed in contrast with the mount to which God's people of this age have come, was mount Sinai. The writer refers to the contrast, involving the people of Israel, in this way: "For ye are not come unto a mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that no word more should be spoken unto them; for they could not endure that which was enjoined, If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned; and so fearful was the appearance, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." (Heb. 12: 18-21.)

It matters not how great the blessings under the old dispensation were, the ones which the Lord's people have in Christ are infinitely greater. Believers can look back to the experiences of the Israelites, and imagine how they must have looked forward in hope to the year of jubilee, when they could again experience freedom from captivity, repossess the inheritance which they received from their fathers, and serve God with joy during the period which God had provided for them; but all of that fades into insignificance, when one thinks of the marvelous blessings which have been provided for us in Christ. And it was for the purpose of encouraging us, and leading us to a greater appreciation of our blessings in Christ, that the things of the past have been recorded. (Cf. Rom. 15: 4; 1 Cor. 10: 6, 11.) We can have a better hope, if we can learn the lesson of the past, as we should.

The Superior Privileges and Experiences of Christians

(Heb. 12: 22b-24)

... and 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.

Although the ages of Moses and Christ are different in many respects, as all careful Bible readers know; there is a very real sense in which they cannot be entirely separated from each other. The writer of Hebrews touches on this issue, when he says, concerning past heroes of faith, "And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better things concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." (Heb. 11: 39, 40.) Mount Sinai was indeed a focal point in the history of Israel, for it was there that their law was given; but it was never God's will that his people should center their attention on that locale permanently; there was something better ahead.

And so, instead of returning to the terrifying experiences of mount Sinai, the writer of the letter, from which the lesson 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. The apostle 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, the writer of Hebrews 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.)

The city of the living God is called the heavenly Jerusalem, of which the famous earthly Jerusalem, in the days of its greatest glory, was to the pious Israelites the noblest symbol. All the glorious and rapturous things which the prophets of the Old Testament said about the city of David, have their ultimate fulfillment in the new Jerusalem, the eternal city of our God and his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. That glorious dwelling-place has been, and still is, the goal of all of God's people, in their struggling pilgrimages from time immemorial. (Cf. Heb. 11: 13-16.) It is the bright ideal of all thinking which is high and holy; and is the *sumum*

bonum of earth's greatest dreams and heaven's certain reality. And so, in the words of the psalmist,

Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised,

In the city of our God, in his holy mountain.

Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth,

Is mount Zion, on the sides of the north,

The city of the great King.

God hath made himself known in her palaces for a refuge.

(Psalm 48: 1-3.)

The Speaker's Bible notes that this is the place from which our Saviour came, and to which he has returned—the Father's house of many mansions. This is the home of the whole family of God, in heaven and on earth, who have known him as Father through Jesus Christ. The city of the saints has no temple, for indeed it is all temple. God is in every part of it, and the common has become the sacred; all its work is worship. We now wait in its lower courts, while we serve; and we shall see its higher glories, when we pass through its gates, in the last great day.

The writer of Hebrews, after speaking of the place of meeting, next makes known who are there. He first mentions an innumerable host of angels, and the saints of joyful convocation. The original word for "general assembly" means a *festal gathering*; and it is in contrast with the terror-stricken multitude at mount Sinai. The "church of the

firstborn" (the term "firstborn" is plural, as may be seen from the text—"who *are* enrolled in heaven") is 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 rights and privileges as the firstborn. (Cf. Heb. 12: 16.) These are the people who are enrolled in heaven. (Phil. 4: 3.) This figure is probably based on the well-known practice of city officials, who inscribed the names of their citizens on tablets or scrolls.

God is the final judge of all men, and it is before him that every person must stand or fall; for he is the great Center of the realities, to which his people have been introduced. (Cf. Rev. 4: 1-11.) Jehovah will assign, without appeal, each soul to his own destiny. Those who are faithful to Christ have nothing to fear; for the Son has promised to confess their names before the Father, and his holy angels. (Cf. Matt. 10: 32, 33; Rev. 3: 5; Luke 12: 8, 9.) The "spirits of just men made perfect" probably include all who have died in God's favor, since Abel. Abel's blood cried out for vengeance (Gen. 4: 9, 10); but the blood of Christ opened the way for reconciliation and holy fellowship with God and all that is good.

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

—William Cowper.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

What is the meaning and significance of the term "assembly"?

What is the relationship between the terms "assembly" and "congregation"?

In what sense are the words "assembly" and "church" the same?

What responsibility do people have when the assembly is called by divine authority?

What is meant by the "general assembly"?

The Year of Jubilee

What is the meaning of the term "jubilee"?

In what way did its observance affect all the people of Israel?

How was the year of jubilee related to the general law of the sabbath?

In what way was the year of jubilee determined?

What relationship, as a rule, exists between God's commandments and his promises?

Where does one find the law which regulated the observance of the year of jubilee?

What were the principal things to be done by the people of Israel during that time?

In what way was the year of jubilee related to the mission of Christ to the earth?

The Contrast between the Old and the New

Why do so many people have difficulty in distinguishing between the Old and New Testaments?

In what way does the writer of Hebrews deal with this problem?

What "mount" was prominent in the history and experience of Israel and why?

What happened when they assembled there?

How should we feel toward those things in the light of the new order?

What bearing does this have on the year of jubilee?

What benefits accrue to us from the records of the past?

The Superior Privileges and Experiences of Christians

What unbroken connection remains between the people of Moses and those of Christ?

What did the writer of Hebrews urge his Jewish brethren to do and why?

Why did God want his people to turn from one mountain to another?

What is the mount of the new order?

Where is the city of the living God and who will always live there?

What significance did the words of the Old Testament prophets have for it?

What are some of the features in the Bible's description of the heavenly Jerusalem?

What place do the angels of God have in the divine economy? (Cf. Heb. 1: 13, 14.)

What is the nature of the "general assembly" and with what is it placed in contrast?

What is meant by the church of the "firstborn"?

Of what better things, than that of Abel, does the blood of Christ speak?

Lesson XIII—March 28, 1971

DUTIES TOWARD OTHERS

Lesson Text

Lev. 19: 32-34; Heb. 13: 1-6

32 Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and thou shalt fear thy God: I am Je-ho'-vah.

33 And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not do him wrong.

34 The stranger that sojourneth with you shall be unto you as the home-born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were sojourners in the land of E'-gypt: I am Je-ho'-vah your God.

1 Let love of the brethren continue.

2 Forget not to show love unto strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; them that are ill-treated, as being yourselves also in the body.

4 Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

5 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.

6 So that with good courage we say,

The Lord is my helper: I will not fear:

What shall man do unto me?

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Thou shall not hate thy brother in thy heart."* (Lev. 19: 17.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Heb. 13: 17-21.

Daily Bible Readings

March 22.	M.	A Selfish Man (Luke 12: 13-21)
March 23.	T.	A Generous Man (Acts 4: 36, 37)
March 24.	W.	A Liberal Church (Acts 4: 32-35)
March 25.	T.	A Covetous Couple (Acts 5: 1-11)
March 26.	F.	Duties to All (Gal. 6: 1-10)
March 27.	S.	A Righteous Man (Psalm 15)
March 28.	S.	Duties Toward All (Rom. 12: 9-21)

TIME.—Leviticus, 1490 B.C.; Hebrews, A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACES.—Leviticus, In the wilderness before mount Sinai; Hebrews, Rome and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Moses, and the Israelites; probably Paul and some Hebrew Christians.

Introduction

When we think of the term "duty" or "duties," we usually have in mind

that which one is under obligation to do; something which is required

of him. This could be the result of his relationship to one of authority, or to some circumstance which places him under obligation to respond to the voice of authority, or to some situation which affects the person in question. The question of duty is so widespread, as to cause Cicero to note that there is not a moment without some duty. In the words of Gladstone, "Duty is a power that rises with us in the morning, and goes to rest with us at night. It is coextensive with the action of our intelligence. It is the shadow that cleaves to us, go where we will." When one stops to consider his place in the world in which he lives, he will easily see the wisdom and the correctness of George Eliot's observation, namely, "Can any man or woman choose duties? No more than they can choose their birthplace, or their father and mother."

One of the common practices among professed Christians of our day, or so it seems, is to see how little one can do, and still be regarded as a Christian. People who manifest that kind of an attitude, are not satisfied without doing something; but they obviously do not want to do any more than what they consider to be their duty. But what do such people regard as their duty? and who is it that sets the standard of their obligations? The average person is likely to find the answer to

these questions, in the standard of public opinion by which he is surrounded. Duty too often means the average expectation in any given situation in life. The Lord himself apparently dealt with this issue, when he spoke that which is contained in Luke 17: 7-10. That passage reads as follows:

"But who is there of you, having a servant plowing or keeping sheep, that will say unto him, when he is come in from the field, Come straightway and sit down to meat; and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank the servant because he did the things that were commanded? 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." The careful student can see at least two defects in this conception of one's duty, namely, (1) it limits and narrows life; and (2) it breeds self-satisfaction, that is, it makes people satisfied with doing less than they are capable of doing. This attitude is diametrically opposed to both the letter and the spirit of the New Testament. (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 5-11, and notice especially the emphasis which is placed upon the term "diligence.")

The Golden Text

"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart." The words just quoted are found in this context: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am Jehovah." (Lev. 19: 17, 18.) It was from this passage that Jesus quoted, when he answered the lawyer regarding the two great commandments of the law of Moses. (See Matt. 22: 34-40.) Cain apparently thought that he was not responsible for his brother (cf. Gen. 4: 9); but in that he was sadly mistaken. It has always been God's will that each man manifest the

proper attitude toward his brother, as the golden text for today's lesson, and its setting, plainly teach. One's speech and outward conduct do not always indicate his true character. This truth is forcefully illustrated by the following words:

"Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye.

Neither desire thou his dainties: For as he thinketh within himself, so is he:

Eat and drink, saith he to thee; But his heart is not with thee.

The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, And lose thy sweet words."

(Prov. 23: 6-8)

That which is within the heart will determine that which one says and does, as well as his attitude toward

others; and it is for this reason that Solomon exhorts, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. 4: 23.)

Thus, if a man never allows hatred for another to abide in his heart, he will not be guilty of saying and doing wrong things regarding him. And so, instead of harboring hatred in the heart for one's brother, who may have sinned against him, the offended person should remonstrate with the offender, and endeavor to get him to correct his mistake or wrongdoing. But if the offended man does not rebuke him, and endeavor to bring him to re-

pentance; he will by that failure, and by cherishing ill-will in his own heart, become guilty of sin, as a result of that which his brother has done. The Wycliffe Bible Commentary notes that the original word for *rebuke* involves reproving the wrongdoer, that is, telling where he was at fault, and then adds, "Doing this sincerely would reveal not only a lack of hatred but also a desire for his improvement. A word of rebuke left unsaid might well encourage him to continue in sin, thus bringing sin upon one's self." (Cf. Gal. 6: 1, 2; 1 John 3: 13-15; Matt. 18: 15-17.)

The Text Explained

Regarding the Aged and Sojourners
(Lev. 19: 32-34)

Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and thou shalt fear thy God: I am Jehovah.

One has only to look about him today, in order to see how little regard many people have for the precept just quoted; and it is quite probable that the lack of the proper consideration for the elderly, is due to a lack of parental training during the early years of the children. When young people are permitted to manifest a lack of respect for their elders, during their formative years, a pattern of life is being set in order; and the habits thus established will probably continue on through life. In the words of Edward Ward Carmack, "An act often repeated hardens into a habit; and a habit long continued, petrifies into character." When children and young people are permitted to show disrespect for older people, it will not be surprising to see them grow up with a similar attitude toward their parents. (Cf. Rom. 1: 30; 2 Tim. 3: 2.)

One of the best commentaries on the attitude which younger people should manifest toward the aged, is seen in the manner in which Joseph behaved himself in the presence of his hoary headed father. (Gen. 48: 8-12.) Adam Clarke quotes Dr. Delaney as saying, concerning Joseph. "When I consider him on his knees to God, I regard him as a poor mortal in the discharge of his duty to his creator. When I behold him

bowing before Pharaoh, I consider him in the dutiful posture of a subject to his prince. But when I see him bending to the earth before a poor, old, blind, decrepit father, I behold him with admiration and delight. How doth that humiliation exalt him!" Dr. Clarke goes on to say that he sees "nothing peculiarly amiable in this part of Joseph's conduct; he simply acquitted himself of a duty which God, nature, decency, and common sense, imperiously demanded of him, and all such in his circumstances, to discharge." But however one may look at Joseph's attitude toward his father, it can very properly be said, that when children are taught to respect the aged, including their parents, their conduct toward such can generally be commended by thoughtful and reverent people. (Cf. Prov. 16: 31; 20: 29.) When children are taught to reverence God, they most likely will honor the aged.

And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not do him wrong. The stranger that sojourneth with you shall be unto you as the home-born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself: for ye were sojourners in the land of Egypt: I am Jehovah your God.

If the people of Israel would manifest the proper attitude toward them who were strangers among them, they would, of course, have a better chance of getting them to listen to their teaching, both by word of mouth and by their conduct, about the true God. People who

have been strangers, can easily put themselves in the place of strangers.

This should be a most valuable lesson to us today; for it is an indisputable fact that some people will probably never be reached by the saving message of the gospel, unless they first see it in the lives of the Lord's people. There are doubtless multitudes of people living today who will be lost, largely because of the unchristian attitude which some professed followers of Christ have manifested toward them. If people can be made to realize their own lost condition, before they were rescued by the gospel, they will be more sympathetic with the unredeemed, and in a better position to assist in bringing them to the Lord. This is the principle which Paul apparently had in mind, when *he* wrote the following words to Titus: "Put them in mind to be in subjection to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready unto every good work, to speak evil of no man, not to be contentious, to be gentle showing all meekness toward all men. For we also once were foolish disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another." (Tit. 3: 1-3; cf. Matt. 5: 43-48; Rom. 12: 17-21.)

Some Personal and Social Duties

(Heb. 13: 1-4)

Let love of the brethren continue. Forget not to show love unto strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; them that are ill-treated, as being yourselves also in the body. Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

It is interesting to note that in every letter which inspired men wrote to Christian people, a large portion was devoted to the question of urging them to put into practice that which they had been taught. Or, to say the same thing in another way, the teaching of the Lord's plan of salvation must be reduced to practice, if he is to be pleased, and if the person in question is to be saved. This has always been true, as, may be clearly seen by reading the eleventh chapter of Hebrews

from which this portion of the lesson text is taken. When the writer finished that part of his epistle, he made this application: "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.) If we expect to dwell with God in eternity, we must accomplish our work, just as Christ did his, that is, with the same kind of faithfulness. (Cf. John 17: 4; 2 Tim. 4: 6-8; James 2: 10; 4: 17.)

It makes little difference what one may know from the doctrinal point of view, if he does not put into practice that which is required of him. The lessons which we have studied this quarter, from the Hebrew letter, have consistently emphasized the Christian system, over that of the Old Testament order; and it is fitting that the series of lessons should close with instruction in Christian living. When Jesus gave the great commission, as recorded by Matthew, he said, "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 which was preached, as authorized by this commission, is recorded in Acts 2: and verse 41 of that chapter tells something of the results which followed.

It is interesting to note that the very first thing which was said of the newly organized church, was with reference to its faithful observance of the things which they had been taught to do. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2: 42.) The words just quoted set forth the characteristic marks of the Christian life, to which the members of the first church

were pledged by their acceptance of the gospel message. God himself set the apostles in the church (1 Cor. 12: 28), and they constituted the visible center of unity of the newly established body of Christ. The new disciples were gathered around the apostles, and it was from them that the doctrine and discipline of the infant church proceeded. The instruction which we are to consider in today's lesson, proceeds upon the same basis, namely, that of apostolic teaching. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.)

The manner in which the hortatory portion of this section of the lesson text begins, indicates that there was no reason for the writer to reprove the brethren to whom he addressed his letter for a lack of brotherly love. Love of the brethren is one of the basic doctrines taught throughout the New Testament. The early church began its existence on that plane, as may be seen by reading Acts 2: 44, 45. Luke, the inspired historian, notes, "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 one had need." (Acts 4: 32-35.)

Brotherly love is one of the Christian graces, which Peter says is essential to an acceptance with God (2 Pet. 1: 5-11.) Jesus calls such love the badge of Christian discipleship (John 13: 34, 35); while John shows something of its supreme importance, by such statements as the following: "He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whether he goeth, because the dark-

ness hath blinded his eyes." (1 John 2: 9-11.) "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 we know love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3: 14-16.) "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God his brother also." (1 John 4: 20, 21.)

Hospitality in earlier times was a particular virtue, and filled a definite need, especially for people with high morals. William Barclay in speaking of the subject of inn-keeping during the days before and after Christ, tells of two men who were discussing the question of finding a lodging-place, when one asked the other if he knew of one where they could expect to encounter the fewest fleas! This same author continues: "When Theophrastus wrote his character sketch of the reckless man, he said that he was fit to keep an inn or run a brothel. He put both occupations on the same level. In the ancient world there was a rather wonderful system of what were called 'guest friendships.' Throughout the years families, even when they had lost active touch with each other, had an arrangement that at any time needful they would make accommodation available for each other. This hospitality was even more necessary in the circle of the Christians. Slaves had no home of their own to which to go. Wandering preachers and prophets were always on the roads. On the ordinary business of life, Christians had journeys to make. Both their price and their moral atmosphere made the public inns impossible."

Our modern way of living has greatly modified the practice with reference to strangers; and it is altogether possible that the need for hospitality is not so great, as it was in Bible times. But, even if that is true, it certainly is not a sufficient reason for ignoring the subject of

entertaining strangers altogether. Great impressions for good can often be made by showing love unto strangers, in spite of the fact that there are people who take advantage of the hospitality of others, and impose themselves upon them, just to save the price of a hotel or a motel, when there is no actual need on their part. But, on the other hand, there are those who do have a real need, and good in their cases can be done by showing hospitality to them. The enemies of Christ observed this virtue among the early Christians, and it is a matter of record that the apostate Julian assigned "kindness to strangers" as one of the reasons for the rapid progress which Christianity made, during the early years of its history. The reference to entertaining angels unawares, was probably to such cases as that of Abraham (Gen. 18: 1-8) and Lot (Gen. 19: 1-11).

Sympathy for those in trouble was also a distinguishing mark of the early Christians. The Lord's people were often persecuted, and many were cast into prison, because of their faith in Christ. Some of them were poor and probably in debt. Obligations to others could easily happen to those helpless people, because of conditions over which they had no control, with the result that they could be cast into prison, because of their inability to meet their debts. And it is doubtless true that mere pretexts were often used as occasions for treating defenseless Christians unjustly. When any of these unjust practices took place, the brethren who were in position to do so, went to their rescue. Tertullian said, "If there happened to be any in the mines, or banished to the islands, or shut up in prisons for nothing but their fidelity to the cause of God's church, they became nurslings of their confession." And, according to Aristides, "If they hear that any one of their number is imprisoned or in distress for the sake of their Christ's name, they all render aid in his necessity; and if he can be redeemed, they set him free." This is the kind

of practice that Jesus has reference to in Matthew 25: 31-46.

The low moral standards of the times of the early church made the injunction regarding marriage imperative; and what was true then, is also true today. If marriage is held in honor "among all," then all people, both the married and the unmarried, will respect it. Fornicators and adulterers include all who are guilty of improper and forbidden sexual relationships among both the married and the unmarried. Most people who are guilty of these sins probably escape human tribunals; but God will certainly punish them.

The Way to Acceptance and Contentment

(Heb. 13: 5, 6.)

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?

This is not the only place in the New Testament where the sins of immorality and covetousness are placed in the same general category. (Cf. Col. 3: 5; Eph. 5: 3-5.) The danger in loving money is expressed by Paul in these words: "But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Tim. 6: 9, 10.) The original promise, which the writer here adapts, was made by God to Moses (Deut. 31: 6), and to Joshua (Josh. 1: 5); but it is here extended to include all of God's people. (Cf. Matt. 6: 24-34; Phil. 4: 6, 7, 19.) God as a helper is a quotation from Psalm 118: 6; and there is no better commentary on this blessed assurance, than that found in Romans 8: 26-39.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is the meaning of the term "duty" and what constitutes a duty?
How do many people, apparently, regard their religious (Christian) duties?
What important lesson does Jesus teach on this subject?

The Golden Text

In what setting are the words of the golden text found?
In what way is the true character of a man determined?
Instead of hating one's brother, what should the child of God do?

Regarding the Aged and Sojourners

Why do so many people today show so much disregard for the first precept of this lesson?
What should be done in an effort to correct this manifest disobedience?
Discuss the example of Joseph in this respect.
Why did Jehovah place such stress on the proper attitude toward strangers?
What great blessing can come from the proper conduct to those without the Lord's fold?
How does the apostle Paul impress this lesson for our day?

Some Personal and Social Duties

In what way is the question of practice related to the doctrinal teaching of the epistles?
How did the writer of Hebrews apply this principle?

Why is it so important that we put into practice that which has been ordained for us?

What is one of the principal issues which is kept before the readers of the Hebrew letter?

How does Jesus combine the question of "doctrine" and "obedience"?

Upon what plane did the early church begin its service for Christ?

In what way did the early Christians regard the apostles?

What lesson is there in this for us?

How, apparently, did the Hebrew brethren feel toward each other, as indicated in the text?

How did the principle of "brotherly love" find application among the early Christians?

How do we know that it is impossible for one to please God without brotherly love?

In what way did the early disciples regard the question of Christian hospitality?

What should our attitude be toward the issue?

What was the practice of the early Christians toward the mistreated and persecuted people of the Lord?

What should be our attitude in this respect? Give reasons for your answer.

What attitude and conduct does the Lord expect his people to manifest toward marriage?

The Way to Acceptance and Contentment

What is the apostolic attitude toward immorality and covetousness and why?

What gracious promise has the Lord made to his people?

What blessed assurance has he given to all of us?

SECOND QUARTER

MEETING HUMAN NEEDS—THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

AIM.—*To observe how our Lord dealt with life's problems; to apply to our own lives the principles which he taught; and, to urge them upon others.*

Lesson I—April 4, 1971

THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

Lesson Text

Luke 4: 33-44

33 And in the synagogue there was a man, that had a spirit of an unclean demon; and he cried out with a loud voice,

34 Ah! what have we to do with thee, Je'-sus thou Naz-a-rene'? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

35 And Je'-sus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst, he came out of him, having done him no hurt.

36 And amazement came upon all, and they spake together, one with another, saying, What is this word? for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.

37 And there went forth a rumor concerning him into every place of the region round about.

38 And he rose up from the synagogue, and entered into the house of Si'-mon. And Si'-mon's wife's mother was holden with a great fever; and

they besought him for her.

39 And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she rose up and ministered unto them.

40 And when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.

41 And demons also came out from many, crying out, and saying, Thou art the Son of God. And rebuking them, he suffered them not to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.

42 And when it was day, he came out and went into a desert place: and the multitudes sought after him, and came unto him, and would have stayed him, that he should not go from them.

43 But he said unto them, I must preach the good tidings of the kingdom of God to the other cities also: for therefore was I sent.

44 And he was preaching in the synagogues of Gal'-i-lee.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases."* (Matt. 8: 17.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Luke 5: 12-16.

Daily Bible Readings

March 29.	M.	Healing in His Wings (Mal. 4: 1-6)
March 30.	T.	Healing of the Blind (Luke 18: 35-43)
March 31.	W.	Healing All Manner of Disease (Matt. 4: 23-25)
April 1.	T.	Healing of the Nations (Rev. 22: 1-5)
April 2.	F.	Health for Soul and Body (3 John)
April 3.	S.	Spiritual Health (Prov. 3: 1-12)
April 4.	S.	Ministry of Healing (Isa. 53: 4-6)

TIME.—Probably A. D. 27.

PLACES.—Capernaum and other places in Galilee.

PERSONS.—Jesus, a man with an unclean spirit, Simon's wife's mother, and others.

Introduction

The only two-volume historical record contained in the New Testament, is the one which is attributed to Luke, namely, the gospel narrative, which bears his name, and the Book of Acts. The first volume covers the life of Christ, while the second book is a history of the early church and of the efforts which were made to carry out the commission which the Lord gave to his disciples, between the times of his resurrection and ascension. If one takes into consideration the way in which the closing part of Luke, and the opening part of Acts, overlap each other, and the abrupt manner in which the Book of Acts closes; there appears to be sufficient reason for thinking that Luke may have previously planned to write a third volume for the set, which would cover the period following Paul's release from his first Roman imprisonment, and as long as the apostle and Luke might live. This is the period which is covered, although briefly, in Paul's two letters to Timothy and the one to Titus. However, if Luke had such a plan in mind, we have no way of knowing why it was not carried into fulfillment.

It is generally thought by Bible students, that Luke was a Greek; and if that is true, then he was the only writer of the New Testament who was a Gentile. Many students of the New Testament are also of the opinion that Luke and Titus were brothers in the flesh, and that their home may have been, at one time, in the city of Antioch of Syria, the city from which Titus emerges into history. (See Gal. 2: 1-3; cf. Acts 15: 1ff.) This fact, along with some information contained in Eusebius' history, has led some Bible students, including William M. Ramsay, to think that the two men, mentioned above, may have been natives of the Syrian city of Antioch, the city which played such a prominent part in the work of the early church, especially in its missionary activities among the Gentiles. And then add to that which has just been said the additional fact that the name of neither Luke nor Titus is mentioned in the Book of Acts, although both men had a

prominent part in the work of the church, which is covered in Acts; about the only solution to the problem, if Luke actually wrote Acts, is to say that he followed the plan adopted by John, and omitted both his own name, and that of his relative, from his historical record.

Luke is referred to in the New Testament as "the beloved physician" (Col. 4: 14), an epithet which implied both his popularity as a Christian gentleman, and his competency as a human benefactor. It is very probable that he was better educated, as that term is usually understood, than any of the other gospel writers; and the fact that he was apparently a Gentile, probably accounts for his writing to Gentiles, as well as to Jews. Ledlow notes that Luke was interested in human diseases, both physical and spiritual; and that he interpreted Christ as a physician, the equal of whom the world has never seen. Jesus, as Luke saw him, could penetrate the human soul, cleanse the heart, and remove whatever disease the person might have, and which the ordinary man could not detect, nor was even aware of its presence. And so, from Luke's point of view, Jesus Christ was the world's redeemer, and not merely the Jewish king.

Inasmuch as Luke looked at Jesus from the cosmopolitan, rather than from the national, point of view, it was natural for him to emphasize the Lord's sympathy for the Gentiles, as well as for the people of Israel, and to call attention to the many favors which were bestowed upon those who were outside the Jewish world. Matthew, writing primarily for Jews, traced the genealogy of Jesus, only as far back as Abraham; but Luke, with the Gentiles also in mind, went all the way back to Adam, to the very beginning of the human race; and to God himself, the creator of all men. (Cf. Acts 17: 24-28.) It is also interesting to note that only Luke mentions the birth of John the Baptist. The harbinger of the Saviour of the race was a man thirty years of age, and engaged in the work which he was sent to do, when he appeared on the scene in the other three gospel narratives.

The Golden Text

"Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases." The words of the golden text were written by Matthew, as he gleaned them from Isaiah's description of the suffering servant of Jehovah, a part of which reads as follows: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53: 4-6.)

If one will read Isaiah's entire account of the sufferings which Christ was called upon to endure for the human race, it will not be difficult for him to see that the overall picture is that of redemption from sin. Matthew, on the other hand, while not ignoring the total scope of the Saviour's activities, is concerned for the moment with his miracles in the physical world, and especially as they relate to human infirmities and illnesses. J. W. McGarvey, in commenting on the text now before us, notes that Matthew did not make a literal quotation from Isaiah, but did, without exhausting the prophet's meaning, show that Jesus did take away physical diseases and infirmities by curing them. McGarvey then goes on to say that the prophet referred, not merely to

the cure of bodily and mental diseases, but also and chiefly to the final sufferings of Jesus by which our spiritual maladies may be healed.

When Jesus, as Matthew pictures him, demonstrated that he had control over the various ills and evils which plagued the human race, then the people who were in bondage to the greatest of all terrorists and destroyers, namely sin and Satan, would be better prepared to understand that he could also save them from those enemies too. This, in fact, is the manner in which Jesus himself explained his miraculous powers, namely, "And he entered into a boat, and crossed over, and came into his own city. And behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven. And behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy). Arise, and take up thy bed, and go unto thy house. And he arose and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they were afraid, and glorified God, who had given such authority unto men." (Matt. 9: 1-8.)

The Text Explained

The Authority of Jesus in the Spirit World

(Luke 4: 33-37)

And in the synagogue there was a man, that had a spirit of an unclean demon; and he cried out with a loud voice, Ah! what have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Nazarene? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst, he came out of him, having done him no hurt. And amazement came upon all, and they spake to-

gether, one with another, saying, What is this word? for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. And there went forth a rumor concerning him into every place of the region round about.

Demonology is a New Testament subject, and one needs to have some knowledge of it, if he is to understand such passages as the one now before us. The first thing which one should observe, is that "demons" and "devils" are not the same, either then or now. When one reads the New Testament, it will not be difficult for him to see that there were

many demons (cf. Luke 8: 26-30), but only one devil (see Rev. 12: 9). Both the Jews and Gentiles of Bible times, believed that demons were the spirits of dead people, with this difference: the Jews believed that they were the spirits of the wicked dead, while the Gentiles thought that they were the spirits of both the good and the bad.

Josephus says that demons are no other than the spirits of the wicked, that enter into men that are alive and kill them, unless they can obtain some help against them. (See Wars, 7: 6, 3.) It is well to note that neither Jesus, nor the apostles, tried to correct the views which the Jewish people held with reference to demons, so far as the record goes.

The original term for "very religious" (Acts 17: 22) is rendered by McGarvey in these words: "*very demon-fearing*"; while Berry, in his interlinear Greek-English New Testament, has it this way: literally, "very reverent to demons." We are not to understand that either McGarvey or Berry subscribed to the Greek view of demons. They were simply giving the literal meaning of the expression, as Paul applied it to his hearers, as he stood in the midst of the Areopagus, in Athens. Or, to say the same thing in another way, the apostle was telling the men before him that they were devoutly engaged in that which they believed to be right. And if they were as eager to worship all who were entitled to such adoration, as they appeared to be, then it would not be too difficult for him to lead to the true worship of the UNKNOWN GOD.

The apostle John says, "To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3: 8); and inasmuch as Satan is the prince of demons (Matt. 12: 22-29), the works of the devil would certainly include the spirits of the wicked dead, who inhabit living people (cf. Matt. 12: 43-45). Jesus implied in Matthew 12: 25-29 that Satan would be bound, while Revelation 20: 1-3 plainly says that such was done. And so, not only did Jesus bind Satan (cf. John 16: 7; Col. 2: 13-15; Eph. 4: 8); we are plainly told that he has the keys of death and of Hades (Rev. 1: 18); and he has, by

his victory over Satan, made it possible for any one, who so desires, to be free from the clutches of sin and the devil (cf. 2 Tim. 2: 24-26; Rom. 1: 16, 17; Heb. 2: 14, 15). The power which the Lord demonstrated on demons during his personal ministry, was but a foretaste of the manner in which he would take care of his people, when his kingdom should be established.

As to whether or not evil spirits still dwell in the bodies of people today, the answer is, We have no direct teaching in the New Testament on the subject, no one should presume to speak dogmatically regarding the matter. We do know, however, that even Christians are called upon to take their stand against the "wiles of the devil," and that our fight is against the "principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (See Eph. 6: 11, 12.) And if disembodied spirits cannot find an abiding-place in the bodies of faithful Christians, it does not appear to be unreasonable to conclude that they would seek a home in the bodies of the wicked. (See again Matt. 12: 43-45.) This, however, is a question about which no one can be positive. The only way for one to be certain that the devil has no control over him whatsoever, is to allow the Lord to rule his life supremely; and in that way he will know that no evil spirit can ever come into his being.

Cures Inside and Outside the House of Simon

(Luke 4: 38-41)

And he rose up from the synagogue, and entered into the house of Simon. And Simon's wife's mother was holden with a great fever; and they besought him for her. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she rose up and ministered unto them.

It appears more satisfactory, and effective, to study the gospel narratives separately, one at a time; but no one will be able to learn the whole truth regarding our Lord's ministry, unless he also considers that which the other narrators have recorded. Both Matthew and Luke

simply say that Jesus, after leaving the synagogue, went into the house of Simon; but Mark notes that the house was Simon's and Andrew's, and that James and John accompanied him, as he entered the dwelling. (Mark 1: 29.) All three of the Synoptic writers speak of the miracle, involving the cure of Simon's wife's mother; but only Luke refers to her ailment as "a great fever." It is said that Galen, the father of medicine, divided fevers into little and great; and it is very evident that Luke took a similar view of the question.

Those people who are willing to take the time, and to make the effort, to acquaint themselves with the terminology which Luke employs in his writing, will be impressed with the fact that he was skilled in many fields of human accomplishment; and that his knowledge of material things covered a very wide range in human experience. For example, Luke's exclusive narratives regarding the births of John the Baptist, and of Jesus, are such as would interest a physician, to whom such personal disclosures would be confided. (Cf. Luke 2: 19.) Luke was the only one of the biographers of Jesus who referred to the illness of Peter's mother-in-law as *a great fever*.

And too, Luke alone, among the gospel writers, reports the story of the good Samaritan, including its first-aid episode. (Luke 10: 25-37.) When reporting the Lord's teaching regarding the perils of riches, in which he said, "For it is easier for a camel to enter in through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Luke 18: 25), Luke used a different word for "needle," from the one employed by Matthew and Mark. The term used by the two just named is *raphis*, whereas, Luke's word is *belonē*, which signifies a surgical needle. A. T. Robertson points out that the great detail, and the minute accuracy, with which Luke describes the voyage and shipwreck of Acts 27, throws more light upon ancient seafaring, than everything else we possess put together. One of the great works on the subject is Smith's *Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul*, the third edition of which was used by Ramsay, as a guide to his chapter

on *The Voyage to Rome*. Although Luke was so accurate in his use of nautical terms, it is interesting to note that he wrote, not like a sailor, but like a landsman.

There are two things to note regarding Peter's household, namely (1) Peter was a married man, and his mother-in-law was living in his home, or, at least, she was there at the time of this lesson; and was lying ill with a great fever. Not only was Peter married at the time of this lesson, but Paul says of him years later, "Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" (1 Cor. 9: 5.) Thus, the papal doctrine of clerical celibacy finds no example in Peter, as, indeed, that doctrine finds no example in that apostle for any of its peculiar doctrines.

The second thing to observe regarding that which took place in Simon's house, is the manner in which his mother-in-law was completely cured of her illness. The record says, "And Simon's wife's mother was holden with a great fever; and they besought him for her. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she rose up and ministered unto them." The "great fever" indicates a burning or violent fever, but regardless of its severity, the fever fled from the victim at the word of Jesus, after being rebuked by him. The woman's recovery was both immediate and complete: no convalescent period was necessary; for she arose and ministered unto Jesus and those who were with him.

And when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. And demons also came out from many, crying out, and saying, Thou art the Son of God. And rebuking them, he suffered them not to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ."

Jesus and his disciples had spent a busy day in Capernaum, first in the synagogue, where the Lord cast out an unclean spirit from one of the men who was present; and then in the house of Simon, where the instant cure of Peter's wife's mother had been effected. Luke says, "And

there went forth a rumor concerning him into every place of the region round about"; and that, of course, was sufficient to cause the people to gather up and bring their afflicted people to him. The reason why the people waited until the sun was setting, was that that was the time when the sabbath was ending, and they would be permitted by the law to bear their burdens to Jesus. The dramatic account of Mark makes the scene even more vivid: "And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were sick, and them that were possessed with demons. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick with divers diseases, and cast out many demons; and he suffered not the demons to speak, because they knew him." (Mark 1: 32-34.)

Both Matthew (8: 16) and Luke (4: 40) make it plain that every afflicted person, who was brought to Jesus, was healed. The size of the crowds, and the immediate and complete cure of the afflicted, made fake healing impossible; and it is certain that no such scene as that which was witnessed in connection with the activities of Christ, has ever been seen in the so-called faith-healing assemblies today. There were at least two reasons why Jesus did not permit the expelled demons to speak, namely, (1) he did not want the faith of the people to be associated with demons; and (2) he did not want it to appear that he himself was on friendly terms with them. (Cf. Acts 16: 16-18.)

Devotion to God and Public Service
are Both Essential

(Luke 4: 42-44)

And when it was day, he came out and went into a desert place: and the multitudes sought after him, and came unto him, and would have

stayed him, that he should not go from them. But he said unto them, I must preach the good tidings of the kingdom of God to the other cities also: for therefore was I sent.

Mark (1: 35) says that Jesus rose up a great while before day, and went out into a desert place to pray. That which distinguishes a deeply religious man from all other people, is the fact that he has a definite place in his life for prayer; or, to say the same thing in another way, prayer is a definite part of his life. No finer example of this truth can be found, than the one which Jesus left us. He prayed because he felt the need of his Father's help and companionship. When Jesus prayed, he was communing with God, while surrendering himself unreservedly to all the emotions of divine love, both for the Father and for all mankind; so that he might better dedicate himself to the work which God sent him to do.

There is something touchingly illustrative of the Saviour's humanity, in his devotional attitude toward God. Jesus could have prayed upon his couch; but he did not. Instead, he sought a quiet place, where he could be alone with his heavenly Father. And if the Lord needed to pray, how can we, who profess to follow him, live without communion with God? To begin the day with our heavenly Father, is the only sure method of setting ourselves above all of its events, and thus be in position to triumph over them. (Cf. Heb. 4: 14-16.) We learn from Mark's record that it was Simon, and those with him, that apparently led the multitude to the secluded place where Jesus was communing with his heavenly Father.

And he was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee. This was the beginning of our Lord's great Galilean ministry. (Cf. Matt. 4: 23-25, for a fuller account.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What writings of Luke have come down to us and how are they related to each other?

Who, apparently, was Luke and how does he fit into the New Testament scheme of things?

In what way did his background qualify

him for the work he did in the Lord's service?

What was the general viewpoint from which Luke sought to interpret Jesus and his work?

The Golden Text

In what context are the words of this portion of the lesson found?

What was the Lord's purpose in taking our infirmities, and bearing our diseases?

What use did Matthew make of Isaiah's prediction regarding the suffering servant?
 What was Matthew's purpose in recording these miracles of Jesus?

The Authority of Jesus in the Spirit World

In what way is the question of "demonology" related to the teaching of the New Testament?

What were the prevailing views regarding demons?

Why was Jesus given authority over the evil spirits which were prominent in his day?

What did the Lord do in order to make his people free from the tyranny of Satan?

Cures Inside and Outside the House of Simon

What, in your opinion, is the most satisfactory way to study the gospel narratives? Give reasons for your answer.
 What special lesson does one learn from the peculiar terminology which Luke employs?

Discuss some of the things which may be learned from such a study.

What important lesson does one learn from this narrative regarding Peter?

What significant truth is emphasized in the healing of his mother-in-law?

Recount the events of the day which Jesus and his disciples spent in Capernaum.

What prompted the people to bring their afflicted ones to Jesus?

Why did they wait until sundown to bring them?

How many of the people were relieved of their afflictions? Give reasons for your answer.

Why didn't Jesus permit the expelled demons to speak?

Devotion to God and Public Service Are Both Essential

Where did Jesus go when he left Simon's house the next morning?

Why did he seek a quiet place on that occasion?

What important lessons can we learn from the Lord's prayer-life?

What are some of the reasons why Christians ought to pray before the beginning of their day's work?

Why should one seek a quiet place for his devotions?

Who was it that followed Jesus to his secluded place and why?

What important mission did our Lord then begin?

Lesson II—April 11, 1971

THE LORD'S LAW OF LOVE

Lesson Text

Luke 6: 27-38

27 But I say unto you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you,

28 Bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you.

29 To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not thy coat also.

30 Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

32 And if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for even sinners love those that love them.

33 And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same.

34 And if ye lend to them of whom

ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much.

35 But love your enemies, and do *them* good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil.

36 Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

37 And judge not, and ye shall not be judged: and condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: release, and ye shall be released.

38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."* (Luke 6: 31.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Prov. 3: 13-18.

Daily Bible Readings

April 5. M. The Law of Love (Matt. 5: 38-45)

April 6.	T.	Love of Enemies (Luke 6: 27-38)
April 7.	W.	Love the Brethren (Heb. 13: 1-7)
April 8.	T.	Love the Brotherhood (1 Pet. 2: 14-17)
April 9.	F.	Love for Neighbors (Luke 10: 25-37)
April 10.	S.	Love Fulfills the Law (Gal. 6: 1-10)
April 11.	S.	God's Love for Man (John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 8, 9)

TIME.—A.D. 28.

PLACE.—On or near a mount in Galilee, probably mount Hattin.

PERSONS.—Jesus, his disciples, and the multitude.

Introduction

When one reads the record of the Lord's sermon on the mount, as given by Matthew, and then turns and reads much of the same teaching in Luke's account of our Lord's ministry, he is very naturally made to wonder, as to whether or not the two records are of the same sermon. The Lord's discourse, which is popularly known as *The Sermon on the Mount*, was delivered soon after Jesus began his great Galilean ministry, which was, generally speaking, the beginning of his second year of active teaching. Most of the first year of his public ministry was spent in and around Jerusalem, with an occasional visit to Galilee, as may be seen by reading the first three chapters of John. The fourth chapter of John records the actual transfer of the Lord's ministry from Judaea to Galilee. "When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples), he left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs pass through Samaria." (John 4: 1-4.)

Bible students have never been able to agree regarding the question raised in the preceding paragraph, that is, as to whether or not Matthew and Luke made records of the same sermon. There is no known way to be absolutely certain about the issue, and neither is it of great importance to our understanding the Lord's teaching. The subject, however, is an interesting one, and it is not out of place to give some consideration to it. Some students of the Scriptures appear to see an insurmountable obstacle, when both records are placed side by side, which makes it all but certain that the two inspired writers recorded the Lord's teaching on two different occasions. The obstacle referred to

is the apparent contradiction between Matthew and Luke, regarding the place where the sermon was delivered. Matthew says that the sermon was preached on a mountain, while Luke just as clearly says that it was spoken on a level place.

It is possible, however, that the so-called contradiction, just referred to, is more apparent than real. Matthew's exact language is, "And seeing the multitudes, he went up *into the mountain*: and when he had sat down, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying." It is possible for one to go up into a mountain, without going all the way to the top, just as it is possible for him to go to the very top of the mountain. And then, after the sermon was finished, Matthew says, "And when he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him." (See Matt. 5: 1, 2; 8: 1.) Luke's record says, "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." The next day he chose the twelve apostles from his disciples; "and he came down with them, and stood on a level place"; and it was there that the sermon in question was delivered. (Luke 6: 12ff.) There is nothing in Luke's record which makes impossible the view that Jesus descended with his disciples to a level place on the side of the mountain, and there delivered his discourse.

But whatever may be the facts regarding the time and place of the Lord's teaching, recorded by Matthew and Luke, that is the teaching which we know as that contained in the sermon on the mount, this much can be safely affirmed, namely, the discourse is generally regarded as the greatest statement of moral and religious principles to be found in

the annals of history. Even those who are unwilling to follow Jesus as a religious leader, are practically united in their acclaim of the sermon's loftiness and sublimity. There are few people who are willing to dispute the moral excellence, of that which Jesus spoke on the occasion, or occasions, now before us. It is true that there are some people who have not been favorably impressed with the sermon which Jesus delivered on the mount, but even those who have criticized it have, as a rule, registered their objections to it, not on the basis of its lack of nobility; but rather upon its impracticability. Its very idealism, they contend, is its most damaging feature; for it is, according to their viewpoint, on a plane too exalted for every day living.

There are even among so-called Christian people many who do not take the teaching which we are to study today seriously. They apparently feel that its demands are beyond their ability to reach in their daily living; and, as a result, they "find themselves with a divided conscience, if not a besetting hypocrisy." Such people, however, have

no fault to find with the sermon's teaching; they simply feel that it is beyond their reach, and more or less unrelated to the immediate problems of the average man in the workaday world.

But the teaching which is here attributed to Jesus, by both Matthew and Luke, has been put into practice, both by Jesus himself and by others who have endeavored to follow him. The message of the Lord, which we are to consider today, can be understood and put into practice by his disciples; and it is valid and useful, even apart from its historical, literary, and exegetical aspects, which are receiving so much attention today, and which tend to overshadow the real significance and power of the Lord's teaching. The words of Jesus, in the setting now before us, set forth an ideal for human life, founded upon religious truth and moral principles, thereby making it the highest standard of moral and spiritual conduct which has ever been conceived. It is, in fact, correctly regarded as the ultimate standard of living, to which the Lord's people can and must strive to attain.

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

The Attitude of the Christian toward Those About Him

(Luke 6: 27-31)

But I say unto you that hear. Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you. To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not thy coat also. Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

As any one can easily see, most of the teaching of Jesus, which is contained in Luke's account of the Lord's discourse, is also in Matthew's report of the Lord's sermon on the mount. There is nothing to indicate that either Matthew or

Luke recorded all that Jesus spoke on the occasion, or occasions, which they had under consideration. We know, for example, that Luke did not record all that Peter spoke on the day of Pentecost, as reported in Acts 2. After giving that which was probably the principle part of the sermon, along with the immediate reaction which followed, the inspired writer says, "And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation." (Acts 2: 40.)

Those who are acquainted with the gospel records are aware of the fact that the writers did not always list their information chronologically. (Cf. Matt. 4: 1-11 with Luke 4: 1-13, where the two writers do not list the three temptations of Jesus in the same order.) Each of the four writers evidently had a purpose in mind, as he wrote; but

mere chronological order was not always necessary to the accomplishment of their purpose. Each of the four writers covered, in a general way, the life and works of Jesus, while here in the flesh; but they did not always record the same events and teaching of a given period. It is a fact, worthy of notice, that the only miracle of Jesus, which all four of the evangelists recorded, was that of feeding the five thousand. All of this is being said in order to show that two or more of the inspired historians could write about the same teaching or works of Jesus, without discussing all that he said or did, or without the same chronological order. This, evidently, was the case when Luke and Matthew wrote of the Lord's teaching now under consideration.

Any faithful and dedicated child of God is almost certain to have some enemies; for Paul says that "all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3: 12.) Friends and well-wishers do not persecute their friends; but both Jesus and Paul plainly teach that the Lord's people should not be guilty of retaliation. Paul's language is, "Render to no man evil for evil. Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men. Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto the wrath of God: for it is written. Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord. But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom. 12: 17-21.) Verse 18 makes it plain that enmity between the Lord's people and others, should never be the fault of the Christian.

If the early Christians had sought revenge, when their enemies persecuted them, it is doubtful if many of the latter would have been converted to Christ. Those who are acquainted with the facts in the case, are aware that the story of Christianity, especially during its early years, is a record of suffering. The religion of Christ in the Roman Empire, for three hundred years, was a persecuted religion. The purpose of

the persecutors was "to abolish the Christian name from the earth." (Cf. Rev. 6: 9-11.) The Roman officers, accordingly, invented every conceivable instrument of torture to exterminate the church.

It is said that Christians were dragged by the heels, behind fast horses, as they raced through the streets of the cities. They were laid upon red-hot gridirons; their skin was peeled off in strips; they were sawed into pieces—fingers, toes, and then arms and legs; they were wrapped in skins, soaked in pitch, placed on poles or other upright objects, and used for torches; they were left to rot in dungeons; lions tore their bodies apart in the arena, and bears hugged them to death; wild bulls tossed them upon their horns; the people were boiled alive; and they were subjected to every other imaginable manner of inflicting a horrible death. But in spite of all that the enemies could do, Christianity continued to spread; it could not be swept back, any more than could the mighty ocean tide.

The success of the early Christian movement was not due to the people who accepted the Lord's way of life; but rather to their motivation—they endeavored to see to it that all they did was done in love. (Cf. 1 Cor. 16: 14.) There are three specific directions which love for one's enemies should take, namely, (1) do *good* to them that hate you; (2) bless them that curse you; and (3) *pray* for them that spitefully use you. This is enough to show that the love which Christians are to manifest toward their enemies, is not the feeling of natural love, such as that which exists between husband and wife, parents and children, and friend and friend. It is, rather, the love which is based on moral choice, the kind which seeks the eternal welfare of those who hate the Lord's people. This is the kind of love which God has for sinful humanity (cf. John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 6-8); and it is the will of God that his people be like him in this respect. (Cf. Matt. 5: 43-48.)

When one thinks of the fact that Jesus commands his followers to love their enemies, what must be his feeling toward his professed disciples, who sometimes manifest such unchristian attitudes with reference

to each other, as is so often the case? Those professed Christians should read the First Epistle of John often. "Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3: 13-16.) "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." (1 John 4: 20, 21.)

There may come to the Lord's people, in their relationship with those who dislike or hate them, treatment which can very properly be classified as belonging to the realm of physical violence, such as smiting one on the cheek. A slap in the face has, in all ages, been regarded as a gross insult: but it is not an assault that imperils one's life. (Cf. John 18: 22, 23; Acts 23: 1-5.) If we continually keep in mind the fact that Jesus forbids his people from seeking revenge, or even the manifestation of a vindictive and an unforgiving spirit, we should have no trouble in understanding what Jesus means by offering the other cheek. The spirit which prompts the turning of the other cheek, is a demonstration of the fact that the one who has been mistreated does not possess a spirit of malice, but rather a spirit of love. It is the same in principle as doing good for evil; or, to say the same thing in another way, one, by turning the other cheek, is simply showing that it is better to suffer wrong twice, than to do wrong once.

One may also be deprived of his personal or material property, but even at that, he still is not permitted to do wrong. Instead, the Christian should be willing to be defrauded still further, rather than to violate his Master's will. The Scriptures are very clear on this point, both with reference to false brethren, and those of the world. If a Christian is

robbed of his earthly possessions, it is far better to be defrauded, than it is to do wrong. This is the way Paul cautioned the Christians in Corinth, who felt that they had suffered wrong, and were endeavoring to get relief through the civil courts: "Nay, already it is altogether a defect in you, that ye have lawsuits one with another. Why not rather take wrong? why not rather be defrauded? Nay, but ye yourselves do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren." (1 Cor. 6: 7, 8.) "For ye both had compassion on them that were in bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions, knowing that ye have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one." (Heb. 10: 34.)

Verse 31 contains Luke's version of the rule of life, expressed by Jesus, which we know as the Golden Rule; and if we can bring ourselves to visualize its true spirit, it will not be difficult for us to realize that one of the most striking characteristics of the teaching of Jesus, is its practicableness. There is nothing about his program for daily living, which cannot be put into practice. Matthew calls the Golden Rule a summary of the law and the prophets: "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets." (Matt. 7: 12.) But we should remember that the Golden Rule can benefit us, only as we are willing to use it.

The Lord's People Must Do More
Than Others
(Luke 6: 32-36)

And if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for even sinners love those that love them. And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much. But love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing: and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil. Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

This section of the lesson text

may very properly be called the law of love in action. The Lord's people are called upon to treat their enemies better than the latter treat them; and it is this spirit and service which raises them above the people of the world. Or, to state the same thing in another way, the Lord, by asking the question, "What thank have ye?" or, as Matthew has it, "What do ye more than others?" means for his disciples to be distinctive. Jesus has an ideal of his own to offer to the world; and his people are expected to furnish the proof of its superior quality. (Cf. Phil. 2: 12-18.)

A great part of the battle for human advancement, has been won when men learned to give to others more than they themselves receive. It is on this basis that the social equilibrium is maintained, and the individual is preserved in well-being and peace. But if we, as individual Christians, want to ascertain whether or not we are being benefited by the teaching of Jesus, we can easily learn the answer, simply by asking and answering a related question, namely, Just what difference is his teaching making in our lives? Or, What is there about us, as professed followers of Christ, which is special or noteworthy? Those who are living among and around Christians should always be able to speak of them as "the people who are different."

The Interpreter's Bible refers to the Lord's teaching in the lesson text for today's study, as *the supreme ideal*, and points out the need for meditation on the passage during all the days of one's life. The loftiness of the challenge which Jesus places before his people, is intended to exalt them with a sense of the glory of God, while at the same time humbling to the dust with the consciousness of our utter inability, in and of ourselves, to measure up to the ideal which he has placed before us. When Jesus named the greatest commandments of the law, he said that the first one relates to God, while the second requires that one love his neighbor as himself. When one loves himself, that implies that he wants for himself the best that life has to offer, and that he is willing to make the effort to obtain it. But such love, and such a pur-

pose in life, can really be beneficial, only if one is willing to recognize values according to God's standard. And so, when one loves another, even an enemy, it means that he should regard him as being potentially worthy of all the best in life, which God can help us make available for him.

Measure for Measure Can Be Expected

(Luke 6: 37, 38)

And judge not, and ye shall not be judged: and condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: release, and ye shall be released: give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.

The injunction contained in this section of the lesson text, should motivate every follower of Christ to walk in the pathway of mercy; and to treat other people as he would have them treat him. One of the common faults among God's people today, is that of censorious judgment, a practice which Christ specifically condemns; and it is a fact, worthy of notice, as Christ himself points out, that the one who engages in harsh criticism, is usually guilty of greater wrongdoing, than that which he condemns in others. (Matt. 7: 1-5.) Only those who are honest with themselves, and with God, do not try to evade the facts, in their own lives, by unjust criticism of others. Instead, being characterized by humility and truthfulness, they promptly confess their own sins, and thereby escape the judgment of others, and receive, not the condemnation, but the mercy of the heavenly Father.

The Bible abounds in examples of the truthfulness of the principle of measure for measure. (Read the stories of Ruth's kindness to Naomi; Jacob's deception of his old and blind father, and the many times he himself was deceived; and the outcome of Haman's plot against Mordecai.)

The story is told of a small boy who, in company with his mother, visited a place called Echo Valley. The boy had never heard an echo, and his mother, aware of that, told

him that for men there was an old man in the mountains; but that for boys there was a boy, who would answer any one who called out to him. The boy cried aloud, and the echo returned the greeting. Surprised, the boy asked, Who are you? and the boy in the mountains answered back. Who are you? The boy was irritated, and said, I don't like you; and he, of course, received the same reply. The boy's mother then suggested that he say something nice to the boy in the moun-

tains; and when he did, the boy across the way replied the same way. This pleased the boy, and he was to learn later that this is the way that life deals with all of us; just as Jesus announced in the long, long ago. May God help us to learn the lesson. And so.

If you seek for kindness, be kind;
If you seek for truthfulness, be true;

What you seek in others, you find:
Your life is a reflection of you.

—Anonymous.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Give reasons for thinking, or not thinking, that Matthew and Luke recorded the Lord's teaching in the same sermon.

About what time in the Lord's ministry did he deliver the sermon on the mount?

Why is the teaching of the sermon so important to us?

The Attitude of the Christian toward Those About Him

What was the general plan which the gospel writers followed in recording their narratives?

Why didn't each one of the four men write about the same things?

Why does each faithful Christian always have people who oppose him?

What general attitude does the Lord want his people to maintain toward their enemies?

In what way did Paul comment on this kind of a situation?

What effect did this kind of attitude have on many of the church's enemies and why?

Why were the Lord's people treated so cruelly?

What three specific directions does loving one's enemies take, according to Jesus' way?

What can you say about the manner in which the Lord regards enmity among brethren?

What does the Bible teach regarding such an attitude?

What does it mean for a mistreated person to turn the other cheek?

What should be the attitude of those who are deprived of the property through persecution?

What does the Lord's golden rule involve on the part of his people?

The Lord's People Must Do More Than Others

What does this section of the lesson text set forth for the Lord's people?

What is it that makes Christian people different from others?

Why is it essential that Christians do more than others?

How can one be certain that the Lord's teaching is in reality a blessing to him?

Why is the teaching of Jesus in this section of the lesson text called *the supreme ideal*?

What does this ideal involve with reference to our fellow men?

What must one always recognize, if love for self is to prove a blessing to him?

Measure for Measure Can Be Expected

What effect should the Lord's teaching in this section of the lesson text have on us?

What does it mean for one to be merciful to others?

What is one of the common faults among the Lord's people, as referred to here?

What is usually true of the censorious faultfinder?

What should be the attitude of the Lord's people in this respect?

What is the lesson of measure for measure?

Lesson III—April 18, 1971

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Lesson Text

Luke 10: 25-37

25 And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

26 And he said unto him. What is written in the law? how readest thou?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Je'-sus, And who is my neighbor?

30 Je'-sus made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Je-ru'-sa-lem to Jer'-i-cho; and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 And by chance a certain priest was going down that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And in like manner a Le'-vite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Sa-mar'-i-tan, as

he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion,

34 And came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on *them* oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee.

36 Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers?

37 And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Je'-sus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."* (Lev. 19: 18.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 5: 38-48.

Daily Bible Readings

April 12.	M.....	Our Neighbor Identified (Luke 10: 25-37)
April 13.	T.....	Duty to a Brother (Gen. 4: 3-10)
April 14.	W.....	Love for Others (Rom. 13: 8-10)
April 15.	T.....	Duty to Others (Matt. 5: 38-42)
April 16.	F.....	Unfriendly People (Matt. 13: 54-58)
April 17.	S.....	Friends of Jesus (John 12: 1-8)
April 18.	S.....	True Neighbourliness (2 Cor. 8: 1-9)

TIME.—A. D. 28.

PLACE.—Probably in Judaea.

PERSONS.—Jesus and a certain lawyer.

Introduction

The facts of the parable which we are to study today, were recorded only by Luke; and it is well to observe at the very outset, that it is one of the greatest and best known parables which Jesus spoke. It is so simple that a child can read and understand its meaning; and yet it is, as some one has observed, "in truth a treatise on practical ethics more profound in thought and more powerful in effect than any other in the world." Perhaps it is not too much to say that the parable, which we know as the Parable of the Good Samaritan, sets forth the essential truth of one's relation to his fellow men. Our very familiarity with the parable blinds us to the greatness of its mingled simplicity and depth, as well as to the greatness of the claim which it makes on us. The Great Texts of the Bible quotes Westcott as saying that as we grow older.

things about us change, and we find ourselves viewing the record from different angles; but regardless of the manner in which the various parts of the story group themselves together, and the frequency with which we read the narrative, the central truths which Christ spoke always rise up before us in sharp and clear focus, and crown each special lesson which the Lord's teaching supplies.

It is essential, if we are to appreciate the significance of the parable which we are to study today, to have some understanding of the background against which it was spoken. The Jewish people, for some fifteen hundred years, had considered themselves as being God's people, exclusively; and had regarded all others as being godless, unclean, and hopelessly lost. This kind of an attitude had led the

Jews, and especially their leaders, to become technical, narrow-minded, and selfish. They could, and did, criticize others freely, while failing to see their own faults. They had no interest in the salvation of other people, and were vigorously opposed to any effort to bring them into fellowship with God. This spirit is clearly portrayed in the Book of Jonah.

Jesus had not gone very far in his public ministry, before he met this kind of opposition on the part of the scribes and Pharisees; and his purpose in the lesson text which we are to consider today, was to show them the error of their way, and to assure them of the love of God for all men. The Jewish people hated the nations about them (cf. Matt. 5: 43), and they had "no dealings with Samaritans" (John 4: 9). It was with this limited and circumscribed view of men and measures, that the lawyer

in the text asked the question regarding the identity of his neighbor.

The Lord had already made it plain to the lawyer, as we shall presently see in the principal text, that love for God and one's neighbor was essential to eternal life, and the lawyer could find no fault with the statement of Jesus; but that was not the answer which the man who was concerned with the law wanted. If it could be clearly established that his neighbor was one who lived nearby, that is, one of his Jewish brethren with whom he enjoyed mutual kindness; then his claim to eternal life would have the force of a demonstration. Or, to say the same thing in another way, the lawyer wanted to be justified in his own attitude toward people of other races. This was the kind of background against which Jesus spoke the parable which we are to consider today.

The Golden Text

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The words just quoted are found in this context: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am Jehovah." (Lev. 19: 17, 18.) With this entire statement before them, it is not difficult for thoughtful people to understand why the Jewish teachers got the idea that one's neighbor, so far as the Jews were concerned, was a member of his own race. But when we come to the Lord's interpretation of the law, it is easy to see that the precept has a much wider application. We know, for example, that the people of Israel regarded Jehovah as then-Father, and theirs alone; but Jesus makes it plain that he is indeed the Father of all who are willing to enter into fellowship with him. (Cf. Acts 10: 34. 35.)

It is a significant fact therefore that one of the chief differences between the people of the Old Testament, and those of the New, is found in who one's neighbor is, and what it means to love him. Both Testaments contain the commandment that one must love his neighbor as

he loves himself; but it appears that the people of the old covenant were wholly unable to grasp the full meaning and significance of the precept. It seems that they could not conceive of one being their neighbor, who was not related to and friendly with them. What they failed to see was that when the Bible says that people should love their neighbors as themselves, it is not enjoining a love which seeks its own comfort and pleasure. Jesus made this truth plain, when he said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." (See Matt. 16: 24. 25.) It remained therefore for Jesus to give the true meaning of just who one's neighbor is, and what it means to love him.

The love which a child of God must have for his neighbor is, accordingly, the same kind of love which he has for himself, namely, a love which recognizes the dignity and worth of the human soul, and which realizes that this supreme product of creative power is in his hands, as it were, to bring to completion as God would have it, or to eternal ruin. Love for one's self and his neighbor, is man's supreme

duty; and since there is no respect of persons with God, it is the eternal obligation of each individual to have the same kind of interest in his fellow men, that he has in himself.

The Text Explained

The Occasion for the Parable (Luke 10: 25-29)

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he said unto him, What is written in the law? how reddest thou? A)id he answering said. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy sold, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto HIM. Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?

Luke makes it very plain, as to why the lawyer asked the questions, which he addressed to Jesus. The first one was an attempt to put Jesus to the test, to try him, with the evident purpose of learning just what Jesus would say. While the lawyer's motive may not have been pure, there is no indication that he was trying to lead Jesus into sin; he may have wanted to "expose his ignorance." We would call it a catch question; and we may be certain that the lawyer did not mean for and good, so far as Jesus was concerned, to come from his effort to try the Lord. The original word for "made trial of" occurs in the New Testament in three other places. (Matt. 4: 7; Luke 4: 12; 1 Cor. 10: 9.)

Eternal life was a subject of general interest (cf. Luke 18: 18); and the lawyer probably wanted to see just how much the young Galilean teacher knew about it. It is well to keep in mind that the term "lawyer," as used here, was not an *attorney*, as we understand the word: but rather an expert in the religious teaching of Moses, that is, one who was capable of explaining or interpreting the law. The original word for "lawyer" is *nomikos*, literally, one learned in the law. Some of the lawyers were also, apparently, called scribes, because of their familiarity with the law. (Cf. Luke

The Father is not willing that any one should be lost; and if we are to be like him, then we must work for the salvation of others, as well as for our own.

11: 45-52 with Matt. 23: 13ff.) It is possible that the lawyer, on the occasion now before us, stood in order to attract attention to himself.

But regardless of the motive which prompted the lawyer to address his inquiry to Jesus, it is certain that he could not have asked a greater, or a more important, question; for to live with God in eternity will mean more to those who are granted that privilege, than anything else in the world. Jesus himself 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.) The New Testament sets forth two aspects of eternal life, namely, (1) its quality, and (2) its duration. If one is to have his life extended in heaven, he must see to it that he has the quality of an enduring life here and now. (Cf. John 11: 25, 26; Col. 3: 1-4; 1 John 5: 10-13.) And so, in the language of Longfellow and Mis. C. H. Morris

"There is no Death! What seems so
is transition;

This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life elysian.
Whose portal we call Death."

"Eternal life, begun below.

Now fills my heart and soul;
I'll sing his praise for evermore.
Who has redeemed my soul."

When the lawyer asked Jesus about eternal life, he may have thought that the latter would announce some new rule for obtaining eternal salvation; and he could therefore expose him as implying that the law of Moses was not sufficient for the instruction of those who were seeking life everlasting. That, of course, was true; but the lawyer himself was not aware of it. (Cf. Acts 13: 38, 39.) This appears to have been the reason why Jesus gave his reply in the form of a question. The method which the Lord employed is one of the most effective ways of getting at the

heart of an insincere person, and also of exposing him to others. The lawyer claimed for himself a thorough knowledge of the law; and it was therefore essential that he answer the Lord's question correctly, which he did.

The question which the lawyer had asked Jesus, even granting that he was entirely sincere and desired information, was far too important to be dealt with by merely describing that which would be intellectually in harmony with one's thinking. Jesus therefore made an immediate and direct appeal to the man's conscience. An honest person, in such a situation, would be satisfied with God's word; but if he is not honest at heart, he will try to raise a side-issue, and turn the argument into another direction. That is precisely what the lawyer attempted to do; but Jesus did not permit him to get away from the issue in hand. The lawyer's answer to the Lord's question was clear and decisive, containing, as it did, a summary of the law and the prophets (cf. Matt. 22: 34-40); and it was there that the question regarding the obtaining of eternal life had to be answered. The lawyer had evidently received more than he had asked for.

If the lawyer in question was like the scribes in general, he was a theorist instead of a doer of the law. (Cf. Matt. 23; James 1: 22-25.) And if this was true of the man now under consideration, then his probable purpose in asking the question regarding eternal life, was to expose Jesus as one who had been disregarding the law, in the "new" teaching which he was doing. But Jesus demonstrated his devotion to the law, when he told the lawyer that he had correctly answered the question regarding what the law said; and when he bade him do that which the law enjoins, he put the lawyer in an embarrassing position; for the law required action on his part, rather than mere theory.

The lawyer, however, was not ready to rest his case, but he was no longer concerned with his original question; his aim at this point in the controversy, was to try to extricate himself from the embarrassing situation in which he found himself, and to maintain his standing among

his fellow scribes. Or, to say the same thing in another way, the lawyer's aim at this point, was to turn the light of the truth away from himself, and center the discussion upon a theoretical question, which had long occupied the minds of the Jewish leaders. When one tries to evade the truth which has brought an issue to his sense of morality, his effort may very properly be called the attempt to seek a refuge for his stricken conscience. The lawyer's effort at this very thing reminds us of a similar attempt on the part of the Samaritan woman, who apparently sought to turn the attention of Jesus from her to a religious question, when he had let it be known that he was aware of her own moral life. (John 4: 9-20.) This practice is still common among religious people, and even to an alarming degree among preachers who profess to be active in the Restoration Movement, as any thoughtful observer well knows. The Lord answered the lawyer's second question, as the remainder of the lesson shows; but not as the man of the law wanted it answered.

From the Jewish Point of View (Luke 10: 30-32)

Jesus made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance a certain priest was going down that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side.

The setting of this parable has led some commentators to think that Jesus may have been in or near Bethany, when he spoke it. The Fourfold Gospel notes that "the road from Jerusalem to Jericho is eighteen miles long, and descends about 3,500 feet. About two miles from Jerusalem it passes through the village of Bethany, and for the rest of the eighteen miles it passes through desolate mountain ravines without any habitation save the inn, the ruins of which are still seen about half the way to Jericho. This district from that time to the present has been noted for robberies, and Jerome

tells that the road was called the "bloody way." While the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was real, that is, a literal road, it will do no violence to the Scriptures to speak of it as life's road; and that which we see upon it, in the parable, is still being done today.

It is well to note, before beginning the actual study of the parable itself, that Jesus did not give a direct answer to the lawyer's question regarding the identity of his neighbor. The very question itself betrayed a wrong attitude on the lawyer's part; and until that was cleared up, any reply that Jesus might have given would have left the wrong impression on the man who asked the question. For example, if Jesus had said that so and so is your neighbor, the lawyer would have concluded immediately that others were not his neighbors. That was the very error which Jesus wanted to get out of his mind. And so, instead of giving a precise definition of a neighbor, Jesus showed the lawyer what it means to be neighborly, first, by showing what it is not, and then by showing what it is; and then, in effect, told him that if he would manifest the true spirit of neighborliness, he would have no difficulty in answering his own question.

If we regard the parable now before us as portraying the road of life, it will be easy for us to see that three distinct attitudes toward others are clearly represented, namely, (1) by the robbers, (2) by the priest and the Levite, and (3) by the Samaritan. The robbers held to the viewpoint that what one has the power to do, he has the right to do. Such people make their living by exploiting others; and they are not all called robbers! People, such as these, do not know the meaning of philanthropy; they love money more than they love men; and they do not hesitate to kill a man in order to get his money, or whatever else he may have which they want, including his good name. Few, if any, professed Christians would actually kill a man, physically; but that overt act is not necessary, in order for one to be guilty of murdering his own brother in Christ. (Cf. 1 John 3: 15.)

The principle of living, represented by the robbers, leaves de-

struction and death in its path; and if it should gain supreme control in the world, human life would no longer be safe anywhere, and peace, happiness, and contentment would no longer be possible. In the scene which Jesus pictures, evil is temporarily enthroned and permitted to exercise its will. No man can adequately describe the results which would follow, if relief from this way of life could not be found.

The conduct of the priest and the Levite enabled the lawyer to see himself; for he saw in them men who knew the law, but did not practice it. The law of Moses required that no one should leave an animal, even the animal of an enemy, in distress, without some effort to relieve it; but how much more a man, presumably a Jewish brother! (Cf. Deut. 22: 1-4; Ex. 23: 4, 5.) The priest and the Levite who passed by the wounded man on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho, may have had excuses in their minds which they deemed sufficient for them to refuse assistance to the sufferer; but Jesus did not consider any of them worth mentioning. Or, to express the same thing in another way, there was no justification for their conduct. (Cf. 1 John 3: 17; James 4: 17.)

The priest and the Levite represent the passive class in human society; and it is worthy of note that the character of a man cannot be adequately estimated, until an opportunity for service is presented to him. (Cf. Matt. 25: 14-30.) No man could foretell what the men of the Lord's parable would have done with their talents, before they were given a chance to use them. The priest and the Levite had an opportunity to show mercy to the wounded man; for his condition presented a problem, the solution of which involved human duty; but they passed by on the other side, that is, on the other side of the road from where the wounded man was lying.

People who belong to the passive class in human society, refuse to assume any responsibility for the condition of the unfortunate; and they, accordingly, feel no obligation to assist them. They may feel that other duties are more important; but whatever their thinking may be,

they pass up the opportunity for assistance, and leave the problem unsolved. This class does not actually and overtly harm society, like that which is represented by the robbers; but neither does it help. Such people would not kill a man for his money; but neither will they spend theirs to rescue him. (Read again 1 John 3: 13-18.) The attitude of the passive class in society may be summed up in these words: What I have is mine, and I will keep it; I am under no obligation to use it in the interest of others.

The Attitude of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 33-37)

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee. Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

The class of people who are represented by the good Samaritan are

nearest like God; and in them love and sympathy find their highest expression. When they see the needy, they ask no questions; but, being "moved with compassion," they immediately try to do something for them, and endeavor to help them solve their problem. Suffering humanity, though strangers to people like the good Samaritan, mean more to them than their money; and they are willing to invest, not only their means, but their time and influence as well, in an effort to save the unfortunate. People who manifest this kind of attitude do not see in the New Testament a list of direct precepts, each of which is applicable to only one case; but rather a book of living principles of universal application. (Cf. Gal. 6: 10.)

And so, instead of telling the lawyer that every one is his neighbor, Jesus presented a picture of the principle of neighborliness at work in the Samaritan; and made it so beautiful that the lawyer could not keep from commending it, even though the deeds were performed by a representative of a despised race. (Cf. John 4: 9.) It also should be observed that Jesus, in teaching his lesson regarding one's neighbor, did not abuse the Jews or praise the Samaritan. Jesus simply presented a situation in which various people had a part, and then, without comment, merely told what each person did. He then asked the lawyer to pass judgment, which he did.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What are some of the facts regarding the parable which we are to study today?
Against what kind of background was it spoken?
Why was a lesson like this one so vital to the ministry of Christ?

The Golden Text

In what context are the words of the golden text found?
How did the Jewish people come to think of other people as they did?
What is the chief difference between the peoples of the Old and New Testament in this respect?
How must the Lord's people regard their neighbors and why?

The Occasion for the Parable

Why did the lawyer ask Jesus a question regarding eternal life?

What is the meaning of the term "lawyer" as used in this lesson?

Why is the question of eternal life so important?

What are the principal ideas set forth in the New Testament regarding life eternal?

How did Jesus answer the lawyer's question and why?

What response did the lawyer make to the question Jesus asked him?

Why did the lawyer ask another question and about what did he ask?

Why do many people follow that same principle today?

From the Jewish Point of View

What are some of the facts regarding the road from Jerusalem to Jericho?

Why did Jesus present a demonstration rather than a simple answer to the lawyer's second question?

What three attitudes toward life can one see represented on the road in question?

What lesson do we learn from the attitude and conduct of the robbers?

In what way is their attitude seen on the way of life today?
 What do we learn from the attitude and conduct of the priest and Levite?
 What apparently is the effect of their philosophy on life's highway today?
 Why is their way of life so appealing to so many today?

The Attitude of the Good Samaritan

What class of people is represented by the attitude and conduct of the good Samaritan?

What makes them so much like God?
 What is their attitude toward the unfortunate?
 What is their conception of the teaching of the New Testament?
 To what extent should Christian benevolence be administered? Give reasons for your answer.
 How, then, did Christ make known to the lawyer the meaning of one's neighbor?
 What was his reaction to the Lord's answer?
 What exhortation did the Lord give to him?

Lesson IV—April 25, 1971

THE WRONG USE OF RICHES

Lesson Text

Luke 12: 13-21

13 And one out of the multitude said unto him. Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me.

14 But he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth,

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17 And he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because

I have not where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry.

20 But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil."* (1 Tim. 6: 10.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Luke 12: 41-48.

Daily Bible Readings

April 19. M. True Riches (Luke 16: 9-13)
 April 20. T. Reward of Faithful Stewardship (Mark 10: 23-31)
 April 21. W. Grace of Stewardship (2 Cor. 8: 1-9)
 April 22. T. What Stewardship Is (1 Cor. 4: 1-7)
 April 23. F. Wrong Attitude Toward Riches (Mark 10: 17-22)
 April 24. S. Danger of Riches (Mark 10: 23-31)
 April 25. S. How Rich May We Be? (3 John)

TIME.—A. D. 28.

PLACE.—Probably in Judaea.

PERSONS.—Jesus, his disciples, and the man in the multitude.

Introduction

The writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes (3: 1) says, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven"; and it is doubtful if a more powerful illustration of the truth just quoted can be found, than the one involved

in the situation contained in the lesson text for today's lesson, along with the setting in which it occurs. An enormous multitude of people had assembled, and were listening to Jesus as he proclaimed some of the greatest truths on record—truths

which concern the human race, both with reference to time and eternity; and it was in the midst of the Lord's discussion of these vital issues, that "one out of the multitude said unto him, Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me." The setting in which the request just quoted is found, is as follows:

"In the mean time, when the many thousands of the multitude were gathered together, insomuch that they trod one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. But there is nothing covered up, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. 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 you shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two pence? and not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

"And I say unto you, Every one who shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me in the presence of men shall be denied in the presence of the angels of God. And every one who shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be

forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven. And when they bring you before synagogues, and the rulers, and the authorities, be not anxious how or what ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say." (Luke 12: 1-12.)

In was in the midst of this profound teaching by the Lord, that a man, somewhere in the multitude, interrupted Jesus and called upon him to deal with a question, which not only had no relation whatsoever to the issues which Jesus was discussing, but which was of interest only to himself. Here, then, is an example of a person interfering with fundamental teaching, which was applicable and vital to many, in an effort to get the speaker to deal with a problem which was purely individual and totally unrelated to the truths which were then under consideration. How often is this situation re-enacted today! Some faithful teacher of the word of the Lord is busily engaged in trying to get a class interested in that which the Lord requires of his people, when all of a sudden, and out of a clear sky, as it were, some thoughtless individual endeavors to inject into the discourse some issue, which not only has nothing to do with the truth under consideration, but which is of no interest to any one except the one who suggests it! It is well to note, however, that the Lord used the impertinent ejaculation as an occasion for teaching a lesson, which has been needed from that day until now; and will continue to have an application in the lives of people as long as time continues.

The Golden Text

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." The words of the golden text are found in this setting, namely, "But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Tim. 6: 9, 10.) Notwithstanding

the plainness of the language which Paul uses in the passage just quoted, it appears to be a fact that many people have failed to grasp the significance of that which the apostle says; while others have deliberately chosen to ignore them.

The first thing which we should observe, is that it is not the money itself, but the love which people have for money, which results in the terrible conditions, described by Paul in the passage now under consideration. The passage is rendered

in the King James Version in these words: "For the love of money is the root of all evil." Any thoughtful observer, to say nothing of those who are acquainted with the teaching of the Bible, and human experience in general, knows that there are motives, other than the love of money, which incite to evil conduct. The love for power, and the simple desire to have one's own way, have caused many men to commit murder and take that which rightfully belongs to some one else, when the consideration for money was not even involved. It is therefore not the money itself, but one's attitude toward it, which results in all kinds of evil—not indeed in all evil, but in all types of evil.

And so, it is not necessarily the rich who suffer the terrible consequences which Paul enumerates in

the context, quoted above, but rather "they that are *minded* to be rich." Phillips renders 1 Timothy 6: 9, 10 in these words: "For men who set their hearts on being wealthy expose themselves to temptation. They fall into one of the world's traps, and lay themselves open to all sorts of silly and wicked desires, which are quite capable of utterly ruining and destroying their souls. For loving money leads to all kinds of evil, and some men in the struggle to be rich have lost their faith and caused themselves untold agonies of mind." (Cf. Matt. 16: 26.) Vincent notes that "it is not the *possession* of riches, but the *love* of them that leads men into temptation." This principle is vital to our lesson today, as we shall see as the study progresses.

The Text Explained

The Heart of the Lesson

(Luke 12: 13-15)

And one out of the multitude said unto him, Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me. But he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them. Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

If one should read through the New Testament, with a view of learning why the inspired teachers and writers dealt with the various issues which characterized their efforts, he would easily see that many of the lessons which are contained therein, were presented as a result of some one's asking a question, or some incident which prompted the discussion. (Cf. Matt. 24: 1-4ff; John 6: 22-25ff; Acts 7: 1ff; 1 Cor. 7: 1ff.) The situation which confronted Jesus at the time of the lesson now before us, suggested the question of covetousness; and it was to this issue that the Lord addressed himself. The man whose request prompted the discussion apparently was not primarily interested in pleasing God; but he did furnish the occasion for a valuable lesson on a vital phase of the subject.

Preachers today have two principal sources for sermon suggestions.

and careful attention should be given to both of them at all times. The two sources are (1) the Bible itself, and (2) the people and situations which come under their observation. Gospel preachers are required of the Lord to be careful students of the Scriptures (cf. 2 Tim. 2: 15), and when this is done, two principal results should follow, namely (1) they should have an understanding of the fundamental teaching regarding basic issues; and (2) they should know how to apply the truth to various people and situations. A preacher who is equipped in this fashion is prepared to be an effective worker in the kingdom of Christ; but he should remember that growth, even for him, should continue as long as he has the physical and mental strength to press onward.

Jesus teaches that it is the truth which makes one free (John 8: 31, 32), and that only they who do the will of God have the assurance of a place in the eternal kingdom (cf. Matt. 7: 21-23); and with these things in mind, those who teach the word of the Lord should not neglect any question which is essential to the growth and development of God's people. One of these basic issues is the one listed in the section of the lesson text now under consideration, namely, "Take heed, and

keep yourselves from all covetousness." A practical definition of "covetousness" is an inordinate, that is, an unregulated or unrestrained desire for that which belongs to another; or, a desire to possess that to which he has no right. This can be true with reference to either God or man.

The question of covetousness was covered by the tenth commandment of the Decalogue (Ex. 20: 17), and it would be well to read that passage at this point. The New Testament writers leave no doubt regarding the will of the Lord with reference to covetousness, as may be seen by the following passages: "For this ye know of a surety, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." (Eph. 5: 5; cf. Col. 3: 5; 1 Cor. 6: 9, 10; Rev. 21: 8.) *Idolatry*, practically speaking, may be defined as the placing of anything before God, as the object of our affection and obedience. A person therefore might love his money, his family, his pleasures, or any one of a hundred things, more than he loves God; and when he seeks to pursue a course which will satisfy his desires regarding them, he is in effect an idolater in the sight of God.

The apostle Peter, in his first letter, says, "Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." (1 Pet. 2: 11.) Some one, in commenting on this passage, has made this wise observation: "The soul in which covetousness and ambition—vices which have ever deluged the world with blood and darkened it with misery—flourish most vigorously is one in which self-love, though strong and insatiable, has been entirely divorced from spiritual aspiration. The effect of the vices on the soul that harbors them is, on the one hand, to destroy its sense of proportion and its standard of reality, and at last to materialize and externalize its whole outlook on life; and, on the other hand, to make it more and more self-centered, till at last it is drawn by an irresistible current into the bottomless vortex of its own ever-narrowing self. Consciously, we condemn these anti-social vices

because of the ruin and woe that they work among men. Unconsciously, we condemn them because they harden, debase, contract, and warp the soul."

The same apostle Peter penned the following arresting words in his second letter, as he pictures the fate of backsliders: "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first. For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them. It has happened unto them according to the true proverb. The dog turning to his own vomit again, and the sow that had washed to wallowing in the mire." (2 Pet. 2: 20-22; cf. Prov. 26: 11, 12.)

No one can read the epistles of the New Testament, without realizing that one of the great dangers in this respect, is with reference to the temptation to covetousness. This is what Paul wrote to Timothy, as we saw in connection with the golden text. A man who is determined to have great wealth, as it respects material things, regardless of the cost to his soul, or to the souls of his fellow men, cannot be a true follower of Christ. No man can be a Christian, who does not put God first in his life. Jesus himself made this issue clear, 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. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt. 6: 24.) Mammon was the god of wealth; and it may be made to stand for every type of material success, which this world has to offer. If therefore one aims to be a Christian at all, he must see to it that mammon always is kept in its proper place, which, of course, is wholly subservient to the interest of both God and man.

Jesus makes it plain, in the text now before us, that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of that which he may possess. This is to say that life is more than a mere physical existence. The life which

pleases God is measured by what we are, rather than by that which we possess. And with this standard in mind, it is possible to find a shrivelled soul in the midst of a great fortune, while a noble soul may live in abject poverty. A true life comes from God, and is governed by the principles which he supplies. One may well say that it consists in the cultivation of its highest possibilities, and endeavors to cast out of its presence all that is low and degrading. As one goes about living, he makes an effort to grow into a character, which can be satisfied only in a spiritual world, and which longs to be with, and to see, God.

Illustrated by a Parable
(Luke 12: 16-20)

And he spake a parable unto them, saying. The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he reasoned within himself, saying. What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits? And he said. This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul. Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry. But God said unto him. Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?

There are three rich men, prominently mentioned in Luke's record of the gospel: and it is worthy of notice that not a single one of them had either the time, or the disposition, to devote himself to God, and to the good of his fellow man. The rich man of the lesson now before us thought only of himself, and his own comfort and enjoyment. The same attitude and conduct also characterized the rich man of Luke 16: 19-31. Lazarus was at his very door, and wanted only that which fell from the rich man's table, and which would be thrown out anyway. There is no indication that the man of the house showed any compassion whatsoever for the poor man who was laid at his gate. The rich young ruler, of Luke 18: 18-23, did go to Jesus and requested information about how he might inherit eternal life; but when Jesus looked

into his heart and told him that which he needed to do, in order to fit himself for an eternal habitation with God, he was wholly unwilling to comply with that which Jesus recommended. "But when he heard these things, he became exceeding sorrowful; for he was very rich." (Verse 23.)

The instances of the rich men just mentioned emphasizes the great peril, in which the rich find themselves. It has been stated repeatedly that the Bible does not look with disfavor upon the rich, as such; but it is a fact, capable of being demonstrated, that those with great riches stand in grave danger of being lost, unless they are willing to allow the Lord to govern their lives. One would gather from Paul's first letter to Timothy that there were probably rich people in the church in Ephesus; for he instructed the younger man as to how he should deal with that situation, namely, "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.)

It is a noticeable fact that the rich man of the lesson we are now considering ignored God completely; he gave him credit for nothing. He spoke of *my* fruits, *my* grain, *my* good, and *my* soul. All he did was for himself, with never a thought for God or his fellow man. W. M. Taylor, in commenting on this aspect of the man's character and attitude, says, "No doubt he had cultivated his ground, and sown his seed; but, after all, the greatest factor in the production of his wealth has been God, who had sent his rain and sunshine, and so caused his crops to grow luxuriantly. Yet he speaks throughout as if he had all the merit of his prosperity, and gives God no praise; while the idea that any portion of the increase of his fields belonged to God seems never to have entered into his mind.

"But does this man stand alone in

this particular? Are we not all too sadly in the same condemnation with him? How many among us glory in the fact that they are, as the phrase is, self-made men? Have we never heard the boast in the mouth of a successful merchant, that he is the architect of his own fortune? and are we not all too prone to take to ourselves the sole credit for any property we have acquired, or for any eminence we have reached? Yet it is just as true in every department of life, though perhaps not quite so apparent, as it is in agriculture, that the chief factor to success in it is God. He gave the original aptitude and ability to the man; his providence furnished the means of cultivating both of these, and opened up the avenues to prosperity; and it will commonly be found that the critical turning-points of life, which led directly to the results over which we felicitate ourselves, were due entirely to him, and came altogether irrespective of our own arrangement. Why, then, should we take the whole credit to ourselves? Would it not be more appropriate for us to say, 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake?' "

But regardless of the rich man's relationship to God, that is, irrespective of whether or not he is a Christian, he, along with all other people in the world, will eventually learn that his soul belongs to God, and that he will, at the last day, answer to God for his life here upon the earth. The material goods which one may possess can neither feed his soul while it is in his body here, nor cause it to stand uncondemned at the day of judgment. Furthermore, no one can control his possessions after he departs this life. "... and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" It is much better to lay up riches

above, where one can enjoy them in eternity; than it is to lay them up for some one else here upon the earth. James, while he may have been writing to people outside the church, nevertheless sets forth the truth regarding the fate of those who live primarily for themselves. (James 5: 1-6.) It should be remembered, however, that any professed Christian who follows in the way of the rich men, mentioned by James, will suffer their fate.

The Lord's Conclusion

(Luke 12: 21)

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

The prime purpose of the passage just quoted is, of course, to teach a basic truth; but the thoughtful reader will readily see in it another vital and valuable lesson, namely, a means of determining something of his prospects of being counted "rich toward God." It hardly seems possible that any thoughtful Christian could be satisfied with the little, which so many professed followers of Christ apparently put into the work which the Lord has authorized his people to do. (Cf. 2 Cor. 9: 6-11.)

If the section of the lesson text, which we are now considering, is read in the light of Matthew 6: 19-21, it will not be difficult for one to see that Jesus is urging upon his disciples the fact that they should keep in their minds those things which are of supreme importance. He repeatedly warns against the worthlessness of ideals which may be outgrown; and inasmuch as his disciples are children of eternity, rather than of time, it is the height of folly to devote their strength of life to the gathering, and the storing up, of treasures which cannot be converted into the currency of the country to which they are going.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What great blunder did the man in the multitude commit when he called out to Jesus?

How can the same mistake be made today by professed disciples of Christ?

What was Jesus doing at the time of the

interruption which is mentioned in the text?
Why was the man clearly out of order?

The Golden Text

In what context are the words of the golden text found?

What is meant by a "golden text" and what is its purpose?

What is it that the words of the golden text for today's lesson say?

What, apparently, do many people think that the passage affirms?
Why are people who strive to be rich in such grave danger?

The Heart of the Lesson

What, apparently, was the occasion for teaching many of the lessons of the New Testament?

Why did Jesus, at the time of this lesson, speak on the question of covetousness? What are the two principal sources which preachers have access to for sermon suggestions?

What two results usually come from a careful study of the Scriptures?

What should teachers of the Word do, as it respects their own work?

What is the fundamental teaching of the Scriptures with reference to covetousness?

In what sense is covetousness idolatry?

How does covetousness affect the individual person who is afflicted by it?

Why can't a covetous man be a true Christian?

Why doesn't a man's life consist in the abundance of his possessions?

Illustrated by a Parable

What did the three rich men, mentioned by Luke, have in common?

Tell what the Bible says about the attitude of each one of them.

Why weren't they willing to accept the teaching of Jesus?

What great danger is always lurking near rich men? Give reasons for your answer.

What is the Lord's will for those who have great possessions?

What was the attitude of the rich man of the lesson now before us?

Give reasons for thinking, or not thinking, that his attitude was not unique.

Why should all people give glory to God for all they have and are?

What mistake did the rich man make with reference to his soul?

What eventually will happen to the possessions which the wealthy leave behind them?

What special obligation do people of means have toward their less fortunate brethren?

How should those who do not have enough feel toward their more fortunate brethren?

The Lord's Conclusion

What conclusion does Jesus set forth?

What lessons should we learn from it?

What effect should the Lord's teaching here have upon all of his people?

Lesson V—May 2, 1971

CHRIST'S CONCERN FOR THE LOST

Lesson Text

Luke 15: 1-10

1 Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto him to hear him.

2 And both the Phar'is-sees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

3 And he spake unto them this parable, saying,

4 What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbors, saying unto them. Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.

7 I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, *more* than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance.

8 Or what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it?

9 And when she hath found it, she calleth together her friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost.

10 Even so, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins."* (Matt. 1: 21.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 55: 1-11.

Daily Bible Readings

April 26. M. Jesus Our Saviour (Luke 4: 18, 19)

April 27. T. The Mission of Jesus (John 6: 35-40)

April 28.	W.....	Obedient to the Father's Will (John 4: 31-38)
April 29.	T.....	Christ, Our Example (1 Cor. 11: 1; 1 Pet. 2: 20, 21)
April 30.	F.....	Jesus Came to Save the Lost (Luke 19: 1-10)
May 1.	S.....	Christ Gave Himself for the World (John 6: 41-51)
May 2.	S.....	Christ, Our Only Saviour (John 8: 21-32)

TIME.—A.D. 28.

PLACE.—Probably in Peraea.

PERSONS.—Jesus, publicans and sinners, scribes and Pharisees.

Introduction

The human race began its descent into sin and destruction, when the first human pair refused to listen to the words of their Maker; and if one is willing to read the inspired record, which is preserved in the Holy Scriptures, it will not be difficult for him to see that the downward course has never been checked. The fact is that only a few, now and then, comparatively speaking, have been rescued from the strangle hold which the evil one has upon mankind. The entire human race was destroyed by the flood, with the exception of Noah and his immediate family—a grand total of only eight people. When God led the Israelites out of Egypt, it is a recorded fact that, of the six hundred and three thousand, five hundred and fifty men, from twenty years old and upward, who left the land of Egypt (cf. Ex. 38: 26; Num. 1: 46), only two of them, not excluding Moses and Aaron, were permitted to enter the land of Canaan, namely, Joshua and Caleb. (Num. 14: 26-30.)

One of the blackest pictures of sin, which has ever been painted, is the one found in Romans 1: 18-32; and when Paul came to consider the Jews, along with the sinful Gentiles, he was compelled to say that the chosen people were no better. "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." (Rom. 2: 1.) "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we before laid to the charge of both Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin; as it is written.

There is none righteous, no, not one; . . . for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3: 9, 10, 23.) This was the condition of the human race, when Christ came to seek and to save the lost. (Cf. Gal. 3: 22; Rom. 11: 32.) And when one reads Paul's last letter to Timothy, he will easily see that sinful conditions will not improve. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 1ff.)

But with all of these terrible pictures of sin, and the fearful dictums regarding the malady, it appears next to impossible to get the average person to realize his lost condition, and his need for the Saviour. Even the plaintive cry of Jesus—"And ye will not come to me, that ye may have life"—does not appear to affect sinful people for the better. (John 5: 40.) Efforts have been made throughout the ages to make men aware of sin; but, judging from the record, very little progress, comparatively speaking, has been made in that direction. The supreme effort, looking at the question from the divine side, was put forth, when God sent his only begotten Son to die for all men, including those who were, and are, in rebellion against him. "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5: 21; cf. John 3: 16.) When Paul wrote to the Romans, he said, "For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5: 6-8.)

The Golden Text

"And thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." The

naming of a child in Bible times, and especially during the first two dispensations of sacred history, was

an event of deep, peculiar, and significant interest and meaning. It was the first permanent acknowledgement that a new personality had begun to live; and it is there that hopes and prayers for the future have their basis. But in the homes of pious Jews, during Bible times, the naming of a child was most impressive; for the names which were given to their children, usually had distinctive meanings. This is to say that the name which was given to the child, was intended to indicate something about the individual who received it, either some memorial fact connected with his birth, or some purpose which it was hoped he would accomplish in the future. (Cf. Moses. Ex. 2: 10; John the Baptist. Luke 1: 13-17.)

The context in which the passage we are now considering is found, involves the virgin birth of Jesus, a fact or truth which is accepted by faith, on the part of all who believe the Bible. If God was not able to make the virgin birth of Jesus possible, then he is not able to forgive the sins of any one; for forgiveness implies that the guilt of sin has been completely removed and abolished. It required no greater power to make the virgin birth possible, than it does to forgive sins, that is, in the sense in which God forgives sins. The forgiven person becomes a new creature in Christ. "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature [there is a new creation, margin]: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." (2 Cor. 5: 17.)

The name "Jesus" means Saviour, or Jehovah saves. It was a name worn by many Hebrews during the Mosaic period, and it was also applied to others during the New Testament period. (Cf. Acts 13: 6; Col. 4: 11.) The names "Joshua" and "Jesus" have the same meaning. (See Heb. 4: 8.) But since the name *Jesus* was given to the son of Mary, it is not usually associated with ordinary men, by those who read and respect the New Testament. This is true, because the name has acquired a new significance in its association with our Lord; and informed and reverent people do not feel the liberty to bestow the name, either upon themselves or their children, as a personal appellation.

Sin is a condition in human experience, which can be dealt with adequately only by Deity. There are three aspects of the malady, which should be considered, as the golden text is considered, namely, (1) the fact of sin; (2) the moral and spiritual nature of sin; and (3) the habit or power of sin. An act, of course, cannot be undone; but Jesus has made it possible for the guilt, which resulted from the sin, to be forgiven. The moral and spiritual status of the sinner is changed by the removal of the conditions which alienated the sinner from God (cf. Isa. 59: 1, 2; 2 Cor. 5: 17-21); while the habit or power of sin is broken in the lives of people, by their close and abiding fellowship with the Lord. (Cf. Rom. 6: 1-11; 1 John 1: 6, 7.)

The Text Explained

The Occasion for the Lord's Parables
(Luke 15: 1, 2)

Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto him to hear him. And both the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

Jesus, in keeping with his mission to the earth, always manifested himself as a friend of the lost; and that was what he was doing on the occasion of the lesson now before us. Luke says that the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto him to hear him; and the Pharisees and scribes, who were generally present

when the Lord spoke, complained at what they saw and heard. When they said that Jesus received sinners, they meant that he welcomed them into his presence. The publicans were Jews who hired themselves out as Roman tax collectors, and, as such, they had no social or religious standing with the Jewish community. These publicans were classed with sinners, who were the lawless, irreligious, and moral perverts; and they were both practically outcasts.

W. F. Ledlow, in commenting on the historical background to the parables of Luke 15, says, "The Phar-

isees, as the guardians of public morals and the religious teachers of the day, felt themselves to be so much better than the publicans and sinners that it was offensive to them for such classes to be allowed in an audience with them. Jesus was a great disappointment to them. His attitude toward the Pharisees and their religious customs was to them evidence that he was not the Messiah, and set them thoroughly against him. They looked for faults, mistakes, and inconsistencies in his life, and complained when he talked or acted contrary to their standards. Such complaints constantly made would have at least two effects: they would discourage the publicans and sinners in their efforts to hear Jesus, and would tend to weaken the faith of the disciples—part of whom probably had been Pharisees, and would have more or less sympathy for them."

It appears that Jesus developed his parables, for the most part at least, from the environment in which he was at the time, and made them fit the conditions under which they originated. This view of the situation will become more apparent, if all the parables of the series are taken into consideration. The publicans and the sinners, on the one hand, and the Pharisees and the scribes, on the other, were before Jesus when he spoke; and while he made no personal application of the parables, both groups are clearly seen in the series. Jesus, as was characteristic of him, acted wisely and prudently in the selection of his method of approach to the problem before him; and then proceeded with care and caution. The Lord's message was clearly and carefully delivered, and his hearers were left to reach their own conclusion. It is not out of place to refer to the parables of Luke 15, as a portrayal of God's love for the lost—a love which found embodiment in the Son who spoke his Father's message. (Cf. John 12: 48-50.)

The Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15: 3-7)

And he spake unto them this parable, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness,

and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance.

The publicans and the sinners, as they appear in the text from which the lesson for today is taken, are clearly the lost; while the Pharisees and the scribes are the self-righteous. The former group *knew* that they were lost; while the latter group *imagined* that they were saved. It should be to the interest of every responsible person in the world, to have his true condition, in his relation to God, brought to his attention; and that is precisely what Jesus was doing, as he spoke the parables now before us. This is, indeed, one of the principal reasons for reading the New Testament; it enables men to see themselves, as God sees them. (Cf. James 1: 21-25.)

Shepherd life, in the land where Jesus spoke this parable, was familiar to all the people who came in contact with him; and it is possible that most of the Lord's hearers had seen the situation which Jesus pictured re-enacted many times. George A. Buttrick puts it this way: "The farmer came down the lane. 'Got a stray,' he said. 'How do they get lost?' asked the city man. 'They just nibble themselves lost,' said the farmer; 'they keep their heads down, wander from one green tuft to another, come to a hole in the fence—and never can find a hole by which to get back again.' The city man answered, 'Like people, like every generation of foolish men.'"

Not all people are lost in the same way, as any one who reads the Lord's parables can see. There are some people who get lost in the sense that the sheep was lost, that is, through ignorance and inattention. Such people are thoughtless, rather than wicked. The lost sheep was still a sheep and alive; but having strayed from the shepherd and the flock, it was lost and did not

know the way back to its place. The sheep, as Dr. Buttrick notes, did not leave the flock intentionally, but simply strayed thoughtlessly away, and without realizing at first that it was lost. There are few men who deliberately break with God; they simply become thoughtlessly, that is, so far as the relation to God is concerned, absorbed in the affairs of this life, seldom stop to ascertain the direction in which they are going; and before they realize what has happened to them, they have drifted away from God, and have become so attached to the things of this world, as to make it difficult for them to return to their first love. (Cf. Heb. 2: 1-3; Luke 8: 14; Rev. 2: 4, 5.)

It appears that the major emphasis in the parable now under consideration is on the shepherd, rather than on the lost sheep. If one views the situation merely from the standpoint of arithmetic, one sheep out of a hundred would not seem to amount to much; for if that one is gone, the shepherd still has ninety which are safe. But that is not the way in which the shepherd views the matter. The one sheep has value, not simply as a hundredth part of the whole flock, as Walter Russell Bowie, points out, but because that one particular sheep has an individuality all its own. Jesus makes this truth plain, when he says, "And the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, . . . and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." (John 10: 3, 4.) It is in this way that the love of God, embodied in Christ, takes into account human souls, one by one; and cannot rest when any single one has gone astray. (Cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9.) The value of a single soul, any soul, staggers the imagination. (Cf. Matt. 16: 26.)

The elders in the congregations of the Lord's people are referred to as shepherds, that is, those who look after the needs of the flock (Acts 20: 28; 1 Pet. 5: 2), and they should therefore be deeply concerned for each individual Christian, who is under their care. Jesus is called the "chief Shepherd"; and that, of course, implies that the elders are *under shepherds*. (1 Pet. 5: 1-4; 2: 25.) The writer of Hebrews emphasizes the tremendous responsi-

bility of the eldership, when he 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; cf. 1 Thess. 5: 12-15.) But how often do we find men, masquerading as elders, who do not even know the names of some of the people who are under their care, to say nothing of that which they may be doing. The chief Shepherd will not rest until every effort has been exhausted to bring the lost sheep back to the fold; and we may be sure that that is the attitude which he expects of those shepherds who serve under him.

The Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15: 8-10)

Or what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth together her friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Even so, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

Neil R. Lightfoot notes that "the coin specified by Luke was a Greek *drachma*, which was almost equivalent to a Roman *denarius*. It was a silver coin, and although worth by our standards less than twenty cents, it was the common wage for a day's labor. Some scholars have suggested that in this case the coin was especially valuable to the woman since it formed an ornament for her head. It was customary for Jewish women to save up ten coins and string them together for a necklace or hairdress. The ornament became a treasured possession worn as the sign of a married woman, very much like a wedding band is worn today. At any rate, whether as a part of her cherished jewelry or simply as something of monetary worth, the coin was of priceless value to the woman. That is evident from her diligent search. On missing the coin, she at once lit her little oil lamp and began to sweep. A lamp was necessary for the search

even in daytime, for houses then were usually built without windows and with only one door. In the house there was no wood or stone flooring, only the packed earth covered with dried reeds and rushes. With a floor like this, there were many places where a coin could be lodged. All of this made the search a difficult and trying experience and helps explain why the woman was overjoyed when she found the silver piece that had been lost."

It should be observed that the coin, like the sheep, did not cease to exist, when it was lost; it was simply out of circulation, and rendered no service whatsoever. And it would be well to keep in mind that Jesus regards as lost, every man who is not active in his service. But how did the coin come to be lost? The specific answer to this question is not given in the parable; but it is fair to assume that it was due, in a large measure at least, to carelessness—not its own carelessness, to be sure, but carelessness on the part of its owner or some one else who had been trusted with its care. If the one responsible for the safety of the coin had been as diligent as she should have been, then it is doubtful if it would have been lost.

But unlike the coin, the sinner, having the power of choice, is not entirely blameless for his lost condition. This is made certain by his relationship to the moral law, as one may gather by reading Romans 2: 12-16. There is some basic light in every individual, and he will, of course, be held accountable for that which he does about it. And so, while the freedom of the will, and the power of choice, should be emphasized, it must be admitted that environment counts for much, in the saving or marring of souls. There are many poorly-trained boys and girls who fall into sin, who could be rescued, or even kept from falling, if proper diligence has been put forth on the part of those who had the opportunity of teaching and influencing them. And too, there are multitudes of adults who are being lost, but who could be saved, if only the professed followers of Christ would do their part.

Both of the parables which we are studying today have practically the same lessons, namely, (1) the loss

which God suffers in every sinner who departs from him; (2) the consequent action which is put forth to find the lost; and (3) the exceeding great joy which is experienced when the lost is found and returned home. The Pharisees and scribes had never understood God's love for the human race. Their attitude, in fact, was expressed by Luke in these words: "And he spake also this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at naught." (Luke 18: 9.) The Pharisees apparently thought of God "as standing upon his rights, enforcing his will by compulsion, and with equanimity punishing and driving into permanent exile those who have strayed from him." The love of God for sinful humanity was something entirely foreign to the thinking of the legalistic Pharisees. (Cf. Jer. 31: 3; John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 6-8.)

When once a creature of God had come into existence, that is, one who had been created in the Divine image, there was absolutely nothing which could take his place. The Eternal Father does not console himself, when his people wander away from him and are lost in sin, by calling new creatures into being, and so fill up the void which has been created by the loss of others. Instead, love which knows no bounds is brought into action, and no effort is abandoned, until the lost has been found and restored, if at all possible. This principle is clearly illustrated in the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son; but the elder brother, the one who did not go anywhere, but remained at home and proclaimed his own righteousness, was the only one who was totally unresponsive to the father's love. This is what Jesus means by the "ninety-and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance." It was the elder brother, and not his father, who thought that no change was needed on his part.

Marcus Dods, in commenting on the Lord's statement, "I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance," says, "The joy is

greater, because the effort to bring it about has been greater, and because for a time the result has been in suspense, so that when the end is attained there is a sense of clear gain. The joy of success is proportioned to the difficulty, the doubtfulness of attaining it. All the hazards and sacrifices of the search are repaid by the recovery of the lost, the value of the unfallen soul may intrinsically be greater than the

value of the redeemed; but the joy is proportioned, not to the value of the article, but to the amount of anxiety that has been spent upon it. . . . The finding is an intenser joy than the keeping safe, because the loss has been actually felt and is now relieved, the pang of separation has been actually endured and is now swallowed up in the joy of restoration."

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What has been the history of the human race with reference to sin?
Cite some examples of what has happened in this respect.
In what way did Paul deal with the question?
What has been, and what is, the attitude of mankind toward sin?
What was the supreme effort, on the Divine side, to bring man to the realization of sin?

The Golden Text

How did the people of Bible times regard the naming of a child?
In what way is the virgin birth of Jesus involved in the golden text?
What is the meaning of the name "Jesus" and why was it given to Mary's son?
In what ways is the question of sin related to the human race?

The Occasion for the Lord's Parables

How did Jesus, characteristically, feel toward the lost and why?
Why were the Pharisees and the scribes so opposed to the program of Jesus?
Who were the publicans and why were they grouped with sinners?
In what way did Jesus usually develop his parables?
How did he deal with the situation which was before him at the time of this lesson?

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

What was the difference between the scribes and Pharisees and the publicans

and sinners, as it respected their relation to God? Give reasons for your answer.

How would the people in Jesus' audience feel about the parable of the lost sheep?
Why do sheep generally become lost and what lesson is there in the parable for us?
Where should the emphasis in the story be placed?
Why was the shepherd so concerned about one sheep out of a flock of one hundred?
What lesson regarding the love of God do we learn from this parable?
How do the elders in the Lord's churches fit into this lesson?
What does the New Testament teach with reference to their responsibility for their people?

The Parable of the Lost Coin

Why, apparently, did the woman place such a high value on the coin which she lost?
Why was the search for the coin so difficult for her?
Why was she so filled with joy when she found it?
Why did she want her friends and neighbors to rejoice with her?
How does a coin usually become lost?
What special lesson is there in this for us?
Why, then, do so many people today become lost to the Lord?
What are some of the things which could be done to lessen this terrible condition?
What are the principal lessons in the two parables we are studying today?
Why does God love lost people so much?
What does he always do when his people go astray?
Why is there such great joy in heaven when the lost has been found?

Lesson VI—May 9, 1971

THE UNJUST STEWARD

Lesson Text

Luke 16: 1-13

1 And he said also unto the disciples. There was a certain rich man, who had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he was wasting his goods.

2 And he called him, and said unto him, What is this that I hear of thee? render the account of thy stewardship; for thou canst be no longer steward.

3 And the steward said within himself, What shall I do, seeing that my lord taketh away the stewardship from me? I have not strength to dig; to beg I am ashamed.

4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

5 And calling to him each one of his lord's debtors, he said to the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

6 And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bond, and sit down quickly and write fifty.

7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. He saith unto him, Take thy bond, and write fourscore.

8 And his lord commended the unrighteous steward because he had done wisely: for the sons of this world

are for their own generation wiser than the sons of the light.

9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles.

10 He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much: and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much.

11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true *riches*!

12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?

13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Luke 16: 13.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 25: 21-23.

Daily Bible Readings

May 3.	M.	Warnings Against Covetousness (Luke 12: 13-15)
May 4.	T.	Love of Money, Root of Evil (1 Tim. 6: 6-10)
May 5.	W.	Right Use of Property (2 Cor. 9: 6-12)
May 6.	T.	Matters of Minor Importance (Luke 12: 13-21)
May 7.	F.	Matters of Major Importance (Luke 12: 22-34)
May 8.	S.	Matters of Greatest Importance (John 6: 25-40)
May 9.	S.	Matters Most Worthwhile (Mark 9: 33-37)

TIME.—A. D. 28.

PLACE.—Probably in Peraea.

PERSONS.—Jesus, his disciples, and the Pharisees.

Introduction

There is, apparently, a very close connection between the parables of the preceding chapter, especially those of the prodigal son, and the elder brother; and that of the parable of the unjust steward. We also shall see that the same kind of relationship exists between the parable we are to study today, and the lesson for next week, namely, the one on the rich man and Lazarus. The fact is, if one wants to understand the lessons of the two chapters in question, he must read them as if there was no break between them. There were, of course, no chapter and verse divisions in the original record, as Luke compiled it. W. M. Taylor, in commenting on the relationship between the parables in the closing part of chapter 15, and the

one at the beginning of chapter 16, has this to say:

"Even the most cursory reader will observe that there is a point of contact between this parable [that is, the parable of this lesson] and that which precedes it, in the fact, that, while the prodigal son is said to have 'wasted his substance,' the steward is accused of having 'wasted' his master's 'goods': the design of our Lord evidently being, to teach these believers in self-righteous respectability that there are other ways of misusing the portion which God has given to us, than by riotous living; and that he who appropriates as his own that which he has received for behoof of another is as really unfaithful to God as is the dissolute man who spends his sub-

stance on the gratification of appetite."

There is little doubt, therefore, that the parable of the unrighteous steward was spoken immediately after, and in connection with, those which are contained in the preceding chapter. The opening words of chapter 16 plainly state that Jesus was speaking directly to his disciples; but we get the idea from verse 14 that the Pharisees regarded the Lord's words as being meant for them too. (Cf. Matt. 5: 1, 2-7; 28,

29.) Two of the outstanding characteristics of the Pharisees were self-righteousness and covetousness. The first of these was severely condemned by Jesus in the parables of chapter 15; and it is evident that the second trait is just as soundly condemned in the parables of chapter 16. The parable of the unrighteous steward, therefore, is an exposure of the the sin of covetousness, with special application to the children of God.

The Golden Text

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

The Text Explained

The Setting of the Lesson
(Luke 16: 1-7)

And he said also unto the disciples, There was a certain rich man, who had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he was wasting his goods. And he called him, and said unto him. What is this that I hear of thee? render the account of thy stewardship; for thou canst be no longer steward. And the steward said within himself, What shall I do, seeing that my lord taketh away the stewardship from me? I have not strength to dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. And calling to him each one of his lord's debtors, he said to the first. How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said. A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him. Take thy bond, and sit down quickly and write fifty. Then said he to another. And how much owest thou? And he said. A hundred measures of wheat. He saith unto him, Take thy bond and write fourscore.

The principal figure in the parable now before us, is that of a steward who had been trusted by a certain rich man, with the entire control of his vast estate. The practical definition of a "steward" is a man who has been placed in charge of that which belongs to another; and if one will read such passages as Gen. 24: 2 and 39: 8, along with their contexts, he can easily see just how the process worked. The rich man

of the lesson, of course, had perfect confidence in the man whom he placed in charge of his affairs; but something happened, along the way, which made the master certain that his confidence in his servant had been misplaced. And so, instead of being benefited, he was being systematically robbed by the very man he had so greatly trusted.

The householder, accordingly, called the steward before him, demanded a reckoning, and told him plainly that he could no longer remain as his steward. The man in question, that is, the steward, could not establish his innocence; and that meant that something on his part had to be done, if he was to continue to have the necessities of life. And so, after surveying the possibilities before him, he decided that it was best for him to continue his dishonest practice, with this addition, namely, he intended to make others share his unrighteous dealings with him. This strategy not only obligated his lord's debtors to him, that is, to the steward, but would also have the effect of compelling them to contribute to his upkeep, or have their own dishonesty exposed.

This is a good illustration of the truthfulness of the proverb, "For as he thinketh within himself, so is he." (Prov. 23: 7a.) The unrighteous steward had been "thinking" in terms of his own welfare, all along; and it therefore required no great effort on his part to continue that policy. The converse is also

true: If the servant had been thinking of ways and means to please his master, and which would redound to his advantage, he no doubt would have continued in that direction. This is a lesson which we should all strive to learn well. It is a way of positive thinking, a way of selflessness, an effort to do that which the Lord wants done; and it will, at the last, turn to the eternal welfare of the one who follows that course.

The Heart of the Parable

(Luke 16: 8)

And his lord commended the unrighteous steward because he had done wisely: for the sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of light.

The action of the unrighteous steward in bringing others into his strategy, was a master stroke on his part, even if it was wickedly conceived and executed. We are not to get the idea that Jesus approved his wicked thinking and plan; that was not what Jesus commended. The steward was wicked, but he was also prudent; and it was the latter quality which Jesus commended. It was actually the steward's lord who commended his practical foresight; but if the comment in the latter part of verse 8—"for the sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of light"—was the comment of Jesus, then he, too, in effect, praised the shrewdness of the unrighteous steward, in that he had acted shrewdly, or cleverly, for his own interest.

Some one, in commenting on this incident of the parable, has made this observation: the master was simply speaking of a single point in the steward's character, his prudence, without taking into account, at the moment, his bad qualities. We all are accustomed to speak after this fashion in everyday life. It is easy to isolate a single quality in a man's life, comment upon it, either by way of praising it or blaming it, without taking his other qualities into consideration. We might, for example, admire the skill by which a professional burglar goes about his work; but that does not imply that we want to commend his life as a criminal. There are men who display great ability in planning and executing business transactions,

which may commend itself to us; but if the man's moral character is not what it should be, then we should not be understood as approving that, while admiring his business ability.

That which has just been said was the sense in which both the wicked steward's lord, and Jesus, approved of his shrewdness. They simply fastened upon a single point, commended it, while excluding all other considerations regarding him. The man had seen his perilous situation, had made his plans to deal with it, and had implemented those plans, with the result that his future seemed secure. It was in this respect that his example is commendable. He was a man of "this world" and, as such, he left no stone unturned to make his earthly future secure. He had a worldly plan, yea, a wicked plan; but he pursued it wholeheartedly. It is in this way that such people put to shame those people who profess to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. They claim to believe in the supreme reality of the world to come; but they make little or no provision for their future there.

And so, in summing up the manner in which the unrighteous steward displayed superior wisdom, let us note (1) that he had a clear view of his aim in life, and he, accordingly, subordinated all other considerations in his attempt to reach his goal. (2) The promptness with which he set about his work. This was in marked contrast with the procrastination which is so often manifested by professed Christians. (3) He selected means which were ideally suited to his needs. It is true that they were both dishonest and wicked; but they placed his lord's debtors under obligation to him, and guaranteed his future welfare. It is not difficult to see that many of the people who profess to follow the Lord, often manifest almost a total lack of practical sagacity in the selection of the means, which are so essential to the accomplishment of their high aims in this life.

Looking for the moment at the last of the three examples cited in the previous paragraph, let us consider two familiar, but exceedingly dangerous, practices which characterize

many professed followers of the Lord, namely, (1) a failure to claim and enjoy the blessings which are available to those who are faithful in assembling with the Lord's people, whenever possible. (Cf. Heb. 10: 24, 25.) Instead of going with gladness to the assembling-place of the saints, many nominal Christians deliberately, and habitually, seek pleasure among the things of this world. (Cf. 1 John 2: 15-17; James 4: 4.) How would such people enjoy the fellowship of heaven, if they should get there? (2) If one will only read through the Bible, it would not take him long to learn the meaning and something of the influence of true friends. This is especially true of those who expect to marry and rear families; and it should be true of those who have already married, and who have families. (Cf. 2 Sam. 13: 1-39—"But Amnon had a friend!") No one can read the Bible without coming to realize that God has always had a law governing marriage for his people; but how often do professed Christians marry out of covenant relationship with God and his people! Would a worldly-wise man select a business associate, who was not vitally interested in the success of their undertaking? (Cf. 2 Cor. 6: 14-7: 1.)

The Lord's Special Application (Luke 16: 9-13)

And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles. He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant 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. You cannot serve God and mammon.

The first thing the Lord said, when he came to take an application of the parable to his disciples, was to point out to them the proper way to

use the material possessions, which have been entrusted to our care. The apostle Paul has a word in this same connection, that is, regarding the proper use of material possessions; for it is a truth, recognized and proclaimed throughout the Bible, that whatever one has, it belongs to God. Paul's words are: "But this I say, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work: as it is written,

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

His righteousness abideth for ever. And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness." (2 Cor. 9: 6-10.)

Every good and every perfect gift comes from God (see James 1: 17), and it is his will that his people use them in such a manner, as to please him. The words of Jesus are, "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles." The contrast here, as well as the comparison, is between that which the unrighteous steward did, with the subsequent results, and that which the Lord's people should do with the very same means, but with far greater results. The faithless steward took material possessions, which Jesus calls "mammon of unrighteousness," evidently because of their relationship to the sinful world, and used them in such a way, as to make friends for himself, who "may receive me into their houses."

The Lord's people, too, have access to the mammon of unrighteousness; and the Lord exhorts them to use it in such a way, as to make friends to themselves; so that, when their material possession can no longer benefit them, the friends whom they have made "by means of the mammon of unrighteousness," may receive them "into the eternal

tabernacles." Bible students have never been able to agree as to the identity of the *friends* whom Jesus had in mind, that is, whether they refer to God, Christ, and the holy angels, or to the people who were benefited by their benevolent ministries. But in either case, the Lord is pleased (cf. Matt. 25: 40), and there will be no question regarding the benefactor's reception "into the eternal tabernacle." And so, in the words of another,

"Go break to the needy sweet charity's bread,

For giving is living," the angel said.

"And shall I be giving again and again?"

"Oh no," said the angel, piercing me through;

"Just give till the Master stops giving to you."

Walter Russell Bowie, in commenting on the welcome of Christian people into God's house, says here, as again and again in the gospel records, there come into sudden view infinite vistas. It is easy for our thoughts to become earthbound, easy to settle down to a way of life which ignores, to a large extent, that which the future holds for God's people. But outside our curtained window there lies the untravelled road which we must take, when the awesome messenger, who is known as Death, opens the gate, and bids us enter. It is at the end of the untravelled road that we will come to our destiny, either the eternal habitations of God, or the place of everlasting suffering with the evil one. The life which the faithful will enjoy on the other side, is not an unrelated gift; it is, instead, the goodness and the greatness of the soul, for which they have longed, and which God makes possible for those who love and serve him while here upon the earth.

The principle which will determine God's attitude toward men, is set forth in verse 10 of the lesson text, namely, "He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much: and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much." It appears that many people feel that they are not doing much, unless they are able to contribute great sums of money, or perform great deeds. But that is not the

standard by which the Lord determines faithfulness. Consider the following passage of scripture, for example: "And he sat down over against the treasury, and beheld how the multitude cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a poor widow, and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, This poor widow cast in more than all they that are casting into the treasury: for they all did cast in of their superfluity; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." (Mark 12: 41-44.)

What makes greatness? The Interpreter's Bible notes that it is not the size of the means, but rather the nobility of the end. A liar, for example, is not great, even though he may be seated upon a throne; while a man who is given to truth is great, even if he is clothed in rags. What makes greatness? Not the size of the means, but the intensity of the cause to which it is devoted. A lantern, in and of itself, is a small object; but it is not small when it shines to mark the harbor for a lost ship. A cup of cold water does not seem to be much to the average person in our midst; but that is not the way the man who is dying of thirst in the desert feels about it. What makes greatness? Not the size of a man's body, or even the measure of his intellect, but his willingness to work as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Cf. Matt. 20: 20-28.)

The principle which will determine God's attitude toward people is illustrated by the Lord in this way: "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?" The New Testament plainly teaches that an unwholesome attitude toward material wealth, such as love for money, has a deceitful effect upon the person so characterized; and it is in this sense that mammon is described as being unrighteous. The Bible nowhere teaches that it is wrong for a child of God to possess this world's goods. The two principal issues regarding

the subject are: (1) How did he come to have his material wealth? and (2) what is his attitude toward it, or, more specifically, what use does he make of it? The true riches are the spiritual possessions, which will be ours in the world to come. Worldly riches are temporal and transitory, while true riches are eternal. (Cf. 2 Cor. 4: 18.)

"The earth is Jehovah's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." (Psalm 24: 1.) This means, of course, that every responsible person not only belongs to God; he is also a steward of all he possesses. "According as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Pet. 4: 10.) All people, to be sure, will be responsible to God, but the lesson now before us is applicable to those who are in covenant relationship with the Lord. "And he said also unto the disciples, . . ." (Verse 1.) To be faithful in that which is another's is to be faithful in those things which are within our possession, but which belong to another, that is, to God. This is to say that we are given an opportunity here, with reference to material things, to demonstrate that we are faithful stewards; and if we are so judged by the Lord, then we shall have that

which is our own. Or, to say the same thing in another way, that which will be given to us in the world to come, will be our own. (Cf. 1 Cor. 3: 22.)

"No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Jesus here assumes that man must have a master (cf. Jer. 10: 23), and that he has the power to choose the one whom he will serve. Mammon is represented as the god of riches; and is set over against Jehovah in making claims upon the devotion and service of men. But since the interests of God and mammon are diametrically opposed to each other, it is utterly impossible for any one to serve them both at the same time. Or, to state the same thing in another way, Jesus makes plain the impossibility of divided allegiance. If we repudiate our responsibility to God in favor of money, we thereby become the servants of mammon; and we shall be dealt with as such in the last day. Both God and mammon promise to care for those who serve them, but God goes further and demands our supreme love and undivided devotion to him; and unless we give them both to him, we cannot be acceptable in his sight.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

In what way are the parables of chapters 15 and 16, of Luke, related?
How, then, should the two chapters be treated?
What are the principal lessons which they set forth?
To whom were the parables addressed?
Give reasons for your answer.
What is the primary purpose of the parable of the unrighteous steward?

The Setting of the Lesson

Who is the principal figure in the parable we are to study at this time?
What is the meaning of the term "steward" and how did one discharge his stewardship?
What happened to cause the confrontation between the householder and his steward?
What did the master tell the steward to do?
What effect did this have on the latter?
In what way did the steward go about solving his difficulty?
What were the effects of the strategy which he employed?

Why would this place the lord's creditors under obligation to the steward?
How did the steward come to adopt the means which he employed to meet his own needs?
What important lesson is there in this for us?

The Heart of the Parable

What did the householder say regarding the plan which the steward conceived and executed?
What did he, and apparently Jesus, commend in the steward?
Is it right to commend, or condemn, a single trait in one's character? Give reasons for your answer.
What comment did Jesus make regarding the shrewdness of the unrighteous steward?
In what way are the children of the world wiser than the sons of light?
In what ways did the unjust steward manifest superior wisdom, in contrast with that which is so often displayed by the Lord's people?
How do many professed Christians frequently show their attitude toward such things?
What are some of the ways in which the Lord's people can show their interest in his work?

Discuss the blessings which come from assembling with the Lord's people, and in having the proper kind of friends.

The Lord's Special Application

How did Jesus begin his application of the parable now before us to his people?

How can one go about making friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness?

What "friends" does Jesus have in mind and how will he receive us into eternal habitations?

How should God's people view their life here upon the earth?

What will determine God's attitude toward us, so far as this lesson goes?

What makes greatness in God's sight?

How does Jesus illustrate his lesson and what is his conclusion?

Lesson VII—May 16, 1971

BEYOND DEATH

Lesson Text

Luke 16: 19-31

19 Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day:

20 And a certain beggar named Laz'-a-rus was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21 And desiring to be fed with the *crumbs* that fell from the rich man's table; yea, even the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom: and the rich man also died, and was buried.

23 And in Ha'-des he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Laz'-a-rus in his bosom.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Laz'-a-rus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remem-

ber that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Laz'-arus in like manner evil things: but now here he is comforted, and thou art in anguish.

26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that they that would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from thence to us.

27 And he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house;

28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

29 But Abraham saith, They have Mo'-ses and the prophets; let them hear them.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one go to them from the dead, they will repent.

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Mo'-ses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.*" (Matt. 6: 20.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Thess. 4: 1-13.

Daily Bible Readings

May 10.	M.	Shall We Live Again? (Job 14: 7-17)
May 11.	T.	Hope for the Future (2 Cor. 5: 1-10)
May 12.	W.	Many Mansions (John 14: 1-13)
May 13.	T.	Earth Destroyed (2 Pet. 3: 9-17)
May 14.	F.	Saints Carried Away (1 Thess. 4: 9-13)
May 15.	S.	The Holy City (Rev. 21: 9-27)
May 16.	S.	Immortality Awaits the Faithful (1 Cor. 15: 50-57)

TIME.—A.D. 28.

PLACE.—Probably in Peraea.

PERSONS.—Jesus, his disciples, and the Pharisees.

Introduction

The lesson text for today's study has a direct connection with the parable of the unrighteous steward, which we studied last week; and it must be considered in that light, if we are to get the force of the Lord's teaching. The Pharisees, who were listening to the Lord's teaching, along with his disciples, took vigorous exceptions to that which Jesus said regarding the proper use of money, and their reaction is expressed by the inspired historian in these words: "And the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things; and they scoffed at him. And he said unto them. Ye are they that justify yourselves in the sight of men: but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16: 14, 15.)

Two of the outstanding characteristics of the Pharisees were (1) self-righteousness, and (2) covetousness. Jesus severely condemned their self-righteousness, as was pointed out in a previous lesson; and now, in the two parables of chapter 16, he just as soundly condemned their covetousness. Any one therefore who reads the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of Luke together, will have no diffi-

culty in seeing that there is a vital point of contact between the parable of the unrighteous steward, and that of the prodigal son. The prodigal son was guilty of "*wasting his substance*," while the unrighteous steward was charged with "*wasting his lord's goods*."

It was the evident purpose of Jesus to teach those who held to the idea of self-righteous respectability, that there are other ways of misusing that which has been entrusted to them, than by riotous living, such as characterized the prodigal son. Thus, according to Jesus, when one appropriates to himself that which should be used in the Lord's service, he is in reality just as unfaithful to God, as is the abandoned sinner who spends his substance in riotous living. And so, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, which illustrates the point just made, that is, the appropriating to one's self that which should be used to God's glory and the good of one's fellow men, is the Lord's way of exposing the sin of covetousness. The occasion of the Lord's speaking the parable of the text, as one can easily see, was in reply to the contemptuous attitude which the Pharisees manifested toward him, after hearing that which is contained in Luke 16: 1-13.

The Golden Text

"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." If one will read the Lord's full statement, when he spoke the words which serve as the golden text for today's lesson, he will see that he approached the issue, (1) negatively, (2) positively, and then (3) gave the basis for his teaching regarding the attitude which God's people should manifest toward material wealth. The thing which Jesus is emphasizing primarily, is that his disciples must keep uppermost in their minds that which is of supreme importance. He warns against the worthlessness of ideals which may be outgrown: and inasmuch as his disciples are children of eternity, rather than of time, it is the height of folly to devote the strength of life to the gathering of

treasures which cannot be converted into the currency of the country to which they are going.

The treasures which people can lay up for themselves here upon the earth, are never safe, in the absolute meaning of that term. But that does not appear to be the primary reason for the Lord's caution against the acquisition of earthly goods for selfish purposes, that is, because of the clanger of losing them to moth, rust, and thieves; it is rather to the fact that people who labor to lay up treasures here, are *themselves* imperiled. (Cf. 1 Tim. 6: 9, 10.) It is interesting to note that the original word for "consume" (*aphanizō*), is the same word which is used to describe the hypocrites who *disfigure* their faces, that they may be seen of men to fast. (Matt. 6: 16). The moth and rust caused earthly treasures to *disappear*, just as the hypo-

criters caused their natural appearances to *vanish*.

The lesson which Jesus wants us to get here is this: Put your treasures where they will do the greatest amount of good. The mere accumulation of material goods is not wrong, in and of itself; it is the attitude which one has toward them, and the use which he makes of them, after they come into his possession, that counts in God's sight. (Cf. Luke 12: 13-21, 33, 34; Matt. 19: 21.) The way to lay up treasures in heaven is stated by Paul in

these words, namely, "Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed." (1 Tim. 6: 17-19; cf. Luke 16: 9; Mark 12: 41-44; Matt. 16: 26.)

The Text Explained

Man, His Goods, and His Opportunities

(Luke 16: 19-21)

Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day: and a certain beggar named Lazarus was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; yea, even the dogs came and licked his sores.

John Oxenham, of course, did not have in mind the parable of the rich man and Lazarus when he wrote his poem on *The Ways*, but he did set forth the principle that there are ways which every man can travel, and that each individual will decide the course which he will pursue. Furthermore, the poet makes it plain that the person in question will be motivated in his choice of a course in life by his own attitude or disposition. The poem in question reads as follows:

To every man there openeth
A Way, and Ways, and a Way.
And the High Soul climbs the High
Way,
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
And in between, on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A High Way, and a Low.
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go.

The Pharisees, and all others like them, were lovers of money, that is, they wanted it for themselves; and it was both easy and natural for them to choose the way of covetousness. But there are others, like the good Samaritan, who loved their fellow men more than they love

their money; and they are both willing and happy to use it for their welfare. Jesus had previously said, "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles." And he then added, "He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much: and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?" (See Luke 16: 9-12.) The rich man was not faithful in that which belongs to God, and he was therefore denied the things which could have been his in eternity.

The Latin word for a rich or wealthy man is *dives*; and that is the term which is usually employed to designate the rich man of the parable now under consideration. *Dives* is not a proper name for a person, but the term has been capitalized; and it has been, for all practical purposes, converted into a title or name for an individual. This, apparently, is the result of the use of the adjective "dives." in this passage, in the Vulgate, the Latin Version of the Scriptures, by Jerome. The idea behind the use of the term *dives*, is to show something of the character and conduct of the rich man, rather than to give him a name.

It appears that only the very expensive fabrics, such as were worn by royalty and the very wealthy,

were colored purple. This type of dye was obtained from a rare shell-fish, with each such fish yielding about one drop of the fluid, from which came the dye. Lydia (Acts 16: 14) was "a seller of purple"; and it is from this fact that Bible students regard her as having been engaged in a profitable business. It appears that the rich man of the parable now before us, had his outer garments made of purple, while his inner raiment consisted of linen. The very mention of this kind of apparel, along with the continuous feasting, indicates a life of extreme luxury.

There are several features of the parable now under consideration which immediately attract the reader's attention. For example, it appears quite evident that the only possession which the poor man had, was his name and the few rags which were upon his body; and it is worthy of note that this is the only parable which Jesus spoke, in which he gave the name of one of the characters in it. The whole story of the rich man and Lazarus, is one of contrasts. It begins with the rich man's extreme wealth, and the beggar's almost complete destitution. It is also worthy of notice that the rich man was not charged with any ill-gotten gain, and that the poor man did not ask for anything more than that which "fell" from the banquet table. The point to remember is that the rich man did not give the poor man anything. Another point of contrast is that suggested by the attention which Lazarus received from the dogs, while the rich man was surrounded by his family and attentive servants.

The Consequence of Social Injustice (Luke 16: 22-26)

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom: and the rich man also died, and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou

in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things: but now here he is comforted, and thou art in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that they that would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from thence to us.

This section of the lesson text begins with another contrast between the two men of the parable, namely, the rich man was buried, while nothing is said regarding such a service for the poor man. Furthermore, the doom of the rich man is a forceful commentary on the inexorable law of the harvest, as expressed by Paul. (Gal. 6: 7, 8.) The destinies of both men in the parable are carefully specified; and they provide the greatest, and most awful, contrast of all. The state of the righteous is represented as being in "Abraham's bosom" which, according to Vincent, was a Rabbinical phrase, equivalent to being with Abraham in Paradise. Vincent also quotes Goebel as saying that "to the Israelite Abraham seems the personal centre and meeting-point of Paradise."

Hades, literally the unseen or invisible world, is, according to Thayer, the realm of the dead; or, which is the same thing, the common receptacle of disembodied spirits. The corresponding Old Testament word, that is, the Hebrew term, is *Sheol*, as may be seen by considering Peter's use of the quotation from Psalm 16: 8-10, as found in Acts 2: 25-31. Many Bible students understand that Hades is divided into two regions—one called Paradise, which is the abode of the righteous dead; the other called Tartarus (2 Pet. 2: 4, marginal note), which is the waiting-place of the people who die in their sins. It is between these two abiding-places that the impassable gulf is fixed. This, of course, means that one's eternal destiny is settled at death, although he will not enter into his eternal state until the day of judgment, at which time rewards and punishments will be meted out, according to each person's deserts. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 10; Rev. 22: 12.)

Some Bible readers, and especially those who have only the King James Version of the Scriptures,

may experience some difficulty in understanding the true significance of the term "Hades," since it is translated "hell" in that version. There are, in fact, three words, with separate and distinct meanings, which are rendered "hell" in the King James Version, namely, *Gehenna*, *Hades*, and *Tartarus*. *Gehenna* always refers to the place of eternal punishment; *Hades*, to the intermediate state; and *Tartarus*, to the part of Hades where the wicked are reserved, that is, kept, during the intermediate state. The American Standard Version clearly shows the difference in the meaning of all three of these words. *Gehenna* is uniformly translated "hell"; *Hades* is always anglicized, that is, made to conform to English by using English letters in the spelling of the term, instead of Greek letters or symbols; and while *Tartarus* is rendered "hell," the marginal note shows that *Tartarus* is the term which Peter used.

It is well, when considering the rich man's cry for mercy, to compare the small favor which he requested with that which Lazarus desired in the way of food. The rich man, during his lifetime, had much of the mammon of unrighteousness in his possession, and he could have used it in such a way as to make friends for such a time as this; but alas! he abused his stewardship by lavishing his substance upon himself. The anguish which the rich man was suffering was the punishment which he was experiencing in the intermediate state (Cf. 2 Pet. 2: 9.) Both Jesus and Peter teach that the punishment in *Tartarus* is both severe and continuous, throughout the period between death and the resurrection; but the Scriptures also teach that there is a difference, both in the mode and the degree of punishment, in the intermediate and the eternal states.

The punishment in *Hades* or *Tartarus* is the punishment of the disembodied spirit; whereas, the punishment in *Gehenna* is the punishment of both the body and the spirit. (Cf. Matt. 10: 28.) J. W. McGarvey says, "As the body and soul are both to be destroyed in hell, hell (*Gehenna*) cannot belong to the intermediate state, but to the state which follows the reunion of body

and soul at the resurrection. Hell, then, lies beyond the final judgment." (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 35-44.) The punishment of the intermediate state will end with the resurrection; but the punishment of *Gehenna* will continue for ever. (Cf. Matt. 25: 46.)

This section of the lesson text not only teaches that people will reap that which they sow (cf. Gal. 6: 7, 8); it also makes it plain that *memory* is a definite factor in future punishment—"Son, remember!" The reference to the great gulf which is fixed, is sufficient to show that it would be difficult, if not indeed impossible, to find language which exhibits, in a clearer manner, that with death the righteous and the wicked are for ever separated. Two important lessons may be learned from this part of the lesson text, namely, (1) the righteous are neither homeless nor unconscious, during the period between death and the resurrection (cf. Phil. 1: 23); and (2) the doctrine of Universalism is refuted; for the gulf is fixed, and cannot be crossed in either direction, which means that the wicked are eternally lost.

The Sufficiency of God's Word (Luke 16: 27-31)

And he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. But Abraham saith. They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said. Nay, father Abraham: but if one go to them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead.

McGarvey and Pendleton suggest that the double attempt of the rich man to use Lazarus, was due to the difficulty which he had of adjusting himself to his new situation. At any rate, the rich man's eyes were opened to the truth, and his natural sympathies were awakened toward his brethren. It is certain that no one who is lost wants his loved ones to share his misery. Albert Barnes thinks that it is remarkable that the rich man did not ask that he himself be allowed to go on the mission to

his father's house. He may have realized that that was impossible, since his condition was *fixed*; but whatever may have been his reason for not making the request for himself, we should learn from this circumstance, that the time for people to try to keep their friends and loved ones, and any one else as for that matter, from going to the place of torment, is while they are still here on earth with them.

When Abraham told the rich man that his brethren had "Moses and the prophets; let them hear them," that was equivalent to saying that they had the Old Testament Scriptures to guide them. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 15-17.) Jehovah has never failed to supply responsible beings with whatever they needed, to enable them to do his will. It is altogether possible that the rich man and his brothers heard the Old Testament Scriptures read in the synagogue every sabbath (cf. Acts 15: 21); but if they did, that exercise had not produced faith in their hearts (cf. Heb. 4: 2). The hearing of God's word is his way of producing faith in the hearts of his people; and if that will not work, it is certain that man's way will not succeed. No miracle, which might be performed today, if God so willed, would change the hearts of the people who are set in their own ways, and who will not listen to that which God has spoken in his inspired word.

It was not long after Jesus had spoken the parable now under consideration, before a real and well known Lazarus did arise from the dead, and which was witnessed by many of the Jewish people; but instead of causing the Jewish leaders to accept Jesus as the promised Messiah, the miracle served to intensify their efforts to put him to death. (John 11: 45-53.) These leaders of the Jewish people, in fact, wanted to kill Lazarus too; "because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus." (John 12: 9-11.) It was Abraham, in the parable, who did the speaking to the rich man, but it was Jesus who put the words in his mouth; and it is for this reason that the lesson before us is, in reality, the Lord's appraisal of the purpose and power of the revealed word of

God. This inspired revelation is designed to show people how to get to God; and we may be certain that there is no substitute for it. (Cf. John 14: 6.) Furthermore, what would the rich man's brothers have thought of the message of Lazarus, if he had come to them and told them that their brother was in torment, while he (Lazarus) was safe in Abraham's bosom!

The rich man was suffering the penalties which were imposed by Moses and the prophets. (Cf. Heb. 2: 1-3.) He had failed to keep the commandments of the law, under which he lived, such as loving his neighbor as himself; and that would be the fate of his brothers, and all others of that age, who did not live as Moses and the prophets prescribed. The people of this age have Christ and the apostles, and the lesson, so far as we are concerned, should be clear. We must hear that which they teach; for no further revelation will be made. (Cf. Judo 3; 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17; 2 Pet. 1: 3, 4.) Any one who knows his duty, but does not do it, will be judged accordingly. (James 4: 17.) The rich man, and presumably his brothers, rejected the law which they had; and why should the Lord give them a further miraculous revelation? The same lesson, of course, applies to people of this age. (Cf. Matt. 13: 12.)

The facts just presented should be an impressive lesson to those who think that the gospel is not sufficient to save those who are out of Christ. Jesus himself, while here on the earth, set forth the principle by which people must be saved. (Cf. John 6: 44, 45.) It was the purpose of the Old Testament Scriptures to direct men to Christ (cf. Gal. 3: 24; 2 Tim. 3: 15); and when Christ had finished his work of redemption, and was about ready to return to the Father, he told his disciples to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation (see Mark 16: 15); and it is this gospel which is God's power unto salvation (Rom. 1: 16, 17). We may therefore be certain that there is no other way to accomplish that purpose; and neither will any other way be provided. (Cf. Gal. 1: 6-9; 2 Thess. 1: 7-9; Heb. 9: 27.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

In what way are the lessons for last week and this one related?
What were two of the outstanding characteristics of the Pharisees?
What, then, was the occasion for the Lord's teaching at the time of this lesson?

The Golden Text

In what context were the words of the golden text for today spoken?
How did Jesus deal with the subject about which he spoke?
What is the best possible way for one to lay up treasures for himself?
What direction do the Scriptures provide for this activity?

Man, His Goods, and His Opportunities

What obligation rests upon every responsible person in the world and why is this true?
What was the principal difference between the Pharisees and the good Samaritan?
What should be the attitude of the Lord's people with reference to their possessions?
In what way is the rich man of the parable now before us usually identified and why?
What do the clothing and the eating habits suggest about the rich man's character?
Discuss some of the contrasts which are seen between the two men.

Wherein did the sin of the rich man lie?

The Consequence of Social Injustice

What further contrast is seen here between the rich man and Lazarus?
What important New Testament law does the conduct of the rich man illustrate and why?
Where did each man go at death?
What is the meaning of the term "Hades"?
What is signified by Abraham's bosom?
What is indicated by the fixed gulf?
How do you know that Hades is not the place of eternal punishment?
What did the rich man ask for when he cried to Abraham for mercy?
Why did he go to the place of punishment instead of the realm of bliss?
What does the Bible teach with reference to the punishment in Hades?
How does that punishment compare with the punishment of eternity and why?
What part does "memory" have in future punishment and why?
What two important lessons do we learn from this section of the lesson text?

The Sufficiency of God's Word

Why, apparently, did the rich man try to use Lazarus in his behalf?
Why doesn't the Lord permit extra influence in trying to turn people from their evil ways?
What has always been Jehovah's plan for saving people from their sins?
How do we know that influence beyond the word of the Lord will not accomplish good?
How do we know that the lost will not be given a second chance?

Lesson VIII—May 23, 1971

AN EXAMPLE OF INGRATITUDE

Lesson Text

Luke 17: 11-19

11 And it came to pass, as they were on the way to Je-ru'-sa-lem, that he was passing along the borders of Sa-ma'-ri-a and Gal'-i-lee.

12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off:

13 And they lifted up their voices, saying, Je'-sus, Master, have mercy on us.

14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go and show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed.

15 And one of them, when he saw

that he was healed, turned back, with a loud voice glorifying God;

16 And he fell upon his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Sa-mar'-i-tan.

17 And Je'-sus answering said, Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

18 Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?

19 And he said unto him, Arise, and go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."* (Phil. 4: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 92: 1-8.

Daily Bible Readings

May 17.	M.....	Lesson in Forgiveness (Matt. 18: 23-33)
May 18.	T.....	Lesson in Humility (Luke 17: 5-10)
May 19.	W.....	Lesson in Reconciliation (Matt. 5: 21-26)
May 20.	T.....	Humility in Service (1 Pet. 5: 1-11)
May 21.	F.....	Paul Teaches Gratitude (Phil. 4: 4-7)
May 22.	S.....	Gratefulness in Song (Psalm 117: 1, 2)
May 23.	S.....	Christ, Our Example (Phil. 2: 5-11)

TIME.—A. D. 28.

PLACES.—Borders of Samaria and Galilee.

PERSONS.—Jesus, his disciples, and the ten lepers.

Introduction

Ingratitude is one of the common faults of mankind. Who does not remember Jehovah's stinging, yet plaintive, words: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for Jehovah hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." (Isa. 1: 2, 3.) Although Jehovah's wrath is frequently expressed throughout the Book of Isaiah, it is a noticeable fact that the prophecy begins with a picture of the grief of the heavenly Father. One of the sad features of the Bible is that of the wounded love of God, the picture and description of which may be seen on practically every page of his revelation to man.

The indifference which men manifest toward the Creator, Preserver, and Saviour of the race, is beyond our ability to understand; but when we take into consideration the attitude which men manifest toward each other, we at least can begin to see something of that which goes on in their mind. (Cf. Prov. 23: 7.) There are men who will make use of the labors of others, in order to accomplish their ends; but when the latter are no longer profitable to them, the employers have no further interest in them or in their welfare.

That, of course, is the reason why laws have had to be enacted for the benefit of those who can do nothing about such matters themselves. It goes without saying that Christians should never be guilty of such conduct towards those who have served them; but only eternity can reveal how many have been guilty in this respect.

And so, as Jehovah has pointed out through Isaiah, even dumb animals have more consideration for their masters, than some of God's people do for him. One has only to read the Bible in order to see that such an attitude has characterized the human race, since the time of the first transgression in the garden of Eden. (Cf. Jer. 8: 7.) The Persian poet Saadi has pointed out that a grateful dog is better than an ungrateful man; while Timothy Dexter notes that an ungrateful man is like a hog under a tree eating acorns, but never looking up to see where they come from. Shakespeare, in *Twelfth Night*, makes Viola say, "I hate ingratitude more in a man than lying, vainness, babbling, drunkenness, or any taint of vice whose strong corruption inhabits our frail blood." And if thoughtful and conscientious people feel that way about such a moral failure as ingratitude, how must the Lord feel about it?

The Golden Text

"In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." The words just quoted are found in this context, namely, "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say. Rejoice. Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The Lord is at

hand. In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4: 4-7.) The apostle Paul was in prison in Rome,

when he wrote the words just quoted, but he had not lost his sense of gratitude, nor his ability to urge others to manifest their trust in God.

Normal and responsible human beings have the mental ability to think; and when they use that ability and consider their relationship to God, as they should, it will not be difficult for them to manifest a feeling of gratefulness to the Giver of every good and perfect gift. The spelling of the words "think" and "thank" differ only in the middle letter; and so, as some one has observed, people who *think* are thankful, and *thankful* people are those who think. Or, to say the same thing in another way, people who think as they should, will never fail to be thankful; and those who are thankful are the ones whose thoughts toward God are what they should be.

Every child of God can do his work better, if he does not allow his energy to go to waste in anxiety: and any person who stops to think knows that one of the principal causes of anxiety, is a lack of faith

in God. However, we should always keep in mind the fact, that God has not promised to do for us that which we can do for ourselves. Jehovah has furnished the basis for our trust in him (cf. Rom. 8: 28), and it is our responsibility to see to it that we make the proper use of that means. (Cf. Heb. 11: 6.) Relief from anxiety, therefore, can never be obtained by the efforts of our own will, or by arguing its uselessness and harmfulness. The passage which serves as the golden text for today's lesson sets forth the only sure way to that glorious end, namely, prayer and supplication with thanksgiving; and when that is done, the way is opened for one to make known his requests to God, with the full assurance that what is best for him will be done by the Lord. It appears that some people never think of taking "little troubles" to God; they feel that he is interested only in their "big problems." But the text says, "In *nothing* be anxious; but in *everything* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your *requests* be made known unto God."

The Text Explained

A Cry for Mercy

(Luke 17: 11-13)

And it came to pass, as they were on the way to Jerusalem, that he was passing along the borders of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

One will not have to read very far, in the field of modern-day commentaries, before he comes to realize that not every so-called Bible scholar really believes in the credibility of the Scriptures. One well-known man, for example, thinks that the account of the ten lepers presents an element of difficulty for readers, who bring to it the instinctive analytical questioning of a scientific age. As long as young people are at home with their parents, and in their "home" congregations, where they are shielded from the onslaughts of modernism, they will not be bothered by such viewpoints as that mentioned above; but when

they get out into the world on their own, it may not be easy for them to deal successfully with these faith-destroying agencies. They will be better served if they can meet these falsehoods, while they have sympathetic help in dealing with them.

This is the inspired account of the way Jesus went about his work among the people of Palestine. He had been sent to seek and to save the lost, and to demonstrate that he was indeed the Son of God who had been sent into the world for that purpose. He and his disciples were on their way to Jerusalem, and they were, at the time of this lesson, on or near the boundary between Galilee and Samaria. We are not told the name of the village they were entering, when the lepers called to him for his help; but it is evident that they had, in some way, learned of his miraculous ministry among the sick and afflicted. At any rate, their plea for mercy was tantamount to acknowledging that they have faith in his ability to meet their particular needs, that is, they

evidently believed that he was able to heal them of their leprosy.

Leprosy was a loathsome disease, and those who were afflicted with it were required by divine enactment to dwell apart from their families and friends. The entire thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Leviticus are devoted to the subject of leprosy. "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and the hair of his head shall go loose, and he shall cover his upper lip, and shall cry. Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague is in him he shall be unclean; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his dwelling be." (Lev. 13: 45, 46.) Albert Barnes notes that it has been commonly supposed that the disease of Job was a species of black leprosy commonly called Elephantiasis, which prevails much in Egypt. If one will read the account of that patriarch's affliction, it will be easy for him to see that Job did indeed dwell alone. When his three friends heard of his plight, they went from their own places "to bemoan him and to comfort him." But when they reached the place from which they could see him, they were unable to recognize him; and "they lifted up their voice, and wept." They then went nearer to him, and "sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was great." (Job. 2: 11-13.) Not every one, however, thinks that Job had a form of leprosy.

One learns from the Old Testament that leprosy was a common disease among the Hebrews; and, so far as the times then were concerned, it was practically incurable. It was easily transmitted from one person to another; and that apparently was the reason for their isolation from the society of their day. (Cf. Num. 5: 1-4; 12: 9-15.) The editor of Barnes Notes, in commenting on Leviticus 13: 45, says, "The leper was a living parable in the world of sin of which death was the wages; not the less so because his suffering might have been in no degree due to his own personal deserts: he bore about with him at once the deadly fruit and the symbol of the sin of his race. (Ex. 20:

5.) As his body slowly perished, first the skin, then the flesh, then the bone, fell to pieces while yet the animal life survived; he was a terrible picture of the gradual corruption of the spirit wrought by sin." And if the disease of leprosy is indeed a type of sin, which cuts man off from communion with God and his brethren, until it is removed; then we must remember that Christ is the only cure for the leprosy of sin. (Cf. Luke 5: 12-14; Heb. 9: 13, 14; John 14: 6; Acts 4: 12.)

A Blessing Bestowed

(Luke 17: 14-16)

And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go and show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, with a loud voice glorifying God; and he fell upon his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

If one will read that which the Bible says about the disease of leprosy, he will see that not all forms of the malady were incurable. There were many instances in which people with leprosy were cured; and when that was accomplished, they were directed to go to the priests. This was in strict keeping with the law of Moses; and it should be carefully noted that Jesus always manifested complete respect for the law of his Father. (Cf. Matt. 5: 17-19; Luke 16: 29-31.) The law which required that the person cleansed of leprosy to go to the priest is stated in these words:

"And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: he shall be brought unto the priest; and the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look; and, behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper, then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two living clean birds, and cedar-wood, and scarlet, and hyssop: and the priest shall command to kill one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water. As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar-wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed

over the running water: and he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let go the living bird into the open field. And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and bathe himself in water; and he shall be clean: and after that he shall come into the camp, but shall dwell outside his tent seven days. And it shall be on the seventh day, that he shall shave all his hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows, even all his hair he shall shave off: and he shall wash his clothes, and shall bathe his flesh in water, and he shall be clean." (Lev. 14: 1-9.) There were other duties which he had to perform, as may be seen by reading further on in the chapter.

If leprosy is to be looked upon as a type of sin, then we should not fail to get the lesson that is suggested in the law which had to be complied with, when the cleansing was effected. People today, who profess to want to be saved from the guilt of sin, are often wholly unwilling even to consider that which the Lord has specified in his word regarding their case. "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.) When Peter delivered the first opportunity for sinful people to accept the salvation which the Lord provided, he said to those whose heart had been touched by his message, or, those who believed that which Peter had proclaimed, "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." (See Acts 2: 36-41.) How much more simple it is to do that

which Jesus commands people to do today, than it was for the Jewish people to comply with the ceremonial rituals which were required by Moses.

This is the second time that Luke has introduced a Samaritan in connection with Jewish people, and represented Jesus as commending him above his own brethren. (See Luke 10: 25-37.) It is generally thought that Luke viewed Jesus from the cosmopolitan, rather than from the national standpoint; and his inclusion in his record of the two accounts involving the two Samaritan men, may have been a part of his over-all plan which foreshadowed the acceptance of Jesus by the great outside world of aliens to the commonwealth of Israel. It has already been pointed out that Jesus himself said, as he led Zacchaeus to a closer walk with God, "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19: 10); and that, of course, included all mankind. (Cf. Gal. 3:22; Rom. 3: 9, 10, 23; 11: 32.) The two Samaritans, who were referred to by Jesus, had a much higher place in his estimation, than the Jews who were mentioned along with them.

An Instance of Gross Ingratitude (Luke 17: 17-19)

And Jesus answering said. Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger? And he said unto him. Arise, and go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

The principal interest in the narrative which forms the basis for this study, is found in the questions of Jesus—"Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"—and their meaning. Before considering this phase of the lesson, it might be well to look at some of the surrounding circumstances, which probably affected the ten lepers, and especially the nine who were Jewish. Edersheim notes that "this history shows how little spiritual value or efficacy they attach to miracles, and how essentially different in this respect their tendency is from all legendary stories. The lesson conveyed in this case is, that we may expect, and even experience, mira-

cles, without any real faith in the Christ; with belief, indeed, in his power, but without surrender to his rule. According to the Gospel records, a man might either seek benefit from Christ, or else receive Christ through such benefit. In the one case the benefit sought was the object, in the other the means; in the one, it was the goal, in the other, the road to it; in the one, it gave healing, in the other, brought salvation; in the one, it ultimately lead away from, in the other, it led to Christ and to discipleship. And so Christ now spake it to this Samaritan: 'Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.' But to all time there are here to the church lessons of most important distinction."

That which has just been said may help to explain the difference in the attitudes which were manifested by the men who were cured of their leprosy; and, as Edersheim notes, the same principle can be manifested in any age of the world. There are people who are constantly receiving blessing from the Lord, but who continue to manifest a self-ish attitude toward the Giver of every good and every perfect gift; but there are some who never cease to be grateful for every manifestation of the Lord's goodness toward them, both with reference to material and spiritual blessings. These contrasting attitudes are expressed by R. C. Foster in the following words:

"As ingratitude is one of the worst sins, it is also one of the most common. The character of these ten men was revealed by their conduct at this critical moment. The first thought of the nine was their selfish desires. The first act of the Samaritan was an expression of his love of God and his gratitude and devotion to Christ. The bodies of the nine had been changed, but their souls remained as selfish as ever. The Samaritan leaped for joy as he dedicated himself to Christ in grateful recognition of his power and truth. The actual examination by a priest could be delayed long enough to permit him to thank God and express his gratitude to Christ. . . . The nine lepers who were in such haste to return to their former lives had faith enough to be healed, but

not love enough to return and thank Jesus. They are like nominal Christians who profess faith and repentance, and are baptized, but do not appreciate what has been done for them by Christ sufficiently to live nobly for him." They are, to paraphrase Peter's remark regarding people who do not give their all to Christ, blind, seeing only what is near, and have forgotten the fact that they have been delivered from the most cruel of all masters, and freed from the worst malady which can afflict the human race.

The questions which Jesus asked, were not to gain information for himself, but rather call attention to those in his presence to the facts in the case. The Lord's remarks were also in recognition of, and in response to, the earnest words of gratefulness which were uttered by the Samaritan, who had returned to express this gratitude to Jesus. The nine Jewish people should have been the first to acknowledge the kindness and goodness which had been manifested toward them, due to their closer relationship to the divine economy; but as the matter turned out, they completely ignored that which has been so graciously done for them. The Samaritan, on the other, with lesser opportunities and privileges, rose to heights in the divine estimation, which are entirely acceptable to the Lord. The second question which Jesus asked, namely, "but where are the nine?" is, as Foster notes, a dramatic expression of the Lord's poignant grief, and which, we may add, was to be, as it had from the beginning, his experience as long as he remained among his Jewish brethren.

Any one who reads the Bible knows that Jesus was entitled to the gratitude of the nine who failed to indicate their feeling toward their benefactor, when they realized that they had been cleansed of the dread disease of leprosy; but it is well to note that he did not detract from the good which he had done, either by rejecting the gratitude which the Samaritan offered him, or by claiming it. He merely showed, when he received it, the natural joy which it caused him to experience. There are, indeed, few things which bless and soothe the lives of others, or which brings them greater satisfac-

tion, than the giving of thanks. Some one has observed that such action makes men feel that they are of some benefit to the society in which they live; and that is one of the finest and most effective impulses to a better life in this world. The expression of gratitude cheers many a wearied heart with pleasant hope, and bids many a man who is sad in spirit to take courage. It is the soother of the world, and like mercy, its work is twofold; for it blesses him who gives it, and him who receives it.

The Speaker's Bible expresses the gist of the matter in this way: "The truth and grace of Jesus Christ

make thankfulness possible by convincing us of our true position before God. Ingratitude, in the main, arises out of infinite and inveterate conceit. Wonderful as this world is, we cherish a secret conviction that we deserve one a great deal better. In the sense of our vast importance we despise most things. Satisfied that we are worthy of the greatest of God's gifts, we really appreciate none. Here the truth of the gospel effects a fundamental change; it convinces us that we are sinners, without merits and rights, and in doing this it gives us a new standpoint whence we view the whole field of life."

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

In what way is ingratitude related to the human race and why?
How, apparently, is God affected by such inconsideration on the part of his people?
How is ingratitude sometimes manifested by some people toward their fellow men?
Name some examples which have been used to emphasize the sin of ingratitude.

The Golden Text

In what context are the words of the golden text found?
Why are thoughtful people seldom ever ungrateful toward either God or men?
What effect does anxiety usually have on the life and work of its victims?
In what way has God made it both possible and desirable for his people to trust in him?

A Cry for Mercy

Why do some so-called Bible students want to disregard the miracles of the Bible?
Why is it good for young people to have these things called to their attention early in life?
What reason can you think of for making this account a part of the gospel record?
What did the lepers imply by their call to the Lord for mercy?
What do the Scriptures teach with reference to the disease of leprosy?

Why were lepers required to live away from their families and friends or society in general?

A Blessing Bestowed

Was leprosy always fatal to its victim?
Give reasons for your answer.
Why did Jesus tell the ten lepers who asked for mercy to show themselves to the priest?
What was required of people who had been cured of leprosy?
What effect should that ceremonial cleansing have on people's attitude toward the requirements of the gospel?
Why do so many people today object to baptism for the remission of sins?
What, actually, does such an attitude demonstrate regarding one's faith in the Lord?
What did the people of the New Testament period do about baptism when they received the word of the Lord?
What lessons did Jesus teach when he cited the examples of the Samaritans, in their relations to the Jews?

An Instance of Gross Ingratitude

Wherein is the principal interest and significance of the lesson text to be found?
Why did Jesus ask the questions which he did?
What, then, was the basis for the difference in the attitude which was manifested by the nine and the Samaritan?
Why is ingratitude such a gross sin?
In what way is the principle we are considering seen in the lives of many professed followers of Christ?
In what way did Jesus react to the situation in which he found himself?

Lesson IX—May!J0, 1971

PERSISTENCE IN PRAYER

Lesson Text

Luke 18: 1-14

1 And he spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought al-

ways to pray, and not to faint;

2 Saying, There was in a city a

judge, who feared not God, and regarded not man:

3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came oft unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest she wear me out by her continual coining.

6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge saith.

7 And shall not God avenge his elect, that cry to him day and night, and yet he is longsuffering over them?

8 I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

9 And he spake also this parable unto certain who trusted in them-

selves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought:

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get.

13 But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner.

14 I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Lord, teach us to pray."* (Luke 11: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Luke 11: 1-13.

Daily Bible Readings

May 24. M.....	A Prayer That Teaches to Pray (Matt. 6: 5-15)
May 25. T.....	Persistence in Prayer (Mark 7: 24-30)
May 26. W.....	House of Prayer (Matt. 21: 12-16)
May 27. T.....	Earnestness in Prayer (Psalm 63: 1-8)
May 28. F.....	Prayer of the Penitent (Psalm 38: 1-9)
May 29. S.....	Faithfulness in Prayer (John 14: 11-20)
May 30. S.....	Unanswered Prayers (James 4: 1-3)

TIME.—A. D. 29.

PLACES.—Probably on or near the borders of Samaria and Galilee.

PERSONS.—Jesus, his disciples, and certain others.

Introduction

Robert Milligan, as he begins his book, *A Brief Treatise on Prayer*, notes that prayer is the spontaneous utterance of every grateful and pious heart. It flows from a sense of our dependence on God for blessings which are internal, as well as for those which are external. Any man who looks into the deep recesses of his own nature, will see and feel that there are both wants and needs, for which he has no power to supply. Furthermore, no man, however great he may be, has the ability to comprehend fully what his fundamental needs are; but if he has faith in his heavenly Father, he will never doubt his ability to supply whatever is needful and best for him. This attitude to-

ward God will, of course, cause the trusting child to commune with his Father all the days of his life. This is another way of saying that our helpless condition, that is, our dependence upon a source above and outside of ourselves, will cause us to continue to look beyond our own ability to the Source of every good and every perfect gift. (Cf. James 1: 17.)

The Christian's experience in praying is frequently referred to as his *prayer life*; and that, in and of itself, is very suggestive, since it implies that prayer is not a mere isolated act or exercise. Hall L. Calhoun points out that there are many devout and earnest souls who are quite energetic in *saying* certain

things to God, which they piously imagine is the highest degree of excellence in prayer; and they repeat these things over and over again, as the days come and go, until their repetitions become almost mechanical. (Cf. Matt. 6: 7.) Spiritual communion with God, through his revealed will, will enable the Christian to come to an increasing understanding of God's purpose in and for man. And as the child of God learns more and more about his relation to his heavenly Father, and his own possibilities as a follower of Christ, the greater will be his incentive and effort to attain the Lord's ideal for him.

Calhoun goes on to say, "*This sympathetic contemplation of God's ideal for him and his earnest desire to attain it is real prayer.* It is a spirit, a desire, a vision of real greatness and beauty of achievement for himself that leads the man

into deeper and deeper depths of comprehension of the wonderful possibilities open to him. Continued meditation upon and desire for these spiritual excellencies is what prayer is intended to be. Such prayer is the normal atmosphere of a human soul awake to its highest good." How grateful we should be, therefore, to avail ourselves of the wonderful opportunity, which God has so graciously given to us, for the purpose of approaching him for whatever request we may have to make to him. (See Phil. 4: 6, 7; Heb. 4: 14-16.) And we should always keep in mind the fact that the divine revelation has placed before us guidelines for our prayer life, which will always make certain, if we abide within them, that our prayerful exercises will never be in vain. (Cf. John 15: 7; Matt. 21: 22; 1 John 5: 14, 15.)

The Golden Text

"*Lord, teach us to pray.*" The request just quoted was made by one of the disciples, just after their Master had finished a prayer himself. The context in which the request is found, is as follows: "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. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Father, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive very one that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation." (Luke 11: 1-4.)

The request contained in the golden text, along with Paul's statement to the Romans, should be enough to convince any thoughtful person, that even the best, and the most efficient discerners of spiritual realities, need to be taught how to pray, in the true sense of that term. The statement of Paul reads as follows: "And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groan-

ings which cannot be uttered; and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." (Rom. 8: 26, 27.)

One has only to read the context in which the words of the golden text are found, in order to see that Jesus did indeed teach his disciples to pray. They had, by their association with their Lord, created within them the *desire* to pray; and they were therefore ready to put their desire into actual practice. The words which Jesus taught his disciples to use in making known their requests to God, are those which give expression to the most fundamental of spiritual desires, and the most common of daily needs. And if one considers them well, it will not be difficult for him to see that the maturest saint cannot outgrow them, while even babes in Christ can easily grasp their significance and meaning. The Lord does not teach his people to use a mere form of words, as such; but rather to take the expression which he has given as a guide in our approach to God. "After this manner therefore pray ye." (Matt. 6: 9-13.)

The Text Explained

An Illustration of the Right Way to Pray

(Luke 18: 1-8)

And he spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying: There was in a city a judge, who feared not God, and regarded not man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came oft unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest she wear me out by her continual coming. And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. And shall not God avenge his elect, that cry unto him day and night, and yet he is longsuffering over them? I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

There is one important lesson which the student of the parables of Jesus should always keep in mind, namely, there is a central truth which lies at the heart of the narrative; and that is the lesson which Jesus wants his readers to understand. There are usually many details, but they should be regarded as mere drapery of the parable, and which require no particular interpretation. The central truth in the parable now before us, is that of persistency—perseverance—and that which it can accomplish. The purpose of the parable is to illustrate that truth; and it is a noticeable fact that Jesus chose as his characters, in the present story, people in extreme situations; so extreme, in fact, that no one can miss his meaning.

The people of his day, as is also true in our time, knew how difficult it was for the average person to be sure of justice. It was easy for the rich and the privileged to get verdicts in their favor, even if a bribe had to be resorted to; but the poor and humble had to take that which others wanted them to have. And so Jesus, in the parable which is now under consideration, told of a judge who had no fear of God, and who had no regard for man; and it

was so, when a poor, helpless widow came to him for redress in connection with a wrong which she had suffered, the judge simply brushed her aside, and gave no heed to her plea for a righteous verdict. That, of course, could have been the end of the matter, had it not been for her persistence: she simply did not mean for that to be the end of the matter. And so, day after day she kept coming back. The judge had not listened to her yesterday, but she would try again today, and also tomorrow, if necessary; and as many tomorrows as might be required to accomplish her purpose. The widow's persistence won out, not because the judge had a change of heart for the better, but because he was annoyed by her continual coming; and decided to grant her request in order to get rid of her! Her determination won the battle, in spite of the overwhelming odds.

The parable itself ends with verse 5, and the remainder of the paragraph is given to the Lord's interpretation of it. "And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. And shall not God avenge his elect, that cry to him day and night, and yet he is longsuffering over them? I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily." This is not to say that Jesus is implying that God is like the unrighteous judge, in that he will not be moved by the cries of his children, until he decides to grant their requests in order to get rid of them. The idea is that the Lord's people should not become discouraged, if their prayers are not answered immediately, or, which is the same thing, they should not faint, that is, lose heart; on the contrary, they should demonstrate steadfastness and continue their trust in God.

The last question of the paragraph—"Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"—clearly implies that Jesus is teaching perseverance in prayer; and since that is true (cf. Luke 11: 5-13), one may ask, Why is it that God sometimes seems to delay his answers? Why must the Lord's people continue to pray, and to wait, and thereby perhaps be tempted to wonder whether or not

God really cares? Finite being, of course, cannot be certain regarding the answer to this question, but it is well to remember that God's purposes include other people, as well as ourselves. Job was plagued with this same question, as others have been all through the historical period of the Bible. (Cf. Job 30: 20; Psalm 89: 46; 2 Cor. 12: 7-10.) When Job understood something of the situation in which he had been placed, he said, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 22: 6.) He did not repent of the sins his friends had charged him with, for he did not commit them; his trouble was his failure to recognize and subject himself to the providence of God. Every faithful child of God will emerge victorious; but God must be given the time to make all things work out for the good of *all* his people. And so, in the words of Caroline Atherton Mason,

Whichever way the wind doth blow.
Some heart is glad to have it so;
Then blow it east or blow it west.
The wind that blows, that wind is best.

My little craft sails not alone;
A thousand fleets from every zone
Are out upon a thousand seas;
What blows for one a favorite breeze

Might dash another, with the shock
Of doom, upon some hidden rock,
And so I do not dare to pray
For winds to waft me on my way.

But leave it to a Higher Will
To stay or speed me, trusting still
That all is well, and sure that he
Who launched my bark will sail with me

Through storm and calm, and will not fail.
Whatever breezes may prevail,
To land me, every peril past.
Within his sheltering heaven at last.

Then, whatever wind doth blow.
My heart is glad to have it so:
And blow it east or blow it west.
The wind that blows, that wind is best.

The Prayers of Two Men

(Luke 18: 9-13)

And he spake also this parable unto certain who trusted in them-

selves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get. But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner.

The first section of the lesson text, as we have already seen, teaches that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; but in the parable now before us, Jesus clearly shows that not all so-called praying is acceptable to God. This is a lesson which we should all learn, and learn well. Jesus touches upon this idea in his sermon on the mount, when he says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 7: 21.) The foolish virgins are represented as saying the very thing which Jesus says will not avail for acceptance With God. (Matt. 25: 1-12.)

The lesson which Jesus teaches in this section of the lesson text, is set forth by means of a contrast—a technique which he so often used in his parables. Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one was a self-righteous Pharisee, who trusted in his own goodness, and set all others at nought; while the other was a penitent publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed with himself. The fact that he "stood" was not the objectionable feature which he displayed: for that bodily posture was both recognized and encouraged by Jesus himself. (See Matt. 6: 5; Mark 11: 25.) The trouble with the Pharisee was his attitude toward God and himself. He took his position *by* himself, and prayed *with* himself, as he gave utterance to a mere self-complacent soliloquy. He expressed no desires, and gave voice to no petitions. He merely rehearsed his religious practices, and recounted his good qualities, as he saw them. It is true that he thanked God in words; but it is not difficult to see, in the light of his

general attitude, that he was merely congratulating himself. He did not express even so much as the feeling of need, to say nothing of the urgency of one who felt that unless God supplied that which was lacking in his life, he would be for ever undone. There was no evidence of devotion or dependence, or of any other religious emotion—nothing but a trust in himself, and a disregard for all others. (Cf. the attitude of the Laodiceans, Rev. 3: 17.)

But how unlike the prayer of the Pharisee, was that of the publican! Although standing, but "afar off," the publican was abashed in the presence of his Maker. The attitude which he manifested was not assumed for effect, like that of the Pharisee; but was the natural expression of the feelings which were surging within him, as evidenced by his whole body. William M. Taylor notes that it is a mistake to suppose that a man speaks only with his tongue. His eyes, face, and hands have all been endowed with the power of expression; and when his heart is profoundly moved, the very posture which his body intuitively and unconsciously assumes, is an indication of the emotions which stir in his soul. Thus, the attitude and action of the publican, his bowed head, the smiting of his breast, as well as the place in which he stood, were just so many indications—all the more sincere because they were unstudied—of his profound humility. This, along with the earnestness which his words expressed, gave all the evidence which is needed to show that he was entirely dependent upon God for the blessings which he alone could bestow. (Cf. Matt. 14: 30; Mark 9: 24.)

The Lord's Appraisal of the Two Prayers

(Luke 18: 14)

I say unto you. This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

There can be no doubt regarding the estimate which Jesus placed upon the prayers of the Pharisee and the publican. And in order to help us see the lesson which the

Lord intends for us to get, let us ask why the publican was justified, rather than the Pharisee? In the first place, the prayer of the publican was motivated by his deep conviction of sin—indeed, not the sins with which the Jewish brethren charged him, that is, the sins which they usually attached to the tax collectors; but as he himself considered himself in God's sight. The publican referred to himself as "the" sinner (the article is in the original); and this implies that he was thinking of his own sins, rather than the sins of other people, as was indicated in the prayer of the Pharisee: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." Sin, in the estimation of the penitent publican, was rebellion against God and his law; and it did not matter whether that law was intended to regulate his conduct toward God or his fellow man. Disobedience to God's law was sin, as he viewed the matter; and when he was thus convicted of sin, he could but stand abased in God's sight.

In the second place, the penitent publican, unlike the proud Pharisee, pled for the mercy of God. This implied that he realized that there was nothing about himself, which could in any way make it possible for him to claim forgiveness, as a favor which was due him. He did not therefore ask for justice, or even seek for anything which could be regarded as his right. This is the spirit which must characterize us if we are to receive the Lord's favor. Salvation from sin is God's gracious gift to those who, in faith and penitence, are willing to receive it. (Cf. Eph. 2: 8, 9; Tit. 3: 5.) This has been called a "humbling doctrine"; but any one who is acquainted with the teaching of the New Testament, including the passage now under consideration, knows that it is the doctrine which must be believed and accepted, if we are to meet God in peace. Some one has said, "'Tis from the mercy of our God that all our hopes begin."

And finally, the prayer of the publican, in contrast with that of the Pharisee, was a prayer of faith. This is evident from the fact that the original term, which is rendered

"be merciful" (*hilasthēti*, first aorist passive imperative of *hilaskomai*), literally means to be propitiated. The only other occurrence of the word in the New Testament, is in Hebrews 2: 17, where it is rendered "to make propitiation." Its cognate noun (*hilastērion*) is translated "mercy-seat" in Hebrews 9: 5; and "propitiation" in Romans 3: 25; while the related term *hilasmos*, a substantive from *hilaskomai*, is rendered "propitiation" in 1 John 2: 2; 4: 10. Thus, with the history of the original word before us, it is reasonable to suppose that the publican, in his plea for mercy, had reference to the fact that he had complied with the requirements of the law regarding sacrifices for sin; and was relying upon God's promise, which he had made to the Jews, in connection with the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrificial victim upon the mercy-seat. The publican was praying in the temple, and it was in its courts that sacrifices were made continuously.

It is, then, from the publican that we can see something of the true meaning of prayer, which may be described as a direct and personal approach to God. Or, to say the same thing in another way, it is the creature seeking the Creator, the one in whom he lives, moves, and has his being. (Acts 17: 27, 28.) William James describes prayer as "intercourse with an Ideal Companion"; and with this view of the question in mind, it is easy to see that prayer is not primarily a matter of our talking, God's listening, and then answering, as is so commonly assumed. (Cf. 1 Thess. 5: 17; Rom. 12: 12.) The real core of the question regarding prayer may be expressed in this way: "Is it possible for me to expose the whole range of my life to the Creative Source from which it came, and to the Creative Will which seeks to assert itself through me?" (Harold A. Bosley.) There is no doubt about the reality of the Source and the Will; but are we consciously willing to turn our whole heart, soul, mind,

and strength toward God? One really prays, when he does, that; but without that attitude and practice, he cannot pray in the true sense of the term. A double life in prayer is impossible, as may be learned from James 1: 1-8. (Cf. Matt. 7: 21.) Shakespeare, in *Hamlet*, makes King Claudius say,

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below:

Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

George MacDonald, in answering the question, *Why pray if God knows?* says, "Reader, if you are in any trouble, try whether God will not help you: if you are in no need, why should you ask questions about prayer? True, he knows little of himself who does not know that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; but until he begins at least to suspect a need, how can he pray?"

"But if God is so good as you represent him, and if he knows all that we need, and better far than we do ourselves, why should it be necessary to ask him for anything? I answer. What if he knows prayer to be the thing we need first and most? What if the main object in God's idea of prayer be the supplying of our great, our endless need—the need of himself? . . . Hunger may drive the runaway child home, and he may or may not be fed at once, but he needs his mother more than his dinner. Communion with God is the one need of the soul beyond all other needs: prayer is the beginning of that communion, and some need is the motive of that prayer. . . . So begins a communion, a talking with God, a coming-to-one with him, which is the sole end of prayer, yea, of existence itself in its infinite phases. We must ask that we may receive; but that we should receive what we ask in respect of our lower needs, is not God's end in making us pray, for he could give us everything without that: to bring his child to his knee, God withholds that man may ask." (From *The Words of Jesus on Prayer*.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What, in your opinion, is a suitable definition of prayer?

Why is faith essential to acceptable prayer?

Discuss the spiritual growth of people who take seriously their prayer-life?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances was the request that Jesus teach his disciples to pray made?

Why is it essential that the Lord's people be taught to pray?

What did Jesus teach his disciples to do when they pray?

An Illustration of the Right Way to Pray
What essential lesson should people who study the parables of Jesus always keep in mind?

What is the central truth of the parable now before us?

Why is the Lord's illustration on this occasion so effective?

What does Jesus teach regarding this parable in his application of it?

What does faith regarding importunity in prayer involve?

Why is steadfastness needed with respect to God's answers to our prayers?

The Prayers of Two Men

What was the Lord's purpose in speaking the parable regarding the Pharisee and the publican?

Describe and discuss the prayers of the two men now before us.

What were the objectional features of the Pharisee's prayer?

In what way did the prayer of the publican excel that of the self-righteous man?

The Lord's Appraisal of the Two Prayers

Why was the prayer of the publican more acceptable than that of the Pharisee?

What was the difference in the estimate which each man placed upon himself?

What did the publican's plea for mercy involve?

What reasons do we have for concluding that the publican's prayer was offered in faith?

What, then, is the true meaning of prayer?

Why does God want his people to call upon him in prayer?

Lesson X—June 6, 1971

AN EXAMPLE OF HONESTY AND GENEROSITY

Lesson Text

Luke 19: 1-10

1 And he entered and was passing through Jer'-i-cho.

2 And behold, a man called by name Zac'-chae'-us; and he was a chief publican, and he was rich.

3 And he sought to see Je'-sus who he was; and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature.

4 And he ran on before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

5 And when Je'-sus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him Zac'-chae'-us, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house.

6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner.

8 And Zac'-chae'-us stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold.

9 And Je'-sus said unto him, To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

10 For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfillment of the law."* (Rom. 13: 10.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Prov. 3: 13-18.

Daily Bible Readings

May 31.	M.....	Barnabas a Good Man (Acts 11: 19-26)
June 1.	T.....	A Good and Faithful Servant (Matt. 25: 21-23)
June 2.	W.....	A Good Minister of Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 4: 1-6)
June 3.	T.....	Those Who Do Good Are of God (3 John)
June 4.	F.....	Justice in Dealing with Others (Mic. 2: 1-5)
June 5.	S.....	Proof of Honesty (Matt. 7: 15-23)
June 6.	S.....	Good Principles (Psalm 15)

TIME.—A.D. 29.

PLACE.—Jericho.

PERSONS.—Jesus, Zacchaeus, and the multitude.

Introduction

Honesty and generosity are basic elements of the kind of character which is pleasing to God; and it is interesting to note that they are both found, insofar as this lesson is concerned, in an unexpected place. There is nothing in the record which indicates that Zacchaeus was in the habit of practicing either of them, before Jesus visited in his home, on the day of this lesson. But be that as it may, these traits of character were potentially in the tax collector of Jericho, and needed only to be brought to the surface and made active in his daily life. This situation reminds us of similar circumstances in the life of the man who became the great apostle Peter, as well as others whom Jesus came in contact with during his earthly ministry. The Lord, in fact, found many unpromising people, such as the woman of Samaria, Simon, and Zacchaeus, who were making little or no progress toward a life which was pleasing to God; but when he had finished with them, they had been changed to the extent as to be hardly recognizable.

When Jesus sought to change a man, he never left the impression that he was importing something alien and artificial into him; instead, he made the person in question feel that he saw something in him, which he did not know was there; and that he was bringing it out into the open. James Whitcomb Riley, so the story goes, was a notorious failure in his early days at school. He was, to quote a schoolmate, "the most celebrated failure in arithmetic in the county." Later young Riley came under the influence of another teacher, who recognized and appreciated his interest in literary accomplishments. Thus, the attitude and approach of the two teachers accounted for the difference between failure and success, so far as Riley was concerned. The one tried to bring something into the young man from the outside, while the other began with the boy himself, and directed *him* so that he could develop that which was already on the inside of him; and thereby made it possible for him to

realize the achievements of which he was capable.

The gospel of Christ may be regarded as an extension of his personal ministry: or, to say the same thing in another way, the Lord expects the gospel to deal with people just as he would, if he were here in person. And if this principle is followed, similar results can be accomplished. This is to say that if those who seek to apply the gospel message to others, will first endeavor to get the individual in question to see himself as he really is; or, to see himself in need of help which only the Lord can give. When this is done, an effort should then be made to enable the lost person to want to become that which he is capable of becoming; and when that is done, the road to success is a matter of hearing and obeying.

There are multitudes of people who habitually wish that they were better than they are. For example, possessing a bad temper, they want a good one; timid, they want courage; or, being sensual, they want emotional peace. And as they think about these things, they no doubt often wonder where such blessings can be obtained. Such a view, however, as we have already seen, is very erroneous; for no one can put such qualities into another person from the outside. Those qualities, indeed, are very essential, if we are to be that which the Lord wants us to be; but they are already within us, imprisoned and undeveloped, like seed which have never been watered, and so have never grown. When Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus, the potentially stalwart proclaimer and defender of the faith was mercurial, temperamental, and impulsive; but he would in time become as stable as the rock. "Thou art Simon . . . thou shalt be . . . Peter." (See John 1: 42.) It follows therefore that people should stop trying to be somebody else, or trying to import into themselves virtues from without. They must be themselves, perhaps not as they now are; but themselves as they are capable of becoming. (Cf. John 10: 10.)

The Golden Text

"Lore *worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law.*" The words just quoted may be referred to as the law of love, and they are found in the following context: "Owe no man anything, save to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law." (Rom. 13: 8-10.) Jesus says that the whole law and the prophets are supported by total love for God and for man (Matt. 22: 35-40); and it is easy to see that Paul, in his discussion of man's relation to his fellows, says practically the same thing. After specifying four commandments of the Decalogue, he says, "And if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Paul does not say that the law is fulfilled by a mere sentiment or feeling: his idea is that it is fulfilled by deeds of helpfulness, which are motivated by love. John says practically the same thing, as may be seen by reading the following state-

ment, namely, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath 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.)

That which has just been quoted from Paul and John is in sharp contrast with worldly ambition, which is always characterized by selfishness. But the man who is motivated by love for his fellow man, will not only refrain from doing him any harm whatsoever; but will, at the same time, endeavor to do him good. When we love our neighbor, as we do ourselves, we will treat him as we would have him treat us; and this attitude will lead us to be on the lookout for opportunities of doing him good. This is the spirit of the Golden Rule, and Jesus says that this is the sum of the law and the prophets. (Matt. 7: 12.)

The Text Explained

The Man Who Wanted to See Jesus

(Luke 19: 1-3)

And he entered and was passing through Jericho. And behold, a man called by name Zacchaeus; and he was a chief publican, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was: and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature.

Jesus, at the time of this lesson, was on his way from Peraea, where he had been for some time, to Jerusalem; and the road on which he was traveling passed through Jericho. That little city was well known during Old Testament times, and was called "the city of palm-trees." (Deut. 34: 3.) It was located about seven miles west of the Jordan, and some seventeen or eighteen miles northeast of Jerusalem. (See map.)

The Lord's passage through Jericho at the time of this lesson, was about a week before he was arrested and condemned to death.

Taking all the facts into consideration, it is relatively easy for one to picture the scene which transpired on the day of this lesson. People everywhere were eager to get a glimpse of Jesus, and we can be certain that the people of Jericho were no exception to that rule. And as the people poured out to see the Lord, a man who was little of stature was among the number. He was, of course, at a disadvantage, since it would not be possible for him to look over the heads of the multitude; and if he tried to push his way through the crowd, practically any one he touched would not hesitate to spit in his face, or do him

bodily injury; for they had no respect for publicans. Zacchaeus was thoughtful enough to know that he would have to resort to some plan, other than trying to elbow his way through the crowd.

It appears that the original publicans were men who contracted to gather taxes for the Roman government, in the various provinces, and to supervise the subordinates who were entrusted with the responsibility of squeezing as much public revenue from the people as possible. These publicans and their subordinates often kept a large amount of the excess profits for themselves; and the men at the top often formed stock companies, through which they shared a part of their gain with prominent men in the Empire.

The publicans of the New Testament were Jews who hired themselves to the Romans, probably some knight or syndicate who had bought the right of taxation from the government, to collect the taxes from their own brethren. The Jews were a subjected people at the time Christ was among them; and the fact that they were compelled to pay taxes to a foreign government, made the taxes themselves odious and their payment exceedingly galling. But when one of their own brethren lowered himself, in their estimation, and became the agent for collecting the taxes, he was regarded in the double aspect of traitor and oppressor.

It was the odium which thus attached itself to the office of publicans that kept those Jews, who had any regard for the good opinion of their countrymen, from accepting the position which, naturally left such work in the hands of those who had neither self-respect nor a good reputation. The publicans among the Jews, therefore, generally deserved the contempt in which they were held; and it appears that the publicans in other provinces of the empire, were held in no better repute, than in Judaea: for Cicero pronounces their business as "the basest of all means of livelihood."

The Fourfold Gospel thinks that Zacchaeus may have been a subcontractor, under some Roman knight, who had bought the privilege of collecting the taxes at Jericho, or maybe in all Judaea. The

provinces of Peraea and Judaea were separated by the Jordan; and as Jericho was a fairly large city and nearest the borders of the two provinces, it may have been the chief office for taxation in that area. The famous balm of Gilead was cultivated in Peraea, and that may have added considerably to the trade which passed through Jericho; and since Herod had raised the city to opulence, it was no small matter for a person to be wealthy in the city of palm-trees. It is reasonable therefore for one to conclude that Zacchaeus had not consented to become a social outcast for nothing. He doubtless had become rich as a result of his efforts as a tax-collector; and being a chief publican, he had, in all probability, profited for the labors of those who served under him, as well as from his own activities. This, then, is the kind of man who wanted to see Jesus; and it appears that he did not intend to be denied that privilege.

Where There Is a Will There Is
Usually a Way

(Luke 19: 4-6)

And he ran on before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

The tree into which Zacchaeus climbed to see Jesus, is sometimes referred to as an Egyptian fig, or a wild fig tree, and bears no resemblance to the sycamore tree which grows in this country. It had leaves similar to a mulberry, and the low trunk and spreading branches made it both easy to climb, and to remain unseen by the people on the street, while waiting for Jesus to pass by.

Jesus was often invited into the homes of people in the places where he happened to be; but this time he issued his own invitation to be the guest of another. The term "must" indicates that he was constrained to make the contact. His aim was to win Zacchaeus to a better life. This publican had, in all probability, resigned himself to his position of a social and religious outcast; and

was probably growing harder as the result of the attitude of his fellow Jews toward him. But Jesus knew that Zacchaeus had a soul to save; and he was not going to be swayed by the opinion of the critical multitude about him. The truth is that Jesus could never be influenced by the crowd to lump men into classes, and then suppose that all who were in a given class were alike. He looked through names and appearances to reality which was underneath; and endeavored to deal with the individual in question; and we may be certain that, at the moment, the chief publican of Jericho was more important to him, than any other person in that city. It is very likely that Zacchaeus still longed for friendship, in spite of his seeming indifference; and he probably had heard of the manner in which Jesus had been treating publicans and sinners, all of which made him all the more determined to see him. At any rate, Jesus was successful in breaking the outer wall of indifference which surrounded Zacchaeus; and this was the first step in bringing about his conversion.

The words which Jesus spoke to Zacchaeus were more than the publican had expected; but it is easy to see that he was equal to the occasion. Not only had Zacchaeus seen Jesus; but he is now to have the privilege of entertaining him in his own home. It would be a wonderful thing if we could get a glimpse of that which Jesus saw in the eyes of that chief publican that day; but there is one thing of which we may be certain, namely, he saw an indication of a deep need. And if one will consider the life of Jesus here upon the earth as a whole, it will not be difficult for him to see that the Lord always responded to need wherever he found it, especially the need in people who wanted help. This is an area of Christian activity which is often neglected. There are many people whose entire outlook on life and religion could, and would, be changed for the better, if those who profess to follow the Lord would show them the kind of sympathetic understanding, which Jesus extended to the publican of Jericho. Jesus never compromised with sin, and he does not want his people to either; but he made sinners realize

that their souls were worth saving. Obligations involving this kind of work should not be neglected.

The Results Which Followed

(Luke 19: 7-10)

And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

The attitude which the multitude in Jericho manifested toward Jesus, when he went into the house of Zacchaeus, was the very attitude which called forth the series of parables, contained in Luke 15. (Luke 15: 1, 2.) Jesus did not deny, or even indicate, that Zacchaeus was a sinner; but he did emphasize the fact that he had come to the earth for the purpose of saving sinners. When the angel announced to Joseph the fact that his betrothed wife would become the mother of a child, he said, "And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people for their sins." (Matt. 1: 21; cf. 9: 9-13.)

The probable reason for Zacchaeus' standing, when he spoke to the Lord in his house, was to give publicity and emphasis to his pronouncement. It appears that he was simply stating what his practice in that respect would be from that time onward. (Cf. Luke 16: 9; Matt. 6: 19-21.) Zacchaeus' offer to make restitution for any improper exactions he may have made does not, in and of itself, argue that all of his wealth had been gained by dishonest means; for if that had been true, he could not have restored fourfold. (Cf. Lev. 6: 1-5; 2 Sam. 12: 1-6.) From now on he proposed to live as God would have him do. This is indeed an impressive example of honesty and generosity.

This new attitude on the part of Zacchaeus had an immediate effect on his will and that was the third step in his conversion. He not only saw the new world into which

Christ was leading him; he also resolved to live in it. This required, as we have already observed, that he settle down in his new relationship, and make whatever changes in his way of living that the law of the Lord for him made essential. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 17.) The resolutions which Zacchaeus made, let it be emphasized again, demonstrated that his changed attitude was genuine. (Read Luke 16: 9-12.)

Not every person today, of course, is in the same situation which characterized Zacchaeus, nor is every one faced with the same problem; but whatever one's sin may be, it must be dealt with in the same spirit which characterized the chief publican of Jericho. This is to say that every one who comes to Christ, must endeavor to change his way of living with reference to both God and man, as the Lord directs.

The assurance of salvation was addressed directly to Zacchaeus, but it appears that the remark about his being a son of Abraham was intended primarily for the critical bystanders. Jesus himself had repeatedly said that he was not sent to the Gentiles, but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and while it is true that the Jewish people of his day had ostracized Zacchaeus, he was still a son of Abraham in God's sight. The action of his brethren could not destroy that relationship, nor make him unworthy of salvation. This is a lesson which we need today; for it is a truth that God does not want any one to be lost. (Cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9.) There are some things we need to have called to our attention, as we endeavor to get the lessons we should from this study, namely:

(1) *What was it that saved Zacchaeus, and brought him to his new way of life?* He saw that personal love was seeking him, as an individual. Jesus sought him for what he was—a lost soul—and not for his wealth or social standing. And Zacchaeus may have felt that he was like a jewel or coin, which had been found and returned to its rightful place; or like a lost sheep, which had been brought back to the fold. Or, to drop the figure, he was now in the world of Jesus, and that was

where he belonged. Zacchaeus also saw that the love which had found him was also suffering for him; for Jesus had to defy society in coming into his house, and pass through the criticism of men in order to reach him. But he had been led to a life of righteousness by Jesus, and he proposed to walk in it.

(2) *The power of kindness.* This was unquestionably the method which Jesus used in dealing with Zacchaeus. Suppose Jesus had denounced him as a child of the devil, and accused him of defrauding helpless people, what would likely have been his reaction? There are times, of course, when sinners must be told of their sins in no uncertain terms; but there are also times when kindness will be most effective. This, of course, requires wisdom.

"Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,

Feelings lie buried that grace can restore:

Touched by a loving hand, wakened by kindness,

Chords that were broken will vibrate once more."

(3) *Zacchaeus and his opportunity.* When Jesus asked the Jericho publican to make haste, and come down; so that he might go into his house that day, prompt action was required. Suppose Zacchaeus had hesitated, because of the crowd which was standing by; or had asked for time to consider the matter, what likely would have been the result? One may have many opportunities to obey the gospel, and then he may have only one; but when any opportunity is turned down, the responsibility for eternal destruction becomes that of the individual. (Cf. Isa. 55: 6, 7; 2 Cor. 6: 2; Heb. 4: 7.) Zacchaeus has long since gone the way of all the earth, and the Jericho which he knew has crumbled into dust. Jesus went on from Jericho to Jerusalem, died on the cross, was buried, and raised from the dead, and after a few weeks, returned to heaven; but we may be sure that there is no soul today who looks in the direction of Jesus, whom the Lord will not receive, if he is willing for the Lord to enter into his house, and abide there. (Cf. Rev. 3: 20.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What place do honesty and generosity have in a life which pleases the Lord? Why?

How does one go about getting these traits of character?

In what way did Jesus go about changing people? Cite some examples.

How should we think of the gospel of Christ in this connection?

Why can't virtues be brought into one from the outside?

The Golden Text

In what connection did Paul write the words of the golden text?

Why is love the fulfilment of the law?

What, then, is the meaning of love?

How can one know that he really loves in this respect?

What does love always do toward his fellow men?

The Man Who Wanted to See Jesus

Where was Jericho located and how did Jesus come to be there at the time of this lesson?

Who was Zacchaeus and what effort did he make to see Jesus?

What probably caused him to want to see the Lord?

What is the meaning of the term "publican" and who were the publicans of the New Testament?

Why did the Jewish people as such object so strenuously to the publicans among them?

Why would so many self-respecting Jews refuse such work?

What, probably, was the situation which characterized Zacchaeus in Jericho?

How do you account for the fact that he was a rich man? Give reasons for your answer.

Where There Is a Will There Is Usually a Way

How did Zacchaeus seek to overcome the obstacles which could have kept him from seeing Jesus?

What kind of a tree did he climb and how well was it suited to his purpose?

What, apparently, was unusual about Jesus on this occasion?

How did the Jews react to his going into the house of the publican and why?

What evidently prompted Jesus to want to go into the house of Zacchaeus?

What important lesson should we learn from this for our time?

The Results Which Followed

What effect did the critical attitude of the Jewish people have on the general teaching program of Jesus?

Why did Jesus come and live among men and how well did he fulfil his mission?

What probable reason did Zacchaeus have for standing when he told the Lord that which he planned to do?

What did his new plans include and why?

What did all of this demonstrate regarding the attitude of the chief publican?

What was it that brought him to his new way of life?

What place does kindness have in seeking and saving the lost?

What do we learn from Zacchaeus regarding a man and his opportunity for salvation?

Lesson XI—June 13, 1971

REWARD OF FAITHFULNESS

Lesson Text

Luke 19: 11-26

11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Je-ru'-sa-lem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear.

12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

13 And he called ten servants of his, and gave them ten pounds, and said unto them, Trade ye *herewith* till I come.

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent an ambassage after him, saying, We will not that this man reign over us.

15 And it came to pass, when he was come back again, having received

the kingdom, that he commanded these servants, unto whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by trading.

16 And the first came before him, saying, Lord, thy pound hath made ten pounds more.

17 And he said unto him, Well done, thou good servant: because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

18 And the second came, saying, Thy pound, Lord, hath made five pounds.

19 And he said unto him also, Be thou also over five cities.

20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, *here is* thy pound, which I

kept laid up in a napkin:

21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that which thou layedst not down, and reapest that which thou didst not sow.

22 He saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I am an austere man, taking up that which I laid not down, and reaping that which I did not sow;

23 Then wherefore gavest thou not my money into the bank, and I at my

coming should have required it with interest?

24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take away from him the pound, and give it unto him that hath the ten pounds.

25 And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.

26 I say unto you, that unto every one that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*" (1 Cor. 4: 2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 103: 11-18.

Daily Bible Readings

June 7.	M.	Jesus Taught Honesty (Luke 10: 1-10)
June 8.	T.	The Golden Rule (Matt. 7: 7-12)
June 9.	W.	Putting First Things First (Matt. 6: 26-34)
June 10.	T.	Keeping Commandments Tests Faith (John 14: 15-24)
June 11.	F.	Tests of Discipleship (Luke 9: 57-62)
June 12.	S.	Test of Friendship for Christ (John 15: 7-20)
June 13.	S.	Test for the Christian (2 Thess. 3: 6-15)

TIME.—A. D. 29.

PLACE.—Jericho.

PERSONS.—Jesus and the multitude.

Introduction

The question of rewards and punishments is one of the basic doctrines of the Holy Scriptures. There is not a book in the entire Bible which does not, in one way or another, have something to say regarding this teaching. It is directly related to the fundamental doctrine of justice and mercy. Justice demands that every sinner shall die, but, in the providence of Jehovah, justice is tempered by mercy; and any one who will turn from his wrongdoing and give himself to the Lord, has the blessed assurance of salvation from his sin. A similar idea is expressed by the psalmist in these words: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." (Psalm 85: 10.) This passage is rendered by Adam Clarke in these words: "Mercy and truth have met on the way; righteousness and peace have embraced." Clarke then goes on to offer the following words of comment: "This is a remarkable text, and much has been said regarding it; but there is a beauty connected with it, which I think has

been overlooked. *Mercy* and *peace* are on one side; while *truth* and *righteousness* are on the other. *Truth* requires *righteousness*; while *mercy* calls for *peace*. These four attributes are personified, and meet together on the way." Truth was going to make inquisition regarding sin; mercy was on her way to plead for reconciliation. When the two met, their differences on certain considerations, which are not mentioned here, are adjusted; their mutual claims are blended together in a common interest, with the result that peace and righteousness immediately embrace. Or, to state the same thing in another way, righteousness is given to truth, and peace is given to mercy. Clarke asks, Where did these meet? and his answer is, In Christ Jesus. Again, When were they reconciled? When he poured out his life on Calvary.

One of the greatest questions which will confront people at the judgment, at the last day, is that of faithfulness; and we should remember, here and now, that faithfulness

is much more significant than accomplishment, as may be seen by reading the Lord's parable of the talents. The Lord wants us always to remember that fidelity to duty, in all of our relationships as God's people, is our greatest responsibility. All that we are and have, as followers of Christ, should be regarded as a trust; and one can please God only by being faithful to that trust. Every responsible person has a divine capacity for truth, duty, and righteousness; and in order to guide and strengthen that capacity, God has given his people a code of instruction, found in the New Testament. Faithful adherence to that code, is but another name for faithfulness.

If there is any one thing taught in the Bible, it is that God will have a final reckoning with his people—in

fact—with every responsible person who has ever lived upon the earth. (Cf. Eccl. 12: 13, 14; 2 Cor. 5: 9, 10.) And we may be sure that when the final test is made, the emphasis will be placed upon faithfulness. That is the reason why the lesson we are to study today is so important. The Lord's people are not simply asked to perform certain deeds, or to give certain amounts; but rather to do the best that we can. It is our faithfulness, rather than our ability, which will count in the last great day. It is interesting to note that the Lord used identical words in commending the five-talent and the two-talent men, notwithstanding the five-talent man had more than twice the ability of the two-talent man. (Read Matt. 25: 20-23.)

The Golden Text

"It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." It was implied, in the introduction of this lesson, that stewardship is also a fundamental doctrine of the Bible. The apostle Peter, in his first epistle, says, "According as each hath received a gift, ministering among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Pet. 4: 10.) The Christian principle of stewardship is the outgrowth of the teaching of Jesus and his apostles, regarding a Christian's obligation to employ any ability he has, or make any needful use of his possessions, for the progress of the kingdom of Christ. (Cf. Matt. 25: 14-30; Mark 10: 17-21; Luke 19: 1-8.) The Christian steward, if he is the kind of person he should be, readily recognizes and acknowledges that he, his life, and all of his abilities and possessions, belong to God, and that he, under Christ, is simply their administrator.

The apostle Paul, as he viewed his responsibility and service in the kingdom of Christ, considered himself as a steward of the gospel, that is, he looked upon the gospel as something which has been divinely entrusted to him. It appears that many of the people in Corinth, whom Paul had led to Christ, had allowed their estimate of him to degenerate to the point, that they no

longer looked upon him as the genuine apostle of the Lord, that they considered him to be, when he labored among them. And it was for that reason that he addressed the passage, containing the words of the golden text, unto them, namely, "Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Here, moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord." (1 Cor. 4: 1-4.)

A faithful steward is one who performs his duty; or, which is the same thing, one who does that which is expected of him. The scope of his stewardship depends, of course, upon that which has been committed to him. (See again 1 Pet. 4: 10; Matt. 25: 14-30.) Ability plus opportunity equals responsibility. No one is responsible for that which he is not able to do, or does not have the opportunity to do. It is easy, of course, for the indolent to try to excuse himself from responsibility; but he cannot deceive his Lord and Master. (Cf. the one-talent man, and the unjust steward of

Luke 16.) The Christian is not a steward because of his own choice; but because he is a servant of Christ. He was redeemed by the Lord, and

so became his property. (Cf. 1 Pet. 1: 18, 19; 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20.) This, of course, makes Christian stewardship a positive duty. (Cf. 1 Cor. 9: 17.)

The Text Explained

The Occasion for the Lord's Teaching

(Luke 19: 11)

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.

It appears fair to assume, in the light of the context, that the Lord spoke the parable we are to consider today, while still in the house of Zacchaeus, or immediately after leaving it. The ones who listened to the remarks to and about Zacchaeus, were also the ones who heard the Lord's parable of the pounds. The reasons assigned for speaking the parable are stated in the section of the lesson text now before us, namely, (1) because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and (2) because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear. The Lord and his disciples were on their way to the capital city of the Jews; and they were being followed by great crowds of eager and excited people. There were many people in Israel, including the disciples themselves, who thought that Jesus had come to set up an earthly kingdom (cf. John 6: 15; Acts 1: 6); and as events were shaping up, as they were nearing Jerusalem, it appeared to them that the time for the inauguration of the new reign was at hand.

When John the Baptist and Jesus began their proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, they both said it was at hand; and when Jesus sent his disciples on their "limited commission," he authorized them to proclaim the same message. "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and charged them, saying, Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 10: 5-7.) The public ministry of Jesus was practically over, at the time of this lesson; but the fact remained that

the popular opinion of the nature of the kingdom of heaven had not changed, in spite of the teaching which Jesus had given regarding it. (Cf. Luke 16: 16; 17: 20, 21.)

One of the greatest hindrances to profitable Bible study, is the habit of reading into passages a meaning which was not in the mind of the inspired speaker or writer. This practice is due to the preference which is given to preconceived ideas; and as long as that practice is continued, people are certain to miss the truth in whatever question that may be under consideration, with the result that false premises will be made the basis for further study. Some people apparently imagine that if they spend so many hours in studying the Bible, they are going to be rewarded by learning the truth: but that will depend upon whether or not they are proceeding on sound principles of biblical interpretation. False or erroneous premises will always lead to wrong conclusions. And so, when people allow their preconceived ideas to enter the picture, or have a theory to defend, they are usually blind to the obvious. Preconceived ideas have no place in Bible study.

The Parable of the Pounds

(Luke 19: 12-24)

He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called ten servants of his, and gave them ten pounds, and said unto them, Trade ye herewith till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent an embassy after him, saying, We will not that this man reign over us. And it came to pass, when he was come back again, having received the kingdom, that he commanded these servants, unto whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by trading. And the first came before him, saying, Lord, thy pound hath made ten pounds more. And he said unto him, Well done, thou good

servant: because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Thy pound, Lord, hath made five pounds. And he said unto him also, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that which thou layest not down, and reapest that which thou didst not sow. He saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I am an austere man, taking up that which I laid not down, and reaping that which I did not sow; then wherefore gavest thou not my money into the bank, and I at my coming should have required it with interest? And he said unto them that stood by, Take away from him the pound, and give it unto him that hath the ten pounds.

Some people who read the New Testament have confused the parable of the pounds, with the parable of the talents; but if such people will only consider the context of each of these parables, it will be easy for them to see that they are not only different parables, but were also spoken at different places and upon different occasions. The parable of the pounds were spoken in or near Jericho, while Jesus and his disciples were on their way to Jerusalem; while the parable of the talents was spoken by the Lord on the mount of Olives, some days after he reached Jerusalem from Jericho. Furthermore, the parable of the pounds were spoken to the multitude; the parable of the talents was spoken to four of the Lord's disciples, as may be seen by reading the entire discourse which Jesus delivered on the mount of Olives. (See the 24th and 25th chapters of Matthew; cf. Mark 13: 1-4; Luke 21: 5ff.)

Jesus, of course, always had some reason for speaking any parable which he uttered; and while it is true that we not always know just why he spoke a given parable, or, what occasion or circumstance prompted it; we can usually learn the lesson which he intended to come from the parable, if we will consider all the facts and make the

proper effort. We are told in verse 11 why Jesus spoke the parable of the pounds; but we are not told just why he came to employ the particular background against which it was spoken. There is, of course, no way to be certain about this, but it is interesting to note that Archelaus, to whom his father, Herod the Great, had willed the kingdom, did go to Rome, in order to try to get the emperor to confirm the appointment, but who also "had the mortification of knowing that a deputation of Judeans came to plead with the emperor that he do no such thing." It is also of interest to note that this same Archelaus had built a palace and an aqueduct in Jericho, which, in all probability, was well known to the Jewish leaders, and probably to the multitude as a whole. It is altogether possible that Jesus, being aware of the circumstances just referred to, purposefully made use of those facts, so as to impress upon the Jews something of their own relationship and responsibility, with reference to the kingdom which he was about to establish. But regardless of whether or not Jesus had the experiences of Archelaus in mind, when he spoke the parable of the pounds, we do know that the Jews of his day did not want him to have the kind of kingdom which he came to establish.

It has already been pointed out, in a general way, that people must make every effort to learn that which the Scriptures actually teach, if they are to have a correct knowledge of that which the Lord has revealed. The people of the Lord's day did not understand either the nature of the kingdom which had been promised, or the time of its establishment. And so, the first thing that Jesus makes plain to those who were listening to him, was the fact that the kingdom would not have a literal establishment in the city of Jerusalem, or anywhere else on the earth, as that expression is generally understood; but that it would be necessary for the "prospective" king to go into a far country, and receive the kingdom from one who had both the authority and the willingness to make him a king. And if one will consider the record, he will easily see that that was exactly what happened.

One of the clearest statements of this truth is found in the following passage, namely, "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." (Dan. 7: 13, 14.) That which has been described as the inaugural address is set forth in the following words:

Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors:

And the King of glory will come in.
Who is the King of glory?
Jehovah strong and mighty,
Jehovah mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
Yea, lift them up, ye everlasting doors:

And the King of glory will come in.
Who is this King of glory?
Jehovah of hosts,
He is the King of glory. (Psalm 24: 7-10.)

Jesus ascended to heaven forty days after his resurrection from the dead (Acts 1: 3, 9-11), and was duly crowned king and took his seat on David's throne at God's right hand. (Acts 2: 29-36.) This was enough to show that Jesus was not to be an earthly king, as that expression is commonly understood; but rather to have dominion in the mediatorial realm, as he endeavored to bring the rebellious world back into obedience to God. (Cf. Matt. 28: 18-20; Eph. 1: 22, 23; Phil. 2: 5-11; Rev. 11: 15-18.) The scope and length of the reign of Christ are set forth in these words: "Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death. For, He put all things in subjection under his feet. But when he saith. All things are put in subjection, it is evident that he is excepted who did subject all things unto him. And

when all things have been subjected unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all." (1 Cor. 15: 24-28.)

Christ will return to judge the world and to receive the redeemed unto himself, at which time they will be ushered into the presence of God, where they shall live and reign for ever. It is between the time of the Lord's becoming king and his second coming, that his servants must prove their faithfulness. Every responsible child of God will be called upon to give an account for what he is and for what he has. Nothing is said directly in this parable regarding the relative abilities of the various servants to whom the "goods" are committed; but it is easy to see from an over-all consideration of the parable itself, that some do have more responsibilities than others; and that all will be judged accordingly. (Cf. Luke 12: 47, 48; Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 8.)

It has already been pointed out that the parable of the pounds and the parable of the talents are not the same; but it is not difficult to see that the principle by which one demonstrated his faithfulness, or unfaithfulness, is practically the same in each parable. In each instance the servants received something from their lord, for which they were responsible; and in each case which was examined, those who were faithful did the best that they could, while the ones who were unfaithful did nothing at all. And so, regardless of who the person may be, or what he may receive (cf. 1 Cor. 4: 7), he is, if he is capable of service, responsible in the sight of God. God has made it plain that all men will be judged at the last day, and that simply means that they will have to answer for their abilities and opportunities. (Cf. James 4: 17.) It will do no one any good to add insult to unfaithfulness, by charging that Jehovah is not just in his dealings with his people. (Cf. Acts 17: 30, 31; 2 Cor. 5: 9, 10; Heb. 10: 31.)

The Divine Principle of Rewards and Punishments

(Luke 19: 25, 26)

And they said unto him. Lord, he

hath ten pounds. I say unto you, that unto every one that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him.

The human race, left to its own ability to reason things out, does not understand the principle which the Lord employs in determining the rewards and punishments, which shall be meted out. It is obvious that those who heard that which the nobleman said about giving the pound of the unfaithful servant to the one who already had ten pounds, did not expect that to happen. They probably would have given it to the man with five pounds, or perhaps to one of the others who had a lesser number, if there was one who had less. But that is not the way the Lord deals with his people, as may be seen by considering the criterion which he laid down. Some Bible students have referred to this as "the riddle of inequality"; but that is because they do not understand the divine method of dealing with such issues.

The Speakers' Bible points out that the principle of the text now before us shapes all areas of human life. It is both a paradox and a deep truth. The paradox is meant to spur attention, stimulate curiosity,

and induce inquiry. The key to the principle is found here, namely, to use is to have. There is a possession which is no possession. To have anything may only mean that if we are going to make a list of our properties, we would set it down among the rest; but that is not the true meaning of ownership. To possess something means to put it to use, to develop it, to make the most of it, to identify ourselves with it. The miser owns his hoard; but, for all the close grip his hands may have upon it, if some one should attempt to take it from him, he does not *possess* it. He puts it to no use; he does not bring out any of the possibilities which are hidden in it. What we use we have; and all else is but a seeming possession. The Lord Jesus, on another occasion, and speaking about opportunities, said, "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath." (Matt. 13: 12.) It is never God's intention to give something to some one, in order to make him nearer the equal of another; but he will always give to him who demonstrates that he has the capacity for more.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is the general teaching of the Bible with reference to rewards and punishments?

To what other great issue is this subject directly related and why?

What is the greatest question which will confront us at the judgment and why is this true?

What does the Bible teach regarding a day of final reckoning?

The Golden Text

Who is a steward and why is it required in him that he be faithful?

In what way did the apostle Paul apply this principle to his own life and labors?

Who, then, is the faithful steward and how does one come to have that responsibility?

The Occasion for the Lord's Teaching

When, where, and under what circumstances did Jesus speak the parable of the pounds?

What reasons did he assign for speaking it?

What kind of national attention had been

directed toward the forthcoming kingdom?

What is one of the greatest hindrances to profitable Bible study?

Why is this hindrance so prevalent?

The Parable of the Pounds

Why do some Bible readers tend to confuse this parable with that of the talents?

How do we know that the two parables are not the same?

What may have been in the mind of Jesus when he began the parable of the pounds?

What was he evidently trying to get the Jewish people to see regarding the coming kingdom?

What had they failed to understand about it?

What does the Bible teach regarding the Lord's going elsewhere for the kingdom?

Trace the steps which are set forth in the Scriptures regarding this.

What are the scope and length of the Lord's reign?

When and under what circumstances will Christ return to his people?

What do the parables of the pounds and the talents have in common?

Why aren't all people equal in their responsibility before God?

What usually happens to the person who tries to justify his negligence in the use of that which has been committed to his care?

The Divine Principle of Rewards and Punishments

Why does the human race fail to see the principle which God employs in determining rewards and punishments?

Why did those who heard the nobleman speak think that the pound of the unfaithful man should not be given to the man who had ten pounds?

What is the nature of the principle which God uses in the matter now before us? What constitutes real possession?

Why would the nobleman want to give the ten-pound man an extra pound when he already had more than any of the others?

Lesson XII—June 20, 1971

DEALING WITH DECEIT

Lesson Text

Luke 20: 19-26

19 And the scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him in that very hour; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he spake this parable against them.

20 And they watched him, and sent forth spies, who feigned themselves to be righteous, that they might take hold of his speech, so as to deliver him up to the rule and to the authority of the governor.

21 And they asked him, saying, Teacher, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, and acceptest not the person of any, but of a truth teachest the way of God:

22 Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Ca2'-sar, or not?

23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them,

24 Show me a denarius. Whose image and superscription hath it? And they said, Cae'-sar's.

25 And he said unto them, Then render unto Cae'-sar the things that are Cae'-sar's, and unto God the things that are God's.

26 And they were not able to take hold of the saying before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men.*" (Rom. 12: 17.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Luke 20: 1-8.

Daily Bible Readings

- June 14. M. Warnings Regarding the Scribes (Luke 20: 45-47)
- June 15. T. Chief Priests Seek to Entrap Jesus (Luke 20: 1-8)
- June 16. W. The Sadducees' Deceit (Luke 20: 27-33)
- June 17. T. Christ's Answer to the Sadducees (Luke 20: 34-40)
- June 18. F. Christ Confounds the Unbelieving Jews (Luke 20: 41-47)
- June 19. S. Jesus Warns of False Teachers (Matt. 7: 15-23)
- June 20. S. False Teachers Are Deceitful (2 Cor. 11: 1-11)

TIME.—Probably A.D. 30.

PLACE.—In the temple in Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jesus, the scribes, and the chief priests.

Introduction

Deceit is one of the common sins of the human race. It is the result of an effort on the part of some one to deceive, mislead, delude, or beguile; or, which is the same thing, it is the work of an insincere person or persons, to leave a wrong impression on an innocent party. Froude notes that of all the evil spirits abroad in the world, insincerity is

the most dangerous. Crabbe says practically the same thing in a slightly different way, namely, "Deceivers are the most dangerous members of society. They trifle with the best affections of our nature, and violate the most sacred obligations." The apostle Paul lists deceit among the blackest sins in the catalogue of wrong doing: "And

even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up into a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity." (Rom. 1: 28-32.)

Robert South has pointed out that all deception in the course of life is indeed nothing else but a lie reduced to practice, and falsehood passing from words into things; and who does not remember the words of Walter Scott, "O, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive." The first act of deception, and one of the most far-reaching, was the one which was perpetrated by Satan in the garden of Eden. The apostle Paul, in commenting on this act of deception, says that "Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression." (1 Tim. 2: 14.) That act of deceit plunged the human race into sin, but not hopelessly so; for a Redeemer was promised, and who in due time came and made it possible for all men to be saved. (Cf. Heb. 2: 9.) However, it is plain to see, both from the Scriptures and from experience, that all men will accept that salvation, but will continue to succumb to the

deceptions of the greatest of all deceivers. (Cf. Rev. 20: 1-3, 7-10; 2 Thess. 2: 8-12.)

But in spite of all that is said in the Bible regarding the sin of deceit, and the extent to which it is seen in human experience, it is a fact which cannot be successfully denied, that the sin of deceiving and being deceived continues to gain momentum. Paul says, "But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Tim. 3: 13.) It appears that the average person has difficulty in realizing the seriousness of the situation, which is everywhere about us. Christian Nestell Bovee notes that many an honest man practices on himself an amount of deceit, sufficient, if practiced on another, and in a little different way, to send him to prison. Henry Ward Beecher reminds us that when once a concealment or a deceit has been practiced in matters where all should be fair and open as day, confidence can never be restored, any more than you can restore the white bloom to the grape or plum that you once pressed in your hand. And so, in the language of the apostle Paul, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Gal. 6: 7.)

The Golden Text

"Take thought jot things honorable in the sight of all men." There is a possibility that Paul was quoting from the Septuagint Version of Proverbs 3: 4, when he penned the words which serve as the golden text for today's lesson. The complete sentence in the Septuagint Version includes verses 3 and 4, and reads as follows: "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee; but bind them about thy neck: so shalt thou find favor: and do thou provide things honest in the sight of the Lord and of men." Bible students are well aware of the fact that Paul frequently quotes from both the Hebrew Old Testament, and from the Septuagint Version of the Hebrew Scriptures; but it is a demonstrable fact that he seldom makes verbatim quotations. His usual plan is to adapt the quotation to the particular subject which he is developing. (Cf. Heb. 13: 5, 6—Deut. 31: 6; Josh. 1: 5.) The English (American Stan-

dard) Version of Proverbs 3: 3, 4 reads as follows: "Let not kindness and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the tablet of thy heart: so shall thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man."

This was not the only time that Paul exhorted the Lord's people to take thought for things honorable in the sight of men. The Corinthian brethren had fallen behind on a pledge which they had made on behalf of the poor saints in and around Jerusalem; and later on, when the apostle was urging them to make up their afore promised bounty (2 Cor. 9: 5), he reminded them that he and those who were working with him, were making every effort to see to it that no man "should blame us in the matter of this bounty which is ministered by us: for we take thought for things honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the

sight of men." (2 Cor. 8: 20, 21.) That, of course, was the way in which he wanted the brethren in Corinth, as well as the brethren in Rome, to conduct themselves. (Cf. 1 Cor. 11: 1.)

Paul's evident purpose in the words of the golden text, was to impress upon the people to whom he was writing, and to all others who have read, or will read, his words, the need, not only for pleasing God, but also to make a favorable impression upon those about them, who were not members of the church. The Speaker's Bible notes that "it was no more calculation of religious advantage that led St. Paul to emphasize so vigilant a regard for the general opinion; rather he was following out to its logical consequence his characteristic conception of Christianity. There was something

strange and suspicious in any breach between Christians behavior and the approval of good men. The lives of Christians were, indeed, the normal witnesses of their faith, and if, by lack of caution or by lack of fidelity, those lives failed to exhibit their true inspiring principle, there was grave injury inflicted on non-Christian observers.

" 'Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men,' says the apostle. Avoid such an exercise of your rights as must, on a reasonable estimate of probabilities, lead to misunderstanding of your intention. You must, as reasonable and charitable, take account of the state of other minds than your own; actions are not interpreted by the doer of them but by the observer." (Cf. 1 Tim. 3: 7; 1 Pet. 2: 11, 12; 3: 13-16.)

The Text Explained

The Process at Work (Luke 20: 19-22)

And the scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him in that very hour; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he spake this parable against them. And they watched him, and sent forth spies, who feigned themselves to be righteous, that they might take hold of his speech, so as to deliver him up to the rule and to the authority of the governor. And they asked him, saying, Teacher, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, and acceptest not the person of any, but of a truth teachest the way of God: Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

The subject for today's lesson is *Dealing with Deceit*; and there is no better way to observe the deceptive process at work, than to read this section of the lesson text, *after* having carefully read the first eighteen verses of the chapter from which it is taken. The Jewish leaders had twice been infuriated, first by being caught in their own trap with respect to the authority by which Jesus was acting—a trap which they fully expected to ensnare the Lord; and then by the devastating parable of the vineyard, which they clearly understood as being spoken against them. They wanted to arrest the

Lord, then and there, but they were afraid of the people. This, of course, put them to the necessity of devising a different strategy. They had been forcefully taught that they could not get the better of Jesus, in fair and open combat; and now they must, if they are going to succeed in trapping him, resort to artful stratagem, or, which is the same thing, intrigue and downright deception.

We learn from the parallel records in Matthew and Mark, that the "spies" who were sent to Jesus, were from the Pharisees and the Herodians. The *Pharisees*, as all students of the Bible know, were the strictest sect of the Jews (cf. Acts 26: 5); and, under normal conditions, they would have had nothing to do with their partners in the deception. The party of the *Herodians* was probably founded during the time of Herod the Great. Edersheim calls them "Nationalists," and says that they were in fact a revival of the Maccabean movement, perhaps more in keeping with its national, than its religious, aspect. It appears that the Herodians undertook to uphold the dynasty of the Herods, in opposition to the principle of a pure theocracy. And while differing from the Pharisees in this respect, the Herodians were quite willing to unite their efforts with

that powerful body, if it would be to their advantage.

Luke says that the men who were sent to question Jesus were "spies," who feigned themselves to be righteous, that they might take hold of his speech, so as to deliver him up to the rule and to the authority of the governor. The plotters of this movement evidently thought that by the union of these two hostile parties, and by their efforts to make it appear that they were themselves righteous, it would be easier for them to deceive Jesus. That, of course, was the obvious purpose of their flattery. Some one has said that the devil never lies so foully, as when he speaks the truth.

J. W. McGarvey notes that the task of a detective, who seeks to entangle a bad man in his talk, for the sake of exposing him, is not an enviable one; but to lay such snares for a good man, is truly diabolical. Yet this is precisely what the Pharisees deliberately took counsel to do; and the wonder is that they could look each other in the face, to say nothing of the Herodians, while plotting such a dastardly act. It is to be regretted that such a spirit did not die with the Pharisees; but, unfortunately, it did not. (Cf. Matt. 22: 15.)

The people who were opposed to Jesus were wholly unable to find anything wrong with his teaching, and they were therefore unable to discredit him with the people; and it was for those reasons that they decided upon the plan of trying to get him to say something, which they could use against him, both in the estimation of the government and the people. But even with that in mind, they had no intention of representing him correctly. (Cf. Matt. 26: 59f.) This also has been the aim of many others through the years. Being unable to deal successfully with some one's teaching, and thereby to prove him to be wrong, they next endeavor to trick him into saying something, which they can use to change the attitude of others against him.

The Pharisees evidently thought that they had devised a plan from which their "victim" could not extricate himself. They instructed the "spies," whom they sent to Jesus, to ask him a question, as if to settle a

dispute which had arisen between the Pharisees and the Herodians, regarding the paying of taxes to the Roman government. This, as already indicated, was the evident reason why the two opposing groups united their efforts to get Jesus to say something, which they could use against him. The Pharisees and the Herodians had no love for each other; but if they could do something together which would result in destroying the influence of Jesus, they were willing to forget their differences for the time being.

And so, with that kind of a plan in mind, and feeling certain that it could not fail, they came to Jesus with this question: "Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" But before presenting the question itself, they felt that they should "prepare" Jesus for the answer which they both wanted and expected him to give to them. That *preparation* (?) was made by means of these words: "Teacher, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, and acceptest not the person of any, but of a truth teachest the way of God." That, of course, was exactly what they did not believe about Jesus; but if they could get him to feel that they had changed their mind regarding him, then the way would be opened for them to gain their end.

The diabolical emissaries who came to Jesus from the Pharisees evidently thought that the Lord would have to answer their question, either affirmatively or negatively; it apparently never occurred to them that he could have any other choice in the matter. And so, if the Lord's answer should be in the negative, then the Herodians who supported the Roman government would, of course, report the matter to the governor. (Cf. Luke 23: 1, 2.) But if the answer of Jesus should be in the affirmative, that would give the Pharisees a chance to tell the Jewish people that Jesus was compromising with the Romans, and that he could not therefore be the promised Messiah or Deliverer; and that would be all that they needed as a pretext to stir up the multitudes against him. (Cf. Deut. 17: 14, 15.)

The first great Roman leader was Julius Caesar, and it was from him

that the subsequent emperors of Rome took their title. This kind of practice was not limited to the Roman Empire, but was also followed by other world powers, as, for example, Egypt; their rulers were called "Pharaoh." The tribute which the Romans exacted from the Jews, along with other subjected peoples, was exceedingly galling to Jewish pride; and many of the Jewish leaders had grave doubts about its being allowed by the law of Moses. Josephus tells of Judas of Galilee, who stirred up a revolt on this account, with the assertion that such taxation was no better than an introduction to slavery. (Cf. Acts 5: 37; Luke 2: 1ff.)

The Lord's Unexpected Answer
(Luke 20: 23-25)

But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them. Show me a denarius. Whose image and superscription hath it? And they said, Caesar's. And he said unto them. Then render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.

Luke says that Jesus perceived, that is, "saw through," their craftiness. The original word for "craftiness" is *panourgia*, a compound term for *pan*, every, and *ergon*, deed, a readiness for any and every kind of deed. As Robertson notes, they would stoop to any trick and go the limit. Instead of craftiness, Matthew has wickedness, while Mark has hypocrisy. All of this shows that Jesus was able to penetrate the outer shell, and could read their very thoughts; and this exposure on the part of Jesus, must have greatly disarmed his would-be destroyers.

If the men who had come to Jesus with the avowed purpose of tricking him into saying something which would be detrimental to his cause, had not been so calloused, they would have been greatly ashamed, when Jesus revealed to them that he understood their hypocrisy; but their sole aim was to destroy him, and they, accordingly, lost sight of everything else. But Jesus, instead of being entangled himself, in the web which they were endeavoring to weave, placed his would-be actors in the conspiracy, which they

were seeking to perpetrate, in a position where they could have a part in setting forth the truth regarding the question which they had propounded.

The "denarius" (an anglicized Greek word) was a Roman silver coin, which normally was worth about seventeen cents; and was the amount which was paid to a common laborer for a day's work. (See Matt. 20: 2; cf. 18: 28, marginal note.)

Hall L. Calhoun, in commenting on the incident now under consideration, says, "One can almost imagine a humorous twinkle in the eyes of Jesus, as he answered the question of those hypocrites. Hoping that he would say, No, it is not right to pay tribute to Caesar, and thus bring himself under condemnation as being disloyal to the Roman government; or that he would say, Yes, it is right to pay tribute to Caesar, and in so answering, lose the sympathy of a large number of the Jewish people, they were wholly unprepared for the answer which Jesus did give, namely, 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' Full respect was shown to both Caesar and God, and no one could find anything to condemn in the answer which Jesus gave; and there is no wonder that they marvelled at his answer."

But Jesus did more than answer a malicious question which his enemies asked him; he laid down a great principle, when he urged them to give to Caesar that which was his, and to God those things which belong to him. Caesar stands for human governments, and any one who fails to abide by the principle which Jesus states, cannot be pleasing unto God. This is the plain and specific teaching of Romans 13: 1-7. (Cf. 1 Pet. 2: 13-17.) Paul teaches that the powers which are enjoyed by world rulers were given to them by God; and if one will read the Book of Daniel, it will not be difficult for him to see that the Most High does, indeed, rule "in the kingdom of men. and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men." (See Dan. 4: 17.)

The very fact that the Jews who came to Jesus had the emperor's

"current" money, was enough to convict them. They were indeed in subjection to the then reigning Caesar, namely, Tiberius; and the coin which they showed to Jesus was due recognition of that subjection. Alford, in speaking of the Lord's answer to the spies who were sent to try to trick Jesus into saying something which could be used against him, says, "These weighty words, so much misunderstood, bind together, instead of separating, the political and religious duties of the followers of Christ. (See Jer. 27: 4-18; Rom. 13: 1; 1 Pet. 2: 13, 14; John 19: 11.) The second clause comprehends the first and gives its true foundation: as if it had been, 'this obedience to Caesar is but an application of the general principle of obedience to God, of whom is all power.' The latter clause reaches infinitely deeper than the former: just as our Lord in Luke 10: 41, 42 declares a truth reaching far beyond the occasion of the meal. *Man is the coinage, and bears the image, of God* (Gen. 1: 27); and this image is not lost by the fall (Gen. 9: 6; Acts 17: 29; James 3: 9. See also notes on Luke 15: 8, 9). We owe then *ourselves* to God: and this solemn duty is implied, of giving ourselves to him, with all that we have and are. The answer also gives the *real reason why they were now under subjection to Caesar*: viz., because they had fallen from their *allegiance to God*. . . . They had again and again rejected their theocratic inheritance;—they refused it in the wilderness;—they would not have God to reign over them, but a king;—therefore they were subjected to foreigners (see 2 Chron. 12: 8)."

A Humiliating Defeat

(Luke 20: 26)

And they were not able to take hold of the saying before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.

This section of the lesson text is rendered by Phillips in these words:

"So his reply gave them no sort of handle that they could use against him publicly. And in fact they were so taken aback by his answer that they had nothing more to say." The total failure which the spies experienced, and the signal defeat which they suffered at the hands of Jesus, may be looked upon as a commentary on a passage in the Book of Job, from which Paul one time quoted (1 Cor. 3: 19), namely, He frustrateth the devices of the crafty,

So that their hands cannot perform their enterprise.

He taketh the wise in their own craftiness;

And the counsel of the cunning is carried headlong.

They meet with darkness in the day-time,

And grope at noonday as in the night. (Job. 5: 12-14.)

McGarvey, in commenting on this incident, notes that the would-be destroyers of Jesus had several causes for astonishment, as, for example, (1) the Lord's instantaneous discovery of their plot; (2) his skillful escape from the dilemma in which they tried to place him; (3) his loyalty to Caesar, while proposing himself to establish a kingdom; and (4) his unsusceptibility to flattery. And so, amazed and baffled, they left him and went their way. (Cf. the parallel passages in Matthew and Mark.)

The spies on the occasion of this lesson were humiliated into silence, but they could have improved their way of doing; but there will come a time in the lives of some people, when their speechlessness, so far as the Lord is concerned, will last for ever. (Read Matt. 22: 1-14.) This will be the fate of those who are not prepared to meet the Lord in peace. "But when the king came in to behold the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding-garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how earnest thou in hither not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless."

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction
What is the sin of deceit and why is it so despicable?

Why would any person want to deceive some one else?
 What does the Bible teach with reference to his great sin? Discuss fully.

The Golden Text

What appears to be the setting for the passage which serves as the golden text?
 Why is it proper and right for people to consider other people when they say or do something?
 Cite some examples of the manner in which this process works.
 What effect does the misconduct of Christians sometimes have on others?

The Process at Work

In what context is this section of the lesson text found?
 Why did the spies want to deceive Jesus with reference to their motive in coming to him?
 Who concocted the scheme which sought to entrap Jesus at this time?
 Who were the Pharisees and who were the Herodians?
 Why were they so willing to work together on this occasion?
 Why would the Jewish leaders want to resort to such conduct with reference to Jesus?
 How did the spies go about executing the plan which had been given to them?
 Who was Caesar and why was it essential to bring up the matter of paying tribute to him?

The Lord's Unexpected Answer

What does Luke mean by saying that Christ "perceived their craftiness"?
 What is the fundamental meaning of "craftiness"?
 How did the Jewish leaders evidently feel about the success of their scheme?
 What was the "denarius" and why did Jesus ask for it?
 What answer did the Lord give to the men who had been sent to him?
 What does that answer involve and what application does it have in our lives?
 Why does every child of God have an obligation to the government under which he lives?
 What was the fundamental reason for the Jewish people's being in subjection to the Roman government?
 What is the most important "coinage," so far as we are concerned?
 Why, then, does obedience to God involve obedience to the powers that be?

A Humiliating Defeat

Why were the spies who came to Jesus so easily defeated by the Lord?
 Why were they unable to reply to that which Jesus said?
 Show that this is the usual way in which the Lord deals with those who oppose him.
 Why were the people who came to Jesus so astonished at that which he said?
 What was their next step?
 What great lesson should we learn from their silence?

Lesson XIII—June 27, 1971

THE CHRISTIAN WAY OF GREATNESS

Lesson Text

Luke 22: 24-37

24 And there arose also a contention among them, which of them was accounted to be greatest.

25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gen'tiles, have lordship over them; and they that have authority over them are called Benefactors.

26 But ye *shall* not be so: but he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

27 For which is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am in the midst of you as he that serveth.

28 But ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations;

29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me,

30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and ye shall sit on thrones judging the

twelve tribes of Is'-ra-el.

31 Si'-mon, Si'-mon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat:

32 But I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren.

33 And he said unto him, Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death.

34 And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, until thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

35 And he said unto them, When I sent you forth without purse, and wallet, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing.

36 And he said unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet; and he that hath none, let him sell his cloak, and buy a sword.

37 For I say unto you, that this

which is written must be fulfilled in me, And he was reckoned with trans-

gressors: for that which concerneth me hath fulfilment.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 2: 5.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—John 13: 1-17.

Daily Bible Readings

June 21.	M.	No Respect of Persons with God (Rom. 2: 1-12)
June 22.	T.	All Have the Same Creator (Job 31: 13-15)
June 23.	W.	Judgment on Basis of Obedience (2 Thess. 1: 1-9)
June 24.	T.	Approved by Keeping His Commandments (1 John 5: 1-3)
June 25.	F.	Some First Here, Last Hereafter (Mark 9: 33-37)
June 26.	S.	Blessing of Faithfulness (Mark 10: 23-31)
June 27.	S.	One Who Failed the Test (Mark 10: 17-22)

TIME.—Probably A.D. 30.

PLACE.—The "upper room" in Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jesus and his disciples.

Introduction

If there is a Christian way to greatness, and there is; then the desire for human greatness is not wrong, in and of itself. On the contrary, it is easy for students of history to see that the desire for greatness is coextensive with the history of mankind. It is true that human depravity has turned the principle of greatness into an evil direction; but it is equally plain that the principle itself was implanted within the human race for the noblest purposes. It is indeed, even in our present state, a constant witness to the immortal progress for which we were originally made. It is not right therefore to denounce the desire for greatness without reservation; for, if it is directed in the right channel, it serves as the mainspring of the soul; and will result in enormous good. This is enough to show that we should not seek to exterminate the desire for greatness which, as we have already seen, belongs to our nature; instead, we should give it a spiritual character, and turn it into a direction which will benefit others, rather than use the blessing primarily for ourselves. It is easy to see therefore that man, in his present state, needs wholesome teaching regarding this vital subject; and that is what Jesus does in the lesson text which we are to study today.

The standard of true greatness, which Jesus sets forth in the portion of scripture we are to consider in the first part of our lesson for today, must be kept in mind, if we are to

understand his view of the question; and it goes without saying that this is the kind of greatness which is acceptable to God. This is true, because those who follow this pattern, are helping to lead men back to the heavenly Father. Jesus, after pointing out to his disciples their mistaken idea of greatness, and seeking to restore harmony among them which their erroneous view of the subject had momentarily destroyed, told them what true greatness is, and bade them seek for it. Any one therefore who has the true conception of the kind of greatness which Jesus speaks about, does not need to be concerned lest he become too great; for the more he strives in that direction, the more he will grow into the likeness of his Master.

When Shakespeare makes Malvolio, in *Twelfth Night*, say, "Be not afraid of greatness: some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em," he was not speaking of the kind of greatness which Jesus is talking about. This kind of greatness cannot last, as Shakespeare so well says in Henry VIII:

Farewell! a long farewell to all my greatness!

This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth

The tender leaves of hope; to-morrow blossoms,

And bears his blushing honors thick upon him;

The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,

And, when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,
And then he falls, as I do.

The greatness of Jesus is a way of life, and not some goal to be sought for, in and of itself. Horace Mann notes, "If any man seeks for greatness, let him forget greatness and ask for truth, and he will find both." And in the words of Samuel Johnson, "Nothing can be truly great which is not right." We usually think of greatness in terms of success; but if we will think of the true meaning of success, it will not be difficult for us to see something of what it means for one to be great in this life. Thomas Stanley has expressed the matter in the following words, "He has achieved success

who has lived well, laughed often, and loved much; who has gained the respect of intelligent men and the love of little children; who has filled his niche and has accomplished his task—who has left the world better than he found it, whether by an improved poppy, a perfect poem, or a rescued soul; who has never lacked appreciation of earth's beauty or failed to express it; who has always looked for the best in others and given the best he had; whose life was an inspiration; whose memory a benediction." And in the words of Seneca, "He who is great when he falls is great in his prostration, and is no more an object of contempt than when men tread on the ruins of sacred buildings, which men of piety venerate no less than if they stood."

The Golden Text

"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." The term "mind," as used in the passage just quoted, is used in the sense of attitude or disposition. Williams: "Keep on fostering the same disposition that Christ Jesus had." Robertson: "Keep on thinking this in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Goodspeed: "Have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had." Phillips: "Let Christ himself be your example as to what your attitude should be." The apostle Paul presents the Lord Jesus Christ as the supreme example of humility; and he urges that the Philippian brethren maintain that same disposition. This was Paul's method of showing the brethren the only successful way to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." There is no better commentary on the words now before us, than the context in which they are found, namely:

"If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or through vain glory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not look-

ing each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore God also highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on the earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2: 1-11.) And so, in the words of Christina G. Rosseti.

Give me the lowest place, not that I dare

Ask for that lowest place, but thou hast died

That I might live and share

Thy glory by thy side.

Give me the lowest place; or if for me

That lowest place too high, make one more low

Where I may sit and see

My God and love thee so.

The Text Explained

True Humility Leads to Greatness
(Luke 22: 24-30)

And there arose also a contention among them, which of them was accounted to be greatest. And he said unto them. The kings of the Gentiles have lordship over them; and they that have authority over them are called Benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For which is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am in the midst of you as he that serveth. But ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The paragraph in Luke's record, which immediately precedes this section of the lesson text, gives the account of the last passover supper and the bringing into being of the Lord's supper: and it was near the close of those events that Jesus said, "But behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. For the Son of man indeed goeth, as it hath been determined: but woe unto that man through whom he is betrayed! And they began to question among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing." (Luke 22: 21-23.) That was a terrible spirit to have hovering over those solemn and sacred moments: but it is plain to see that the trend of unwelcome events were already casting dark shadows over the little company. Not only was Jesus soon to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies; but the hand of the betrayer was at that moment on the table in the Lord's presence. This is one of the many instances which clearly show that the greatest danger to the cause of Christ, comes from within.

But there was another evil spirit at work among the apostles themselves, namely, "which of them was accounted to be the greatest." Some one has described the scene in this way: "Jesus, the Master, is at the

table, and all around him are the twelve apostles; and inasmuch as he is the source of life, his very presence sheds vitality on every side. It is like the sun shining on a fertile field; and with all kinds of dispositions and emotions springing up in all directions. Love, regret, indignation, resolution, expectation—these and a host of others are there. And among all the rest, out of the fruitful hearts which are quickened by the warm sunshine of Christ's nature, these springs up the spirit of emulation; or, which is the same thing, the conscious desire and effort, not only to equal, but also to surpass, the others. Each one, or at least some of them, wanted to be greater than the others."

These disciples would not betray Jesus, but they were showing him how far short they were of being what he wanted them to be. They began to contend with each other, and it was not long before the clear atmosphere began to grow thicker with comparisons. Each one looked upon the other with suspicions; and it was not long before each one began to think more highly of himself, than he should have done. But we should learn that the disposition which the disciples of Jesus manifested on that occasion, was not limited to them. That, apparently, has been the sad story in practically every age of the church. That was not the way to greatness in the days of the apostle; and it is not the way to greatness today.

Jesus made it plain to his disciples that his kingdom would be different from the kingdoms of the world; and that means, of course, that there would be a different standard for measuring greatness. The Lord used his own example of service to show what he expects of his people; and he makes it plain that it is entirely against his will for any of them to lord it over the others, such as is done by the people of the world. This is a stinging rebuke to professed Christians who entertain such ambitions. It should be obvious to any thoughtful person, that men who are prominent in the church should be the first to heed this admonition. True greatness, as Jesus points out, is based on genuine ser-

vice to others; and the greater and more beneficial the service is, the greater is the one who renders it. The Lord always encourages greatness, which is based on, and motivated by, this principle.

It should also be noted that it is not essential for one to perform great deeds, as the world measures such things in order for his life to be both great and successful in God's sight; for Jesus himself makes it plain that "he that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much." (Luke 16: 10.) This principle is illustrated by the parable of the talents. (Matt. 25: 14-30.) The man who had the two talents did not accomplish half as much as the man who had the five; but the one who had the two was just as faithful as the one who had the five; and their lord spoke identical words of commendation to each of them.

There are too many people who have the idea that intelligence, authority, power, courage, eloquence, and similar qualities and abilities, are necessary ingredients of greatness and success; but any one who understands the teaching of Jesus, now under consideration, knows that they are not necessarily marks of true greatness. Jesus, however, does not disparage nor ignore such traits; on the contrary, he would have them all used in service to mankind, of they are properly motivated by love. (Cf. 1 Cor. 13: 1-3.) The apostle Paul was very probably better equipped, so far as native ability, training, and experience are concerned, than any other Christian of his day; but they, in and of themselves, did not make him great in the sight of the Lord. He was always willing to spend, and be spent, for the good of others; and that, along with his attitude or disposition, which included, first and foremost, his determination to be faithful to God and his Son Jesus Christ, were the qualities of greatness which were acceptable to the Lord. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 9, 10.)

And with this view of the nature of true greatness before us, let us note that it is possible for any child of God to attain this standing, anywhere and in any age of the world. This, obviously, is not true of worldly greatness; for all men are not born equal; and the paths to

earthly honors are greatly circumscribed. Not every boy in the United States, for example, can become president of the nation; not every person can reach the top in his profession; and not every one can become wealthy in a material sense. But there is room in the kingdom of Christ for every individual to serve, if he so desires and is willing to abide by the rules of Christ. (See Matt. 25: 14-30.) Furthermore, the greatness which Christ approves, is always satisfying to the possessor, something which is not always true of those who are great in a worldly sense; for it often happens that when the earthly prize is won, it ceases to charm its owner. Or, to say the same thing in another way, that which one thinks he wants while it is still in the distance, often fails to satisfy when it has been reached. But that is never true of the greatness which Christ makes possible. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 6-8.)

The reason why those who serve as Christ directs are great, is because they are engaged in the work for which he gave his life, namely, the salvation and improvement of the human race; and inasmuch as the souls of people are more valuable than all the world (cf. Matt. 16: 26) it follows that those who serve in their behalf, are engaged in life's greatest work, and are the most like Christ himself. And while this kind of service is intended primarily for others, the character of the person who performs it must not be overlooked. A small selfish person cannot render the kind of service which Jesus requires. (Cf. Matt. 5: 43-48; Rom. 12: 3-21; Matt. 16: 24.)

When Jesus cited his own example to illustrate his teaching, he was manifesting the consciousness which he had from the beginning of his ministry, namely, that his divine mission was the sacrifice of himself for others; or, which is the same thing, the vicarious nature of his death. (Cf. Heb. 2: 9.) But we should always keep in mind the fact that the sacrifice which Christ made, will benefit only those who appropriate its blessings by accepting his offer of salvation and a place in his kingdom. (Cf. Heb. 5: 8, 9; Mark 16: 15, 16; Eph. 2: 8-10.)

Jesus therefore enforced his lesson on the only way to true greatness, by citing the greatest of all examples, that of himself. He did not come to earth in order to have men serve him, but that he might serve them; and by citing this example, he suppressed both the desire and the ambition, which any of his disciples might have had, to be greater than their brethren. This is the lesson which we all need today; and it would be impossible for elders, preachers, teachers, and other workers in the church, to study and emphasize it too much. Ernest Renan notes, "Whatever may be the surprises of the future. Jesus will never be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceasing; this legend will call forth tears without end; his suffering will melt the noblest hearts; all ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus."

When Life Becomes Critical

(Luke 22: 31-34)

Simon, Simon, behold. Satan asked to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren. And he said unto him. Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death. And he said. I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, until thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

Whether or not the events of this section of the lesson text came immediately after those of the preceding section (it is a well known fact that the gospel writers did not always follow a chronological order in their narratives—cf. Matt. 4: 1-11; Luke 4: 1-12), it is very likely that Jesus used the occasion now before us to warn Peter that he was not indeed greater and more trustworthy, than his brethren. Jesus knew the nature of Simon, and he also knew that he was facing the greatest crisis of his experience so far. The Lord also knew that Peter, and the others as well, needed every resource which they possessed; and he made it known to the impulsive Simon that he had offered a special prayer for him. Peter's reaction to this as-

surance by the Lord would reveal more of his mercurial and temperamental nature, as well as how small he really was.

But, contrary to Peter's own estimate of himself, he did fall; and one of the most distressing and aggravating circumstances surrounding his fall, lay in the fact that Jesus had fully warned him of his immediate danger, as we have already seen. Jesus told Simon that Satan had asked to have you. that he might sift you as wheat; but the Lord assured Peter that he had made supplication for him, that his faith would not fail. That was a gracious blessing from the Lord, and Peter should have been grateful for it; but instead of feeling that way about it, the impulsive apostle regarded it as a reflection on his loyalty, that his Master should even think that the stalwart disciple was in any danger of deserting him! But before we condemn Peter too severely, let us remember that Jesus is also making intercession for us; and just how do we feel about that? (Rom. 8: 34; cf. 8: 26, 27.)

The Coming Danger and a Veiled Warning

(Luke 22: 35-37)

And he said unto them. When I sent you forth without purse, and wallet, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. And he said unto them. But now he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet; and he that hath none, let him sell his cloak, and buy a sword. For I say unto you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in me. And he was reckoned with transgressors: for that which concerneth me hath fulfillment.

The reference to sending the disciples forth without purse (money-bag), wallet (knapsack or provision-bag), and shoes (sandals), was to the "limited commission," mentioned in Luke 9: 1-6. They enjoyed divine guidance and protection at that time (cf. Matt. 10: 16-20); but things would not be the same, when they embarked on the world-wide mission. The Lord will always be with his people (Matt. 28: 20); but they will need to make due preparation, as they go among strangers, that is, people who are

not familiar with the way and will of the Lord. The life of Paul is a good commentary on this situation, which the Lord's disciples will always have to meet and deal with. (Cf. 3 John 5-8.) The crisis in the life of Christ was rapidly approaching, and the apostles themselves would be severely tried. (Cf. Isa. 53: 12.)

The reference to the "sword," in the section of the lesson text now before us, has always caused commentators a great amount of trouble; and it appears obvious, in the light of the general teaching of the New Testament on the subject, that even the disciples who were with Jesus at the time he mentioned the sword, did not themselves understand what he meant. The Interpreter's Bible notes that if Jesus intended that his followers should prepare themselves to resist the opposition which they would encounter, when the gospel came to grips with the world, then there is no indication of such an idea anywhere

else in the New Testament. The two swords referred to in verse 38, would certainly not be sufficient for the entire group of disciples, who would be going in different directions; and, too, if Jesus meant for them to take a literal sword, and use it against the opposition, then that would be a direct contradiction to that which Jesus said in Matthew 26: 52.

J. S. Lamar seems to have a reasonable explanation: "Undoubtedly, I think, the language is simply a prophetic way of saying that their new mission would be *dangerous*. But surely it does not mean that this handful of feeble men were to stand up against the authorities and powers of the world, with their two swords! And we know, as a matter of fact, that the disciples themselves, after they had been guided by the Spirit into the truth, did not so understand it. But they did fully realize the perilous *danger* of which the 'taking of the sword' was the symbol."

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is the desire for greatness, in and of itself, not wrong?
What limitations are there to this great question and what is the standard governing it?
What is the principal objection to worldly greatness as such?
How may the greatness which Christ approves be described?

The Golden Text

What is meant by the "mind" of Christ?
In what context are the words of the golden text found and what is its significance?

True Humility Leads to Greatness

What is implied by the term "also" near the beginning of this section of the lesson text?
What lesson should we learn from the situation which confronted Jesus and the disciples?
What other problem was present among the disciples themselves?
Why did they, or at least some of them, want to be greater than the others?
What effect would such an attitude have on the cause of Christ?
How wide-spread has that disposition become? Give reason for your answer.
What is the most effective way of dealing with such a situation?
What is the standard by which Jesus

judges greatness and why is it so effective?

In what way is the Lord's kind of greatness related to great deeds of the world?

What is the usual manner in which people tend to think of greatness and why?

In what way does the life of Paul illustrate this principle?

In what way did Jesus enforce his teaching regarding true greatness?

How long will such greatness continue in the world?

When Life Becomes Critical

What use, apparently, did Jesus make of this section of the lesson text?

Why did he single out Peter for special consideration?

What made Simon's fall so distressing and aggravating?

What did Jesus actually say to Peter about the forthcoming crisis?

In what way did Simon respond to the Lord's interest in him individually?

In what way should this lesson affect us?

The Coming Danger and a Veiled Warning

To what did Jesus refer in the beginning of this section of the lesson text?

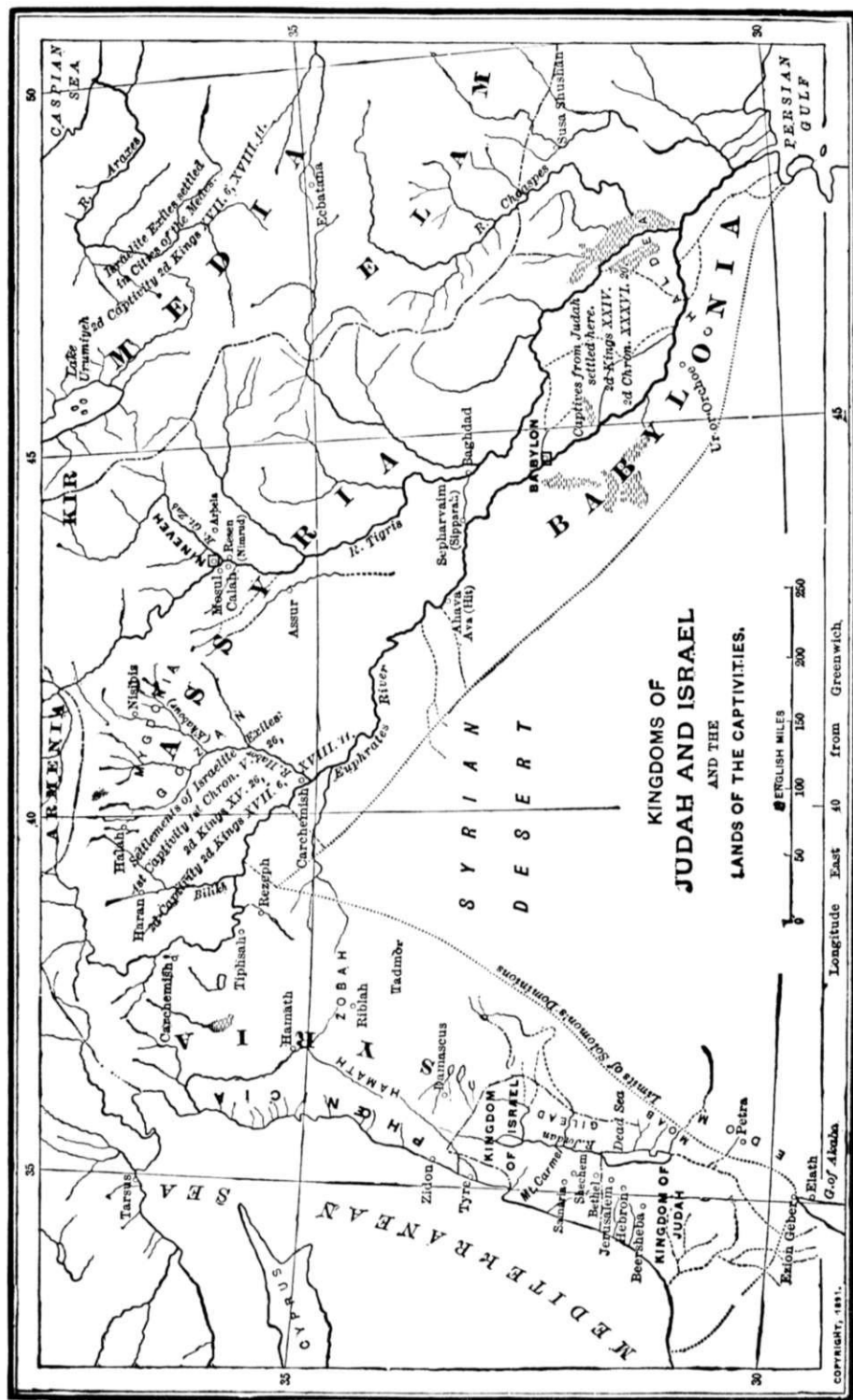
Why were the disciples sent out with such little equipment?

What difference would be noted when the world-wide commission got under way?

Why was this difference inevitable?

In what way does the life of Paul illustrate this principle?

What is the probable meaning of the Lord's reference to the sword?



THIRD QUARTER

SELECTIONS FROM ISAIAH, JEREMIAH AND EZEKIEL

AIM.—*To discover, in the counsels, admonitions and warnings of the great prophets, the ageless, timeless lessons of righteousness and truth, so sorely needed in our day.*

Lesson I—July 4, 1971

MESSIAH'S RIGHTEOUS REIGN

Lesson Text

Isa. 11: 1-10

1 And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jes'-se, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit.

2 And the Spirit of Je-ho'-vah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Je-ho'-vah.

3 And his delight shall be in the fear of Je-ho'-vah; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears;

4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins.

6 And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Je-ho'-vah, as the waters cover the sea.

10 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the root of Jes'-se, that standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek; and his resting-place shall be glorious.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea."* (Isa. 11: 9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 2: 1-4.

Daily Bible Readings

June 28.	M.	.....	Messiah's Peaceful Reign (Isa. 2: 1-11)
June 29.	T.	.....	A Son to Be Born (Isa. 7: 10-17)
June 30.	W.	.....	Of the Seed of Jesse (Isa. 11: 1-10)
July 1.	T.	.....	Church Promised (Matt. 16: 13-21)
July 2.	F.	.....	Kingdom to Be Established (Dan. 2: 36-45)
July 3.	S.	.....	Christ Now Reigning (1 Cor. 15: 20-28)
July 4.	S.	.....	Kingdom Not of This World (John 18: 36)

TIME.—About 713 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Isaiah and the people of Israel.

Introduction

Isaiah is commonly referred to as "the Messianic prophet," because of his clear vision and prophetic de-

scription of the Messiah, whom all devout Israelites were expecting. The conditions which existed among

God's people, during the time of Isaiah, made the glorious reign of "the coming One" seem all the more desirable by comparison. This was particularly true of those Jews who were spiritually minded, and whose primary aim was to please God. It is fair to assume that the unrighteous conditions, which confronted Isaiah, stirred his conscience and made a powerful appeal to his patriotism; but there was another and greater influence which made him the prophet that he was, namely, the inspiration of the Spirit of God. If one will read Isaiah's call to the prophetic ministry, as set forth in the sixth chapter of the book from which the first lessons of this quarter are taken, it will be easy to see that the prophet was impelled, by the vision which he had of Jehovah, to proclaim both his character and his purpose regarding his people.

While the record of Isaiah's prophetic ministry is not the longest of those contained in the Scriptures, it is probably safe to say that Isaiah, the prophet, is among the greatest of the great. The editor of *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible* notes that the world knows but little about its greatest people. It beholds from afar the candle as it burns in the garret of the thinker; but it does not know that its light will continue to burn on down through the ages. The man who lives in the realm of thought, rather than in the domain of action, is usually overlooked while he is yet alive. It is only when his thoughts have been translated into deeds, perhaps hundreds of years after his death, that the world cares to ask who the thinker was, and eagerly tries to catch every detail of his personal history. A forceful illustration of this attitude is seen in the words of the dying Scottish poet, Robert Burns, to his weeping wife. The Ayrshire bard had been neglected by the patrons of his happier days; but with the hopefulness which made his genius so winsome in later times, he said to his sorrowing companion, "Dinna greet [do not weep] for me; I shall be thought far more of a hundred years hence than I am now."

There is, strictly sneaking, very little purely historical information regarding "the myriad-minded"

Shakespeare; and there is but little known of Dante, and still less of Homer; and the same things can also be said of Isaiah, "the sweetest and most impassioned of all the Hebrew poets." That which has just been said is true; for, in spite of the influence which Isaiah exercised upon his contemporaries, our knowledge of his life is derived almost wholly from his own works. It is true that he is portrayed in the nineteenth and twentieth chapters of 2 Kings: (1) as the counsellor to whom the troubled Jewish monarch sent his ministers in an hour of great need; (2) as the prophet who was divinely commissioned to promise them speedy deliverance; (3) as the inspired spokesman through whom Jehovah assured the ailing Hezekiah of health and additional years of life, when all earthly hope for him appeared to be gone; and (4) as the stern reprover of the Judean king for his thoughtless conduct, in snatching the treasures of his house to the messengers of the Babylonian monarch. But this same information is found in the book which bears the prophet's name. The only additional information which we have regarding Isaiah, is found in 2 Chronicles 26: 22; 32: 20, 32, where he is mentioned as the biographer of Uzziah and Hezekiah, and as joining with Hezekiah in prayer, when the Assyrians under Sennacherib threatened Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem. Nothing further is known of the biographical records of Isaiah.

Isaiah was born about 760 B.C. He called his wife "the prophetess," and it appears that two sons were born to them. (See Isa. 8: 3; 7: 3.) Isaiah and his family probably lived in Jerusalem. This man who became the great messianic prophet, was a child when Amos appeared at Bethel; and was only a youth when Hosea began his prophetic ministry in the northern kingdom, that is, the kingdom of Israel. Micah was Isaiah's younger contemporary; and George Adam Smith says of him, "Although anticipated by Amos and Hosea in many of his leading doctrines, and excelled by both Jeremiah and the great Prophet of the Exile in the depth of personal experience and width of religious outlook, Isaiah was nevertheless the greatest of the

Hebrew prophets—by the strength of his personality, the wisdom of his statesmanship, the length and unbroken assurance of his ministry, the almost unaided service which he rendered to Judah at the greatest crisis of her history, the purity and grandeur of his style, and the influence he exerted on subsequent prophecy." (*Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. II, p. 485.)

The Book of Isaiah is second only to that of Jeremiah in actual length, and is just about equal to that of Ezekiel. Many modern scholars think that the book which bears Isaiah's name, was written by more than one author; and it is fashionable to speak of the contents of the book, as First Isaiah (meaning the prophet now under consideration), chapters 1-39; Second or Deutero Isaiah, chapters 40-55; and Third Isaiah, chapters 56-66. Other stu-

dents refer only to First and Second Isaiah, thereby combining Second and Third Isaiah into a single book. But, as *The People's Bible Encyclopedia* notes, "The vision of Isaiah,' etc., has ever been applied to the whole book; that a second part has never been known to exist separately; that if separated those who joined them believed that they were both from Isaiah's pen; that a second Isaiah is unknown in history; that so far from a fatal diversity of style there is a striking similarity of idea and expression in the two parts; that Christ and the apostles, who frequently quote from the prophets, never once suggested the idea of two Isaiahs; that no other satisfactory explanation of the admitted relationship of the two Isaiahs can be given than that of identity." (P. 145f.)

The Golden Text

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

The Text Explained

The Character and Methods of
Israel's Ideal King
(Isa. 11: 1-5)

And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of Jehovah. And his delight shall be in the fear of Jehovah; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins.

The terrible condition of the Lord's people, at the time of this lesson, is set forth in the preceding chapter; and the opening verses read as follows: "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and to the writers that write perverseness; to turn aside the needy from

justice, and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey! And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory? They shall only bow down under the prisoners, and shall fall under the slain. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." (Isa. 10: 1-4.)

When people live without God, they must be prepared to suffer without his help. It is relatively easy for the strong and influential to take advantage of the weak and the poor; but if such people will only take the time to consider such lessons as the one now before us, it will not be difficult for them to see that a "day of visitation" is coming. Jehovah is a righteous judge, and no unforgiven sin will go unpunished. (Cf. Heb. 2: 1-3.) The heartless Assyrians were the chosen means by which God would punish his rebellious people; but the aggressors themselves would also be destroyed. In fact, the prophet Isaiah pictures

their destruction under the figure of the demolition of a great forest. "And the remnant of the trees of his forest shall be few, so that a child may write them." (See Isa. 10: 15-19; read also chapters 36 and 37.)

The punishment which came upon Israel was for their sins, and it was directed by Jehovah himself. The Assyrians were his agents, but that ruthless and mighty ruler did not realize the significance of that which he was doing. "Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few." (Isa. 10: 5-7.) This is another instance of the working of divine providence, and the manner in which God rules in the kingdoms of men (cf. Dan. 4: 17) and makes the wrath of man to praise him (Psalm 76: 10; Ex. 9: 13-16).

But Jehovah did not intend for the punishment, which the Assyrians inflicted upon the people of Israel, to be either permanent or complete; and therein lies the significance of this section of the lesson text. Instead of the stock of the tree of Jesse continuing to decay, until it returned to the dust of the earth, a tender branch came out of it; and in due time it bore fruit. That, of course, is a reference to the coming of Christ from the family of David, who was the son of Jesse. Paul refers to this very thing in Romans 15: 12, namely, "And again, Isaiah saith, There shall be the root of Jesse, and he that ariseth to rule over the Gentiles; on him shall the Gentiles hope." (Cf. Isa. 11: 10.) Thus, not only do we learn from Paul that the "shoot" and "branch" typified Jesus; but we are also told that the rule of the "Coming One" would be extended to include the Gentiles. (Cf. Isa. 9: 1-7.)

Jehovah, in the course of time, personified his Word and his Spirit; and they became the second and third persons in the Holy Trinity—the Son and the Holy Spirit. The

Son became the Saviour, and the Holy Spirit, the Perfector of the plan of salvation, and the animating force of Christianity. When Isaiah says that the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon the Son, the reference is to that which the Spirit would do in the messianic reign, namely, (1) *rest upon him*, that is, be with him permanently; (2) *bestow wisdom and understanding*; (3) *give counsel and might*; and (4) *reveal knowledge and endow with the fear of Jehovah*, or, reverence for Jehovah. All of this means that the Messiah would be completely fitted for the work which was ordained for him to do. (Cf. Acts 10: 38.)

The prophetic picture which Isaiah gave of the Messiah, was the very ideal of a strong and righteous ruler of men, in contrast with the unrighteous rulers in Israel; and this ideal, as we know from the testimony of the New Testament, was completely fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth; for in him "are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden." (See Col. 2: 3.) This implies, of course, that he will never experience any difficulty in the administration of his office, or be brought under the shadow of any perplexity whatsoever. The portrait of the Messiah also presents a comprehensive view of the graces which are in store for all the needs of the people, who are willing to accept his offer of salvation and Christian guidance. (Cf. 1 Cor. 4: 7; James 1: 5-8; 2 Pet. 1: 3.) The New Testament sets forth the truth that the special work of the Holy Spirit, during the reign of Christ, is to bring to fulfillment, in human experience, the total meaning of Jesus Christ as God's Son and the Redeemer of men.

As already indicated, the "fear of Jehovah" implies the proper respect and reverence for God; and this is exactly what Jesus claimed for himself: "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.) The section of the lesson text now before us describes the character and spirit of the reign of Christ; and he himself tells us that all authority and judgment have been placed in his hands. (Cf. Matt. 28: 18; 1 Pet. 3: 22; John

5: 22-27.) The rule of Christ is always according to the principles of justice, mercy, and righteousness; and its wholesome effect in the lives of his people can be seen in the next section of the lesson text. It should be obvious to any thoughtful person, that a righteous kingdom cannot exist, where the subjects are themselves unrighteous and unjust. (See Col. 3: 5-17.)

The Divine Melting-Pot

(Isa. 11: 6-9)

And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fating together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.

This passage of scripture should be familiar to all who study these lessons; for it is one of the truly great statements of the Scriptures, regarding the reign of Christ and the unity of God's people. Bible students are not in agreement, as to the sense in which we are to understand the animals in question, that is, whether they are to be regarded as being literal, with the disposition which existed in the garden of Eden before sin entered into the world; or whether they are to be compared to men of fierce and furious temperaments, who bite and devour according to their sinful desires, before having their dispositions altered by the power of the gospel of Christ. (Cf. Gal. 5: 15.) The context seems to imply the latter viewpoint; and that is the position taken in this study.

If the idea just suggested is correct, then the state of peace and well-being in the kingdom of Christ, is symbolized by the idyllic picture of furious beasts and dangerous reptiles, in harmonious companionship with domesticated animals and children. Or, to say the same thing in another way, those "animals" and

"serpents" and people, who were natural enemies in the unregenerate state, shall, when brought under the influence of the King of Glory, be friends or brethren together. This viewpoint is in complete harmony with the oft-repeated injunction of the Scriptures, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (cf. Rom. 13: 9), and to which Paul adds, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law." (Verse 10.) If this principle is diligently followed by the Lord's people, peace and harmony will continue among them; but, to quote Paul again, "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." (See Gal. 5: 13-15.) The apostle, in the passage just cited, is in effect saying. If professed followers of Christ can not motivate their lives by love, but instead are filled with the spirit of untamed beasts and venomous serpents; then they should be careful not to destroy each other completely!

Paul's language in Galatians, just referred to, appears to be an example of the apostle's frequent use of ironical language, in an effort to get the brethren to see themselves in their true light. The question, plainly stated, is this: "If the spirit of mutual love does not prevent Christian brethren from preying on one another, they are in danger of utter destruction." (The Expositor's Greek Testament, *in loco*.) But, as *The Interpreter's Bible* points out, Paul refused to grant license to such people, and threw the suit of quarreling brethren out of court. The Spirit of Christ proposes "to do nothing less than change human nature and repeal the law of tooth and claw." (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 3-11.) This is indeed a picture of the "redeemed nature" of those people who are true citizens of the kingdom of Christ; and they have been so truly converted, that "a little child shall lead them." (Cf. Mark 10: 15.)

If that which has just been said is true, and there is little or no doubt about it, then we have before us one of the great motives for evangelizing the world, and building up the church of the Lord. One does not have to look very far, or very long, in this sinful world, before he is fully aware that Burns was right,

when he said, "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn." But when the gospel of Christ has been brought to bear upon those in sin, whether out of the church or in it, it will not be long until they will live in peace, with the humblest saint here upon the earth. There is no greater example of this principle, in actual operation, than that of the one-time notorious Saul of Tarsus. (Cf. Acts 26: 9-11; 1 Thess. 2: 7f.) It is, of course, only through the "knowledge of Jehovah," that such a happy situation can be brought about; and that requires the proclamation of the word of the Lord throughout the world continuously. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [that is, his kingdom or church, cf. Isa. 2: 2, 3]; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea."

A Glorious Resting-Place for All

(Isa. 11: 10)

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the root of Jesse, that standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek; and his resting-place shall be glorious.

The coming Messiah was represented in the picture now before us, not as a stately and luxuriant tree, but as a shoot which grew out of the apparently dead roots of a tree, which had been cut down. (Cf. Isa. 53: 2; Rev. 5: 5; 22: 16.) This promised Redeemer is portrayed by Isaiah as "an ensign of the peoples," that is, a standard toward which they might look, and around which they might gather. This was literally fulfilled, when Christ was raised upon the cross. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself. But this he said, signifying by what manner

of death he should die." (John 12: 32, 33.) The practical meaning of the "resting-place" is the church. (Cf. Isa. 60: 13; Eph. 5: 25-27.)

The plural "peoples" means the Gentiles, and corresponds with "nations" in the same passage. The same idea is also expressed in Isaiah 2: 2-4, along with the peaceful aspect of the kingdom of Christ. Micah has substantially the same statement regarding the kingdom of Christ, and its effect on the peoples of the earth; but he adds this further information, namely, "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of Jehovah of hosts hath spoken it. For all the peoples walk every one in the name of his god; and we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God for ever and ever." (See Mic. 4: 1-5.) Both Isaiah and Micah were speaking of the same events; and they were showing that the kingdom of Christ would be in marked contrast with the desolate picture, which the prophets drew of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. (Cf. Mic. 3: 12.)

We know that the predictions of Isaiah and Micah, regarding the coming of Christ, and the establishment of his kingdom, or church, have been fulfilled; and these facts should stimulate great activity on the part of the Lord's people today. God does not want any one to be lost; and he has placed the work of getting the good news of salvation to all people in the hands of the church. (See 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9; Mark 16: 15, 16.) The church in Thessalonica was only a few months old at best, when Paul wrote his first letter to them; but they had already seen to it that the word of the Lord had been proclaimed in all the places which were adjacent to them. (Read 1 Thess. 1: 8; cf. Col. 1: 23.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is Isaiah commonly referred to as the Messianic prophet?
Why was he so zealous in his prophetic ministry?
What is known of his personal life and how does his written work compare

with that of other Old Testament prophets?

What were some of the areas of his prophetic ministry?

Give the complete sources of information regarding the life and work of Isaiah.

When did Isaiah prophesy and what is known of his family?

Who were some of the other Old Testament prophets who were active during the time of Isaiah?

What are the solid facts regarding the unity of the book which bears his name?
How did Christ and the apostles regard the prophecy of Isaiah?

The Character and Methods of Israel's Ideal King

What was the condition of the people of Israel at the time of this lesson?

What always happens to people who live without God and what will always happen to them?

What method did God choose to punish his rebellious people?

What kind of people were the Assyrians and how did they feel about their mission to the Jewish people?

What important lessons do we learn from God's will regarding the Assyrians?

How did he feel about the Israelites and what happened to them?

What do we learn here regarding the mission of Christ and his fitness for it?

What may all people who yield to Christ expect from him?

What was the attitude of Christ toward God?

The Divine Melting-Pot

What is the nature and importance of this section of the lesson text?

What is the probable meaning of the prophet's reference to animals? Why?
What is the application so far as the Lord's people today are concerned?
In what way does Paul deal with the same basic principle?

How are people in the church, generally speaking, responding to this issue today?

What great motive should the facts of this lesson furnish the Lord's people today?

What is the only means which can bring people into harmony with God and with each other?

What is the practical meaning of the Lord's holy mountain?

A Glorious Resting-Place for All

In what way did Isaiah represent the Messiah as coming into the world and what lesson should we learn from it?

What is the meaning of "an ensign for the peoples" and the significance of the plural?

What is the "resting-place"? Give reasons for your answer.

How did Isaiah describe the kingdom of the Lord and its unity?

What assurance do we have that the prediction has been fulfilled?

What should this knowledge do to the Lord's people today?

Lesson II—July 11, 1971

DESTRUCTION THROUGH STRONG DRINK

Lesson Text

Isa. 28: 1-13

1 Woe to the crown of pride of the drunkards of E'-phra-im, and to the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley of them that are overcome with wine!

2 Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one; as a tempest of hail, a destroying storm, as a tempest of mighty waters overflowing, will he cast down to the earth with the hand.

3 The crown of pride of the drunkards of E'-phra-im shall be trodden under foot:

4 And the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be as the first-ripe fig before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.

5 In that day will Je-ho'-vah of hosts become a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people;

6 And a spirit of justice to him that sitteth in judgment, and strength to them that turn back the battle at the gate.

7 And even these reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with

strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they stagger with strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

8 For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.

9 Whom will he teach knowledge? and whom will he make to understand the message? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts?

10 For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little.

11 Nay, but by *men of* strange lips and with another tongue will he speak to this people;

12 To whom he said, This is the rest, give ye rest to him that is weary; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.

13 Therefore shall the word of Je-ho'-vah be unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little; that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: (Prov. 23: 21.)*

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Kings 17: 1-23.

Daily Bible Readings

July 5.	M.	Dangers of Wine (Prov. 23: 29-35)
July 6.	T.	Wisdom of Temperance (Dan. 1: 8-16)
July 7.	W.	Temperance and Alertness (Dan. 1: 17-28)
July 8.	T.	Temperance and Spiritual Vision (Dan. 5: 17-28)
July 9.	F.	Temperance and Success (Dan. 5: 29-6: 3)
July 10.	S.	A Life of Godliness (Psalm 15)
July 11.	S.	Sin a National Reproach (Prov. 14: 28-35)

TIME.—About 725 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Isaiah and the people of Ephraim and Judah.

Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to call attention to the injury to the whole man, and the sin in God's sight, which result from the use of strong drink as a beverage. No professed follower of Christ can give too much attention, to both the theory and the practice of temperance or which is the same thing, self-control, not only with reference to alcoholic beverages, but to all other relationships of life. But inasmuch as the lesson now before us deals primarily with the question of strong drink; it will not be out of place to call attention to some things which men of wisdom and experience have said regarding the issue. The Japanese, for example, have observed that "a man takes a drink, then the drink takes a drink, and the next drink takes the man." Anacharsis, the Scythian sage, states the matter in this way, "The first draught serveth for health, the second for pleasure, the third for shame, and the fourth for madness."

Benjamin Franklin, the statesman, points out that "some of the domestic evils of drunkenness are houses without windows, gardens without fences, fields without tillage, barns without roofs, children without clothing, principles, morals, or manners." And, according to Bacon, "All the armies on earth do not destroy so much of the human race, or alienate so much property, as drunkenness; "while Douglas Jerrold avers that "habitual intoxication is the epitome of every crime." Horace Mann, the great American educator, exhorts, "Let there be an entire abstinence from intoxicating

drinks throughout this country during the period of a single generation, and a mob would be as impossible as combustion without oxygen." It is virtually impossible to estimate the physical cost and damage to the American people, from the manufacture, sale, and consumption of alcoholic beverages; but the results are astronomical. We are told that today alcoholism ranks, with cancer, mental illness, and heart disease, among the four major American health hazards. Then there are personal disasters, such as broken homes, physical and mental disorders, difficulties with the law, and lost jobs, to name only a few.

Dr. Howard Kelly, of Johns Hopkins University fame, says that "there is no disease in the world for which alcohol is a cure. . . . Its use is ruinous to the kidneys, liver, heart, and smaller blood vessels, and gives rise to that most common fatality, high blood pressure." Sir Walter Raleigh says, "It were better for a man to be subject to any vice, than to drunkenness; for all other vanities and sins are recovered, but a drunkard will never shake the delight of beastliness; for the longer it possesses a man, the more he will delight in it, and the older he groweth, the more he shall be subject to it; for it dulleth the spirits, and destroyeth the body as ivy doth the old tree; or as the worm that engendered in the kernel of the nut." These quotations could be multiplied, but suffice it to say, in the words of Francis Quarles, "He that is a drunkard is qualified for all vices."

The Golden Text

"The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty." It has always been the will of God that mankind should work. While Adam and Eve were still in the garden of Eden, and in fellowship with their Maker, they were charged with dressing the garden and keeping it. (Gen. 2: 15.) And then, after the fall, Jehovah said to the man, "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 thou shalt 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 to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Gen. 3: 17-19.) We all know that work would have been much more pleasant, had man remained faithful to the Lord; but that fact does not alter the truth that it is God's will for man to earn his livelihood, and meet his obligations by work. "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat." (2 Thess. 3: 10.)

But the man, or the woman, who is a drunkard and/or a glutton, is mentally handicapped and lacks the power of co-ordination; and cannot, for these and other reasons, work as he should. No employer wants such a person to work for him, and no one in that condition can do his own work, that is, he cannot carry on his own business. And when we consider the fact that all normal people should be gainfully employed, it is

easy to see how easy it is for the drunkard and/or the glutton to come to poverty. The context in which the words of the golden text are found, reads as follows:

"Be not among winebibbers, among gluttonous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty; and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags." (Prov. 23: 20, 21.)

Some one has pointed out that magistrates and prophets, in every age of the world, have been concerned with, and have had a horror of strong drink, as they attempted to govern and guide men in the ways in which they should travel. Isaiah exposes as powerfully as any of them did, in what the peculiar fatality of drinking consists. Wine is a mocker, by the moral incredulity which it produces, thereby enabling men to hide from themselves the spiritual and material effects of over-indulgence in it. No one who has ever been concerned with people, who were slowly falling from moderate to immoderate drinking, can mistake Isaiah's meaning, when he says, "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that tarry late into the night, till wine inflame them! And the harp and the lute, the tabret and the pipe, and wine, are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of Jehovah, neither have they considered the operation of his hands." (Isa. 5: 11, 12.) Nothing kills the conscience like steady drinking to a little excess; and religion, even while the conscience is alive, acts on it only as an opiate. These are terrible truths, but they need to be considered and heeded with all diligence.

The Text Explained

The Impending Doom of Samaria
(Isa. 28: 1-4)

Woe to the crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim, and to the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley of them that are overcome with wine! Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one; as a tempest of hail, a destroying storm, as a tempest of mighty waters overflow-

ing, will he cast down to the earth with the hand. The crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot: and the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be as the first-ripe fig before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.

The kingdom of Israel, that is, the united kingdom of God's people, was

torn asunder as the result of the sins of Solomon; and the two new kingdoms which came into being, namely, the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, continued simultaneously for two hundred and fifty-four years—from 975 B.C. to 721 B.C. The ministry of Isaiah took place during the latter part of that period, ending perhaps during the reign of the notoriously wicked king of Judah, Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah. All of this means that both of the kingdoms, mentioned above, were in existence during the time Isaiah prophesied; and while his work, generally speaking, had to do with the southern kingdom, it is also true that he often denounced the sins of Israel, the northern kingdom.

The kingdom of Israel was the richer of the two realms, and the figures of speech which Isaiah employed with reference to that portion of God's people, was due to the strategic and prosperous conditions of the northern province. The land of Palestine, the home of Israel and Judah, was a land which flowed with milk and honey; and it likewise was a land of orchards and vineyards, to change the figure somewhat, all of which meant that the country was potentially a land of great plenty and prosperity. Isaiah is noted for his lofty language; and it was used in the instance now before us to describe the fading beauty of the rapidly deteriorating kingdom of Israel.

Isaiah was keenly aware of the economic and social significance of intemperance and unwarranted luxury; and he warned all of God's people regarding such sins. As the prophet viewed the situation, worth and personal ability were trusts from God, to be faithfully administered for the glory of God and the welfare of society. These truths were clearly uppermost in the prophet's mind, when he denounced the people of his own land who manifested a zeal in satisfying their own appetites, as may be seen by reading again the passage quoted above, namely, Isaiah 5: 11, 12.

We are told that the term "alcohol" comes from two Arabic words, *el gohul*, which means the *great evil spirit*; and if that is true, then that substance is certainly well named. It was an evil spirit which took pos-

session of men who consumed it; and the result was that they were no longer their own masters. And what was true then, is just as true now; for no one who places himself under the influence of those evil spirits can control himself. The prodigal son of Luke 15 allowed other influences to dominate his being, until he was no longer in control of himself. (Luke 15: 13, 17.)

The destruction which Isaiah had reference to in this section of the lesson text, was that which the Assyrians wrought upon the kingdom of Israel. It was the result of their gross unfaithfulness; and one of the chief sins of which they were guilty, was that of intemperance. That, along with their lack of knowledge, resulted in their captivity. "Therefore my people are gone into captivity for lack of knowledge; and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude are parched with thirst. Therefore Sheol hath enlarged its desire, and opened its mouth without measure; and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth among them, descend into it. And the mean man is bowed down, and the great man is humbled, and the eyes of the lofty are humbled: but Jehovah of hosts is exalted in justice, and God the Holy One is sanctified in righteousness. Then shall the lambs feed as in their pasture, and the waste places of the fat ones shall wanderers eat." (Isa. 5: 13-17; cf. Hos. 4: 6.)

It was not because the people of Israel could not have known better; but when they placed themselves under the control of strong drink, their senses were dulled, and they were brought under the dominion of another "spirit." This is still true of those who give themselves over to those things and influences, which are not pleasing to God. No one can be a slave to, or even a frequent user of, alcoholic beverages, and still be pleasing to the heavenly Father. When will responsible people learn this lesson?

A Gracious Promise to the Remnant
(Isa. 28: 5, 6)

In that day will Jehovah of hosts become a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people; and a spirit of justice to

him that sitteth in judgment, and strength to them that turn back the battle at the gate.

The reference in the first section of the lesson text was clearly to the people of the northern kingdom. Ephraim was the leading tribe of that portion of God's people, just as Judah was of the southern kingdom. The time was rapidly approaching when Israel would be removed from their homeland by the Assyrians, and their national existence as a kingdom would come to an end. The southern kingdom, on the other hand, would continue for another one hundred and thirty-four years, before the Babylonians, who succeeded the Assyrians as the dominant power of the world, took the people of Judah into captivity in 587 B.C., and thereby brought the southern realm to an end.

There is an obvious contrast between that which is said in the first two sections of the lesson for today; and many Bible students are of the opinion that it is between the "fading" kingdom of Israel, and the "continuing" kingdom to the south. And so, in contrast with "the fading flower of his glorious beauty," that is, of Israel, Jehovah himself would become "a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty," unto the "residue of his people," that is, of Judah. Jehovah also promised to be "a spirit of justice to him that sitteth in judgment, and strength to them that turn back the battle at the gate." This is to say that when judges and other leaders of the people are willing to do that which is right, they can always depend upon the Lord for whatever strength and help which they may need. The primary reference was probably to that which took place during the righteous reign of Hezekiah; but the principle is applicable to all ages of the world. (Cf. Isa. 26: 3, 4; Phil. 4: 13, 19.)

But to whomsoever "the residue of his people" may refer, we know that it is never necessary for people to do wrong, just because others, even the majority, may be following a sinful course. But that is a lesson that many of the Lord's people today have apparently failed to learn. Instead, there are many people who seem to think that it is all right for them to engage in ques-

tionable practice, because nearly everybody else is doing it. People are not going to be judged by what others do; but each man is going to answer for himself. Paul says, "Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him. For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. 5: 9, 10.)

God has always promised to be with his people, regardless of how small the number may be, if they will do their best to serve him. The divine promise has always been to "him that overcometh." Jesus himself, in his letter which he authorized John to send to the angel of the church in Sardis, said that he had "found no works of thine perfected before my God," which implies that nothing which had been undertaken had been finished or brought to completion. That, of course, was not pleasing to the Lord; but it did not mean that every member of the church in that city had to do likewise. Jesus said, in that same letter, "But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy." (See Rev. 3: 1-6.) The man with the one talent had the same kind of responsibility for it, that the man with five talents had for his. (Read Matt. 25: 14-30.)

But the Wicked Will Always Be
Condemned

(Isa. 28: 7-13)

And even these reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they stagger with strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.

It would be difficult to think of a more revolting scene, than the one which Isaiah described; but if that kind of conduct was true of the best of the leaders in Jerusalem, what must have been the state of affairs, as it respected those who were not directly concerned with the temple worship and religious teaching!

Jehovah gave specific instruction with reference to the consumption of wine by priests (cf. Lev. 10: 9; Ezek. 44: 21); but when people are determined to have their own way regarding their desires and appetites, it makes little difference with them what the Lord has said; and this is just as true today, as it was during the time of Isaiah. Thomas Jefferson once said that "the habit of intemperance by men in office has occasioned more injury to the public, and more trouble to me, than all other causes; and, were I to commence my administration again, the first question I would ask respecting a candidate for office, would be, 'Does he use ardent spirits?'"

A scene like that which Isaiah described in the very center of Judah's religious activities, would hardly be found in the church today; but it is not difficult to find religious leaders in this age, who are not only "social drinkers" themselves, but who look with displeasure upon those godly men and women who insist that God expects his people, and especially those who are leaders in his work, to be careful to abstain from any practice which is calculated to bring reproach upon the church and the name of the Lord.

The whole question of the Christian's viewpoint regarding the use of strong drink as a beverage is, basically, one of attitude. "For as he thinketh within himself, so is he" (Prov. 23: 7.). If a person is motivated by a spirit of selfishness, then he may easily persuade himself that there is no harm in the practice of moderate drinking; but if his whole aim is to please God (see again 2 Cor. 5: 9, 10), then he will allow nothing to come into his life concerning which he cannot, in all good conscience, ask the Father to bless him while engaging in its practice. (Cf. Col. 3: 17; 1 Cor. 10: 31-33.)

Whom will he teach knowledge? and whom will he make to understand the message? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts? For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little.

The verses just quoted contain the drunken reply of the scoffers (see verse 14) to Isaiah's condemnation

of them. It was as if they had retorted, "Here he is, the great teacher! And whom does he think he is going to teach? children? mere infants who are drawn away from the breasts to hear him? You and your eternal repetition of lessons designed only for children—just a little at the time!" Adam Clarke, in commenting on this passage, says, "They treat God's method of dealing with them, and warning them by his prophets, with contempt and derision. What, say they, doth he treat us as mere infants just weaned? doth he teach us like little children, perpetually inculcating the same elementary lessons, the mere rudiments of knowledge?"

Both Jesus and Paul encountered the same attitude on the part of the people, whom they tried to teach God's will. (Cf. Matt. 13: 10-15; Heb. 5: 11-14.) And any faithful teacher of God's word today, knows that such is by no means uncommon in our own generation. There are people on every side today who have to be taught in the simplest fashion, if at all; and many who are in dire need of having their attention called to God's will concerning them, have only contempt and derision for those Who are attempting to get them to see that which God wants them to do. But the faithful teacher of God's word has no other choice in the matter, as may be seen by reading the following scriptures, namely, 2 Timothy 4: 1-5; 1 Corinthians 16: 10, 11; Titus 2: 15.

Nay, but by men of strange lips and with another tongue will he speak to this people; to whom he said. This is the rest, give ye rest to him what is weary; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. Therefore shall the word of Jehovah be unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little; that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

Isaiah, being a faithful prophet of God, was unmoved, as he listened to the contemptuous derision of the scorners, who sat at the tables of filth before him; but when they had finished, he calmly told them that they would indeed hear God's message to them. However, as he reminded them, it would be presented

by a different messenger, a messenger whose speech they would not understand; for their teacher would come from another country, namely, the Assyrians and the Babylonians. Paul quoted this language in his letter to the Corinthians, as he sought to teach them the truth regarding the use of tongues. (1 Cor. 14: 21.)

People may make light of the simple method, which God employs in teaching them, and they may scoff at the repetition which the teacher employs; but any informed

person knows that the secret of successful teaching is that of repetition and review. That has been God's method throughout the ages; and if we are ever to learn to be like him, we must accept his method of teaching and learning. The same method which the drunken people of Isaiah's time scornfully ridiculed, was employed by their captors in a foreign land; and while the process was much more painful, than that which was employed by the prophets, its success was unmistakable.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is the scope and purpose of this lesson?
Discuss some of the evils which come from the use of alcoholic beverages.
Why is this such a problem today, both in the church and out of it?

The Golden Text

What has always been God's will for man regarding work? Give reasons for your answer.
How does Paul deal with this issue?
Why will the drunkard and the glutton come to poverty?
In what context are the words of the golden text found?
How did Isaiah show the fatality of drinking alcoholic beverages?
Why does the drunkard have such little conscience regarding drinking?

The Impending Doom of Samaria

What was the political situation of God's people at the time of this lesson?
When did Isaiah prophesy and to whom did the most of his work relate?
Who were the drunkards of Ephraim?
How did Isaiah address them and what of the appropriateness of his language?
Why did the prophet regard drunkenness as being contrary to God's will for his people?
What is the origin and meaning of the term "alcohol"?
What destruction did Isaiah warn the people that was coming upon them?
Why didn't the people of Israel realize the

situation into which they were being plunged?

A Gracious Promise to the Remnant

Who were "the residue of his people"?
Give reasons for your answer.
What contrast did Isaiah present in the first two sections of the lesson text?
In what sense did "Jehovah of hosts become a crown of glory" to the people of Judah?
How long did the southern kingdom continue after Israel's captivity?
What promise did Jehovah make to the people of Judah and when and how was it fulfilled?
Why is it never necessary for one to sin when others around him are doing wrong?
In what way did Jesus deal with this question?

But the Wicked Will Always Be Condemned

Describe the scene which Isaiah portrayed in the first part of this section of the lesson text.
What special lesson should we learn from it?
What basic issue is clearly set forth in this part of the lesson text?
What response did the drunken leaders of Judah make to Isaiah's remarks?
How did Jesus and Paul deal with similar situations?
What responsibility does the faithful teacher of God's word have in this respect?
How was Isaiah affected by their response and what did he say in reply?
Why is God's way of teaching and learning always the best?
How did the people of Israel and Judah eventually learn their lesson?

Lesson III—July 18, 1971

THE MAN OF SORROW

Lesson Text

Isa. 53: 1-12

1 Who hath believed our message? and to whom hath the arm of Je-ho'-vah been revealed?

2 For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

3 He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Je-ho'-vah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who *among them* considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke *was due*?

9 And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it pleased Je-ho'-vah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Je-ho'-vah shall prosper in his hand.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many; and he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree.*" (1 Pet. 2: 24.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Phil. 2: 6-11.

Daily Bible Readings

July 12. M.	The Suffering Servant—Christ (Isa. 53: 1-12)
July 13. T.	The Atonement in Type (Ex. 12: 1-11)
July 14. W.	Significance of Christ's Sufferings (Rom. 5: 6-11)
July 15. T.	Offering of Christ's Blood (Heb. 9: 11-14)
July 16. F.	Access by the Blood of Jesus (Heb. 10: 19-25)
July 17. S.	The Blood of the Covenant (Heb. 10: 26-31)
July 18. S.	Partakers of Christ's Sufferings (1 Pet. 4: 12-19)

TIME.—712 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Isaiah and the people of the Lord.

Introduction

It appears safe to say that the chapter from which the lesson text is taken is the best known portion of

the entire Book of Isaiah. Practically any one who reads the Bible at all, is acquainted, at

least to some extent, with this wonderful passage of scripture. When the evangelist Philip, in obedience to the instruction of the angel of the Lord, arrived at the way which went down from Jerusalem to Gaza, he saw a man riding along the road in a chariot, who was reading Isaiah the prophet. "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. 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.

The man who was reading the passage from Isaian, did not know of whom the prophet was speaking, and inquired of Philip about it; and it was from this scripture that the evangelist "preached unto him Jesus," with the result that the Ethiopian eunuch was converted to Christ. (Read Acts 8: 26-40.)

Jesus Christ, of course, is the central personality in the Bible; and it was God's plan that he become the Saviour of the race, which had become alienated from its Maker and Preserver. The very idea of the work of such a Redeemer had its

origin in "divine grief"; and that made it inevitable that the Savior be a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Those who are familiar with the gospel records are aware of the fact that sorrow often filled the heart of Jesus, while he was here among men. The Lord never wept for himself, nor did he ever encourage others to weep for him; but it is a recorded truth that his greatest grief was for those who were lost in sin. Who does not remember that which is said regarding his feelings toward Jerusalem? (See Luke 19: 41-44.)

One of the greatest statements regarding the Lord's mission to the earth is found in 2 Corinthians 5: 21, namely, "Him Who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." This passage presents one of the clearest pictures of the heinousness of sin, to be found anywhere. Its vile aspect is so great, as to require the sacrifice of the sinless Son of God for its atonement. God, in effect, says to us, I sent my beloved Son to take your place, and to offer him as a sacrifice for sin in your stead. The unprecedented sacrifice of Jesus for the sins of the world propitiated God, and made the salvation of all mankind possible. (Cf. Rom. 3: 25, 26; Heb. 2: 9.) And so, in the words of Mrs. Frank A. Breck, There was one who was willing to die in my stead,

That a soul so unworthy might live;
And the path to the cross he was willing to tread,

All the sins of my life to forgive.

The Golden Text

"Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree." The words just quoted are found in this immediate context: "For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness;

by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were going astray like sheep; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." (1 Pet. 2: 21-25.)

The New Testament sets forth three aspects of the cross of Christ, namely, (1) as a sacrifice for sin, (2) as a revelation of God, and (3) as a means for acceptable motivation. Each of these phases should be carefully considered, if we are to get the full meaning of the cross; but inasmuch as only the first is directly related to words of the golden text, we shall limit our consider-

ation at this time to that facet of the question. The vicarious death of Jesus is a fact, if the New Testament record is to be accepted; and his one sacrifice was sufficient for the atonement of the sins of all mankind, so far as the divine side is concerned. The inspired record affirms that God accepted this full, perfect, and complete sacrifice on the part of his Son; and it is also a revealed truth that the love of God could never have reached us without it. (Cf. Rom. 5: 6-8.)

When Peter penned the context which contains the golden text for today's study, he was recording that which he himself had actually witnessed. The buffeting, the mocking, and the crucifixion of Jesus, all were involved in the bearing of the sins

of the human race in his body and soul. And all of this was done, as The Interpreter's Bible points out, so that by this mighty and vicarious death we might enter into a new and eternal relationship, for which Jesus lived and died, thereby putting an end to the world of sin. The apostle Peter's words are no cold systematic credo concerning the atonement, which stands by itself, isolated from life. Instead, he scrupulously relates reality to action, truth to life, and the work of the atonement to the daily work and attitude of the redeemed child of God. The life of the Christian is not only begun by this great Redeemer (cf. Heb. 5: 9; 2: 10); it is also directed by him. (Matt. 28: 20.)

The Text Explained

A Man of Sorrows
(Isa. 53: 1-3)

Who hath believed our message? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed? For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not.

When the apostle Paul wrote his great treatise to the Roman brethren, he quoted from Isaiah 53: 1, as he sought to show that the responsibility for Israel's rejection by Jehovah was clearly and unmistakably their own. (See Rom. 10: 16.) Man's failure to believe that which God has proclaimed, has always been at the root of all his troubles. (Cf. Gen. 2: 15-17; Heb. 3: 16-4: 7.) Isaiah and other prophets of Jehovah, including John the Baptist, foretold the coming of the Messiah; but it is a demonstrable fact that relatively few of the people who heard their message, believed that which they said. Not only did the prophets speak for God regarding the coming of the Redeemer of the race, their message was also confirmed by Jehovah's mighty arm, that is, by the signs and wonders which he permitted to be revealed

for the confirmation of the word. (Cf. Psalm 77: 11-20.) Both the message and the arm of Jehovah, in the passage now before us, have particular reference to Christ.

The fact that the Messiah grew up as a tender plant is, in the opinion of Matthew Henry, an implication that he grew "silently and insensibly, and without any noise. . . . Christ rose as a tender plant, which one would have thought, might easily have been crushed." The growing of a shoot or branch from a root in the ground, suggests the idea that it comes from something which is apparently dead. It had been hundreds of years since a son of David had sat upon the throne of Israel; and, for all practical purposes, so far as men were concerned, the house of that patriarch was dead, or at least in a greatly decayed state. But God had long ago promised that he would raise up one to sit upon that throne; and his promise never fails. (Cf. Acts 2: 29-31; 2 Pet. 3: 8.)

The fact that Jesus possessed no physical attractions, such as people usually desire in their heroes and leaders, was a great stumblingblock to the Jews. They apparently expected that there would be some uncommon beauty in the face and person of the incarnate Deity, which would charm the eye, attract the heart, and raise the expectation of all who should see him. The lack of

all the physical attractions, however, was probably providentially designed, because of the weakness of the human race in adoring such features; and the same principle probably accounts for the lack of worldly grandeur with reference to the church and the worship which God has ordained for his people. (Cf. 1 Cor. 1: 26ff.)

The term "despised," in the expression "He was despised, and rejected of men," carries with it the idea of belittling, looking down upon, disregarding, or holding in contempt; and the reason why people felt that way about Jesus, was the result of their disappointment in him. However, the question which should concern us today, is that we do not fall into the same mistake. There are many ways in which people can despise and reject Christ, as, for example, (1) by yielding to the fear of unpopularity, along with the desire to have the praise of men (John 12: 42, 43); (2) by refusing to accept the word of the Lord (John 12: 49-50); (3) by refusing to suffer with him (Rom. 8: 17); and (4) by a failure to relieve the needs of the Lord's people (Matt. 25: 31-46).

The expression "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," has become a classic phrase with us; and no one can read the life of Christ, as set forth by the gospel narrators of the New Testament, without realizing something of the truthfulness of the statement. Jesus was primarily a man of sorrows, in order that he might save us from our sins; and no man who considers this fact as he should, can remain indifferent toward him. Christ came to bless men, help them in their helpless condition; and yet they hide their face from him, and esteem him not. How great must be the love of the Lord for sinful men! (Cf. Rom. 5: 6-8.) Some one has pointed out that it is the humanity of Christ which constitutes the force of his claim upon the hearts of men. Our very nature calls for a high priest who is touched by the feelings of our infirmities; and those who stop to think, will have little trouble in realizing that the very reason which sometimes makes Christ despised and rejected of men, gives him his real power over their lives. He can,

by his own humbling experience, enter into the feelings of any man, however low his station in life may be.

The Speaker's Bible, in commenting on this aspect of the Suffering Servant, notes that it is this which gives him the sole right to claim the title, Son of man; for he did indeed enter into, shared, and realized in himself, our human needs and affections and pains. The natural human being, left to himself, would think that the Messiah ought to dwell in high places, and that he Should have come to the earth in great glory, and attended by legions of angels. It would also be natural for them to think that he should dwell among, and converse with, the wise, the noble, and the good. (Cf. Matt. 9: 10-13; Luke 15: 1, 2.) But when we consider the facts in the case, it will not be difficult for us to see that he was greater and better than any of our fondest dreams, in that he came amid the poor and humble, and called to himself those who were laboring and heavy laden. When he took upon himself the form of a servant, he did more for men than could have been done in any other way. He made it easy for people in all walks of life to come to him in their needs, and made them feel that they could talk with him, as a man talks to his closest friend.

His Vicarious Sufferings

(Isa. 53: 4-9)

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The Messiah, who was despised and rejected by men, has borne for them that which they could not possibly have carried alone. He was himself brought to sorrow, suffering, and shame, and was condemned as a malefactor; all because he chose to carry the load which man should have carried, but could not. And yet the people for whom

he was suffering so much, thought that God was punishing him for his own sins! The wonder of the cross is both amazing and inexplicable. When God sought to redeem the human race, he brought home to lost souls the real nature of his love for them. He came in the Person of his Son to die upon a cross for them. This vicarious sacrifice revealed not only his love for them, but also the real nature and significance of sin. It is a fact, worthy of our most careful consideration, that love's method of dealing with sin is the only means by which it can be completely and eternally abolished.

The section of the lesson text now before us gives us a picture of the suffering Messiah, along with the embodiment of the principle of the innocent suffering for the guilty. Some people who read this record are moved to ask, Why should God punish the righteous for the sinner; but that is a part of the constitution of the world in which we live. It is happening every day. It is absolutely essential that the innocent suffer for the guilty, not through any fault of their own; but simply from the circumstances in which they are necessarily situated. For example, a godly mother suffers for a vicious son; an upright man must suffer for the wickedness of those who are nearest to him; and inasmuch as Christ put himself in our place, he was made to suffer, "the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." (See 1 Pet. 3: 18; read also 1 Pet. 2: 21-25.)

H. H. Farmer points out that God's purpose in all of this is to win the hearts of lost people to himself; and he asks, "Can he do that?" and then notes that if he can, he is able to establish his kingdom, and his power is vindicated. Dr. Farmer, looking at the picture before the vicarious suffering was accomplished, answers his own question by saying, "I believe he can, and I draw that faith from the cross of Christ." Obviously, he goes on to say, there is only one method of winning such a victory, when methods of force are ruled out; and that is simply to love—"to love so passionately, so utterly that even the most brutal and seemingly triumphant violence of sin leaves it still

love unchanged, except in the increasing agony of its disappointed desire to bless and to redeem. . . . The weakness of a God of love is stronger than men."

Isaiah continues his great portrait of the suffering Messiah, and A. R. Fausset notes that "the innocent was punished *as if* guilty, that the guilty might be rewarded *as if* innocent." But we must always remember that God was working out his purpose at the cost of infinite pain; or, to express the same thing in another way, his love was moving to its final victory through sorrow. Rabbi Solomon notes that "there are three ways in which a man expresses his deep sorrow: the man on the lowest level cries; the man on the second level is silent; the man on the highest knows how to turn his sorrow into song." But such a lesson could only be learned from a source higher than himself. This was exactly what Jesus did, as may be seen from Hebrews 12: 2, namely, "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." The going astray like sheep, and every one turning to his own way, implies the apostasy of men, both as a race, and as individuals. (Cf. Rom. 3: 9, 10, 23; Gal. 3: 22.)

He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due? And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

The verb from which we have "oppressed" literally means to have the payment of a debt sternly exacted, and then to oppress in general. The idea here is probably that the suffering of the Messiah, involved the exaction of the full penalty of our sins; and yet in all the suffering and humiliation which he

endured, the suffering One, like the helpless lamb and sheep, opened not his mouth. (See again 1 Pet. 2: 21-23.) How different it is with us! We are often wont to heap abuse upon those who oppose us, at the slightest provocation. May God have mercy upon us!

The reference in verse 8 is evidently to the Lord's trial and condemnation. He offered no resistance; and, although his judges declared him innocent, yet that judgment was set aside, and the vicarious sufferer was mercilessly executed as a common criminal. He had no sin for which he should have suffered; his entire affliction was for others; and yet few, if any, realize that his death was a vicarious one, that is, he was dying as a substitute for others. The majority of his contemporaries considered him a sinner, and thought that he was dying for his own transgressions. (Cf. Acts 2: 23, 36; 2 Cor. 5: 21.)

The idea that his grave was made with the wicked, probably grew out of the fact that he was put to death with two malefactors. Those two men were naturally expected to be buried as such; and inasmuch as those responsible for his death considered Jesus as a sinful man too, the implication was that they also expected him to be buried among the wicked. However, instead of the Lord's being buried with the wicked, his tomb was with a rich man, who was both honorable and influential; he was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court. Jesus had done no wrong and did not deserve to be buried with the wicked; and it is a recorded fact that he was not interred.

The Reward of His Sacrifice

(Isa. 53: 10-12)

Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many; and

he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore, will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

The sovereign law of Jehovah had been broken, and the only way to uphold his honor, was for a suitable sacrifice to be made; and that meant that it was absolutely essential that a sinless person would have to become an offering for sin. That sinless person was God's only begotten Son; and it was he who died to satisfy the demands of the broken law. His "seed" was evidently his spiritual posterity, and his days were prolonged by his resurrection from the dead. The pleasure of Jehovah prospers in his hand, as he continues to carry on his mediatorial work, that is, his continuous work of redemption. The probable meaning of seeing "the travail of his soul," and being *satisfied*, is that Jesus would see the fruits resulting from his sacrifice, and that would amply "repay" him for all the suffering which he endured. (See again Heb. 12: 2.) Or, it could mean that Jehovah himself would be satisfied with the atonement. No one can be saved today, apart from the knowledge of Christ. (Cf. John 6: 44, 45; Rom. 1: 16, 17.)

The figures used in verse 12 are apparently taken from the practice of army leaders and their men, after defeating or driving out the enemy. The spoil was taken and properly divided. (Cf. Col. 2: 15.) The signal honors came to Christ as a result of his great sacrifice, as stated by Paul in Philippians 2: 5-11. The redemptive work of Christ began with his suffering and is being continued in heaven. (Cf. Heb. 7: 25; 9: 24.) Adam Clarke notes that "in this chapter the incarnation, preaching, humiliation, rejection, sufferings, death, atonement, resurrection, and mediation of Jesus Christ are all predicted, together with the prevalence of his gospel, and the extension of his kingdom through all ages."

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is the chapter from which the lesson text is taken so well and so favorably known?
What use did a New Testament preacher make of the passage?
In what way is divine redemption related to grief?
Why did Jesus come to the earth? Give reasons for your answer.

The Golden Text

In what context are the words of the golden text found?
What three aspects of the cross of Christ are set forth in the New Testament?
How do we know that the death of Christ is sufficient for the salvation of the lost?
In what way was Peter related to the facts involved in the Lord's supreme sacrifice?
How are the people who are saved related to the Saviour?

A Man of Sorrows

What use did Paul make of the opening part of the text now before us?
Why do people fail to believe the gospel message?
In what way did Jehovah re-inforce the preaching of his word?
What are some of the pertinent facts which surrounded the coming of Christ, as set forth by Isaiah?
What possible reason is given for his lack of physical attractions?

How can people today continue to "despise" the Son of God?
Why was Jesus a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief?
What effect does all of this have on his relationship with the lost race?
Why did Jesus have the right to call himself the "Son of man"?

His Vicarious Sufferings

What was involved in the sacrifice which Christ made for the human race?
How did the people who saw him die feel about that which was done to him?
Why is the cross of Christ both amazing and inexplicable?
What is the meaning of "vicarious" suffering and death?
Discuss the principle involved in the innocent's suffering for the guilty.
Why was the vicarious death of Christ essential to God's purpose, and how did it enable him to accomplish it?
In what way did Jesus regard his suffering for the sins of the world?
In what way, and for what purpose, was Jesus oppressed?
In what way does Isaiah describe his suffering and death?
What was said about the grave of Jesus and what actually happened?

The Reward of His Sacrifice

How alone could atonement be made for the sins of the world?
What did Isaiah say regarding the One who was willing to die for others?
What is the pleasure of Jehovah which prospers in the hand of Christ?
Who is "satisfied" and about what?

Lesson IV—July 25, 1971

A MESSAGE OF MERCY

Lesson Text

Isa. 55: 1-11

1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

2 Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

3 Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

4 Behold, I have given him for a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples.

5 Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and a nation

that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of Je-ho'-vah thy God, and for the Holy One of Is'-ra-el; for he hath glorified thee.

6 Seek ye Je-ho'-vah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near:

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Je-ho'-vah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Je-ho'-vah.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and re-
turneth not thither, but watereth the
earth, and maketh it bring forth and
bud, and giveth seed to the sower
and bread to the eater;

11 So shall my word be that goeth
forth out of my mouth: it shall not
return unto me void, but it shall ac-
complish that which I please, and it
shall prosper in the thing whereto I
sent it.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come."* (Rev. 22: 17.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 11: 25-30.

Daily Bible Readings

July 19.	M.	.....	A Righteous Reign (Isa. 32: 1-20)
July 20.	T.	.....	A Gracious Reign (Isa. 33: 13-24)
July 21.	W.	.....	A Happy Reign (Isa. 25: 1-10)
July 22.	T.	.....	A Merciful Reign (2 Sam. 7: 1-15)
July 23.	F.	.....	A Peaceful Reign (Isa. 2: 1-4)
July 24.	S.	.....	A Beautiful Reign (Isa. 62: 1-3)
July 25.	S.	.....	A Heavenly Reign (Isa. 66: 1, 2)

TIME.—712 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Isaiah and the people of the Lord.

Introduction

The first part of the chapter from which the text for today's lesson is taken, has been called the poor man's market. It has been further described as "a plain market, even the most pleasant, most substantial, and most glorious market that ever was." And in the language of The Great Texts of the Bible, "And indeed, when you come to think of it, you have here the strangest kind of market that you can conceive, in which every maxim of the merchantman is set at naught; in which the only payment is made by the seller, and all the gain is to the buyers, and in which goods, the most precious, the most costly you can think of, are given away for naught." No wonder the text for today's study is referred to as a message of mercy!

The words of the prophet Isaiah, which we are to study today, were spoken more than a hundred years before the fall of the kingdom of Judah and the beginning of the Babylonian captivity; but they are, nevertheless, addressed to the people as they would be in their exile in faraway Babylon. The fact is that much of the prophesy of Isaiah was addressed to the captives, during their long stay in captivity; and it is for this reason that the message of the prophet was fulfilled (1) in the return of the Jews from their captivity, and (2) in the coming of the Messiah and his reign.

(Cf. Isa. 35: 1-10.) This dual application must constantly be kept in mind, if we are to grasp the significance of the prophet's message.

Babylon was one of the great trade centers of the world, and the experiences of the people of Judah, in that environment, made a deep impression upon them. We are not to understand that the captives were confined to narrow quarters, surrounded by barbed wire and other formidable barricades. There were, of course, restrictions upon their liberty; but they, apparently, were allowed to mingle fairly freely with the people of that area, and to engage in the commercial transactions of the day. It seems likely that it was during their stay in Babylon that the Jewish people developed their financial genius, and acquired their mercantile habits; both of which have contributed alike to their glory and to their shame, throughout their subsequent history. It appears that many of the exiles prospered to the extent, that they lost all desire to return to the homeland, when the opportunity was offered to them; and chose to remain in the land of their prosperity. That, however, was not true of all of them; and it was to those who did not find satisfaction in Babylon, that the prophet spoke of those things which alone can give life to and satisfy the soul.

The Golden Text

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." The words just quoted are found in this context: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely." And one who reads the Scriptures carefully and thoughtfully, will have no difficulty in seeing that salvation is an individual matter. Every person who is saved must respond, consciously and deliberately, to the gospel message. There is no such thing as "group salvation," without personal responsibility on the part of each individual constituting the assembly. This truth is forcefully illustrated by the calling of penitent Israel from their dispersions, namely, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah will beat off his fruit from the flood of the River unto the brook of Egypt; and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel." (Isa. 27: 12.)

"One by one" not only is the manner in which people in all the world are saved; but the expression also emphasizes the importance of the individual. The gospel is proclaimed to the masses; but it is the individual who responds to it. All who hear the Lord's invitation may respond to it, but they must do so individually. It is always "he that will, let him take the water of life freely." The lesson text which we are to study today, and which the golden text epitomizes, contains one of the clearest invitations to salva-

tion, to be found in the entire Bible; and this is due, apparently, to the fact that Isaiah was, first and foremost, a gospel prophet. He uttered the call to the lost; but since the ultimate fulfillment of the call was the invitation of the Saviour himself, the prophet's utterance could be nothing short of great and majestic.

If people could be brought to realize just how much the Lord loves them, they would immediately accept his offer to bless them. And it was Jesus himself who gave us some of the clearest and most beautiful pictures of that love, which are on record. Behold the father, as he anxiously awaits the return of his prodigal son! Consider the preparations which were made, and the things which were done, to welcome him back and cause him to feel at home! Not only was he received joyfully by his father, but he was restored to his original place as a beloved son. The parable which Jesus spoke was but a portrait of the heavenly Father, who wants all of his wayward people to come back to him, be elevated to sonship, and live with him, both in this world and in that which is to come. (Cf. the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin—Luke 15: 1ff.) And not only does the Father want his people to return to him; he has also made every conceivable sacrifice and preparation, to induce them to accept his offer of restored sonship. This is indeed a message of mercy; and great will be the responsibility of those who reject it!

The Text Explained

The Call to the Spiritually

Dissatisfied

(Isa. 55: 1-5)

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye. buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live:

and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and a nation that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of Jehovah thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

The background against which Isaiah spoke the words of the text as already pointed out, was the Babylonian exile; and the great invitation which the prophet voiced.

should be understood in that light. It has already been noted that many of the captives had become absorbed in their commercial and other activities, and were not especially interested in the religious hopes of the more pious of their brethren. But there were also many in Babylon who were not satisfied with their spiritual situation; and it appears that the prophet had them especially in mind. The terms water, bread, milk, and wine were symbols of life with God. They were not mere luxuries, in their literal application to one's physical well-being; but were absolutely essential to life itself. Furthermore, these necessary items had to be purchased, by the average person; and any one who was unable to buy them, would be in great distress.

But Isaiah speaks a message of great hope to the people; and we should remember that his words have a twofold application, namely, (1) to the captives who were (or would be) in Babylonian exile; and (2) to those who are lost in sin in this age of the world. The prophet proclaims that those in need, and who are dissatisfied with their spiritual condition, may have everything which is essential to salvation, "without money and without price." This is but a picture of the wonderful blessings, which Christ came to make possible for the human race. (Cf. Eph. 1: 3.) And if they are essential to our spiritual well-being, why then do we spend our energies and talents for that which cannot satisfy?

The three great spiritual needs of the human race are (1) propitiation, (2) pardon, and (3) purity; and that is precisely the picture which Isaiah presents in the general context, from which the lessons we are studying are taken. The *propitiation*, that is, that which appeases or renders favorable, is set forth in chapter 53, as we saw in last week's lesson; and this was accomplished when Jesus died for the lost, the righteous for the unrighteous. Paul says, "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5: 21.) Man was a sinner, in a hopeless condition. God's great love came forward with a plan, which would sat-

isfy the demands of the broken law, and would enable him to save all men who were willing to accept pardon at his hands. After showing that the law of Moses was wholly inadequate in this respect (Rom. 3: 19, 20), the apostle Paul sets forth the scheme of human redemption in the following words:

"But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God: for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." (Rom. 3: 21-26.) This is what Paul calls the law of faith, and it is opened to any one, whether Jew or Gentile, who is willing to accept the Lord's offer of salvation. The way to *pardon* and *purity* is set forth in the chapter from which our lesson for today is taken, as we shall see in this study.

When people are willing to listen to the Lord, and do that which he commands, the blessings which he will bestow upon them, are unlimited. The "everlasting covenant," that is, the "sure mercies of David," have reference to the coming of the Messiah, and the kingdom over which he reigns. This, of course, involves the religious, rather than the political, leadership of David. Jesus was the son of David, according to the flesh; and in him were fulfilled the promises made to David, regarding the future of his kingdom. The kingdom over which Christ rules is also his church, the function of which is to bear witness to the truth (cf. 1 Tim. 3: 14, 15), rather than to force obedience to the gospel of Christ. The effective weapon of the Lord's people, in their endeavor to turn others into righteous relationships, is the sword of the Spirit; and there is nothing

more potent and certain of success, when properly used, than this divinely ordained instrument. The beauty and power of the gospel message, and the gifts and graces which Christ bestows upon his people, both glorify the church and furnish all the attractions which are needed, to cause the Gentiles to run unto her. (Cf. Isa. 2: 2-4; 60: 4-9; Zech. 8: 23; John 12: 32; Acts 15: 15-18.)

The Time for Action and the Way
Made Plain
(Isa. 55: 6-9)

Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

The words just quoted may very properly be called the gospel of repentance and forgiveness; and it is in this section of the lesson text, that we see the second great need of the human race, namely, that of pardon. The Scriptures plainly and specifically teach that all men have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God (cf. Rom. 3: 10, 23); they also declare that salvation has been made possible for all who will seek the Lord. Jesus told his disciples, and us through inspired men (see 2 Tim. 2: 2), to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16: 15). However, even when that is done, the hearer must recognize his own responsibility, and make certain that he meets the conditions which are set forth in the gospel message, if he is to enjoy the salvation which is thereby announced. (Mark 16: 16.)

God does not want any one to fail to receive the good things which he has provided for the lost (read again Isa. 55: 4, 5), as may be seen by considering the following passages: "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4.) "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 repent-

ance." (2 Pet. 3: 9.) The twofold relationship involved in saving the lost, is clearly stated in Ephesians 2: 8-10, namely, "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." *Grace* is God's part in the scheme of human redemption, while *faith* (a comprehensive term, involving obedience—John 3: 36), is our part. When the sinner responds to God's grace, he is created anew in Christ (John 3: 3-5; Tit. 3: 5-7; 2 Cor. 5: 17), and becomes a member of the family of God (cf. Eph. 1: 22, 23; 1 Tim. 3: 14, 15.)

While the lost sinner can and must do his part, if he expects to be saved; he should also remember that he should act while he has the opportunity. "Seek ye Jehovah *while* he may be found; call ye upon him *while* he is near." This is enough to convince any thoughtful person, that if the sinner is unwilling to do his part, God's work in behalf of the lost will go for naught, so far as he, that is, the individual sinner, is concerned. If a man is not willing to seek Jehovah, while he has the opportunity, he will be denied the salvation, which has been provided for all men; and he will have to suffer the consequences of his own folly. This is precisely the lesson which the writer of Hebrews urged upon the faltering Jewish Christians, to whom he wrote. (See Heb. 3: 12-4: 7.) When people are unwilling to believe that which the Lord has said, and to put forth the effort on their part, as they are commanded, there is no way for them to be saved.

The term "abundantly" should not be overlooked, as we consider the pardon which the Lord will bestow upon the people who will respond to his overtures of mercy. It does not matter how great their sins may have been. God can and will forgive the penitent believer, who will do as God commands him. The sinner, in the text now under consideration, is told to forsake his evil way, and his unrighteous thoughts; and then return unto Jehovah. Peter was the first preacher to proclaim this mes-

sage, after the kingdom of Christ had become a reality; and this is the way he expressed the matter, in his second sermon, "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of Lord." (Acts 3: 19; cf. 2: 38, 39.) The practical meaning of the proposition which we are now considering, is, Turn your back upon everything you are doing, which is displeasing to the Lord; and then do that which he has commanded, in order to get your sins forgiven; which in the case as Peter stated the issue means, obey the Lord in baptism. Or, to say the same thing in another way, give a demonstration of the fact that you are a penitent believer, and that you want to, above all things else, obey the Lord. (Cf. Acts 22: 10, 16.) The same principle, of course, applies to erring Christians. (See 1 John 1: 9; Acts 8: 20-24.)

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.

Those who are familiar with the writings of Isaiah, are aware of the fact that he frequently employs a literary device known as "parallelism," by which similar, or antithetic, thoughts are stated, and then reiterated in similar phrases. While that may not be specifically true in the passage now before us, it is, nevertheless, a fact that one's thoughts and ways are very closely related. The "ways" of men may be called the routine of their life; while their "thoughts are responsible for the manner in which they live." The people to whom Isaiah spoke were absorbed in their own thoughts and ways, and they could never be pleasing to God, until they were changed; for their thoughts and their ways were completely different from those of God.

This same principle must be recognized and adhered to today; for, as already indicated, a new mind, which will result in new ways, must be acquired, before any one can become an acceptable child of God. "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things

are passed away; behold, they are become new." (2 Cor. 5: 17; cf. Tit. 3: 5; Rom. 12: 1, 2.) When people are preoccupied with their own interest, it is not possible for God to bless them, as he could and would, if they would but turn to him. God is always ready to bless; but his pardon cannot be granted, until our thoughts and ways are brought into harmony with his gracious will.

The Power and Purpose of God's Word

(Isa. 55: 10, 11)

For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

People who accept God's word today, should interpret it as involving his entire aim in the Christian dispensation. Jehovah communicates his mind to men by means of words, and the message which has been delivered, like the rain and the snow, has inherent powers of fruitfulness. The hope which the Christian has is not self-born; instead, it came down from heaven. God's word was spoken for a purpose; and it will not return unto him, until that purpose has been accomplished. We know, for example, that the gospel message is designed to show sinful humanity how to escape from the evil one, and be brought safely into the haven of salvation; and it is as certain to accomplish that end, insofar as those who receive it are concerned, as God is in heaven. The converse is also true; it will bring to eternal condemnation all who refuse to heed its precepts and violate its ordinances.

The apostle Paul makes this matter clear, when he says: "But thanks be unto God, who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest through us the savor of his knowledge in every place. For we are a sweet savor of Christ unto God, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to

the one a savor from death unto death; to the other a savor from life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as the many, corrupting the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ." (2 Cor. 2: 14-17.) The writer of Hebrews says, "For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb. 4: 12, 13.)

It is in this section of the lesson text, and in the remaining two verses of the chapter, that the idea of purity, the third great need of the human race, comes into focus. Any one who is familiar with the Scriptures knows that only the pure in

heart have the promise of seeing the Lord in all of his glory. Paul says that God dwells "in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. 6: 16); and Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (Matt. 5: 8.) The closing verses of Isaiah 55 have this message: "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing; and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree; and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to Jehovah for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." It is not enough for people to receive pardon for their sins; their lives must be built on the principle of "replacement," that is, something better must be cultivated where sins once abounded. (Cf. Matt. 12: 43-45; Tit. 2: 11, 12.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

In what way has the first part of Isaiah 55 been regarded? Why is this true?

What was the nature and extent of Isaiah's prophecy now before us?

Discuss the general characteristics of the Babylonian captivity and its effect on the Jews.

Why, then, is this such a valuable lesson, even for our day?

The Golden Text

Recite the context in which this portion of the lesson is found.

What valuable lesson do we learn from it regarding the manner in which people are saved?

Why is the principle of saving people "one by one" emphasized throughout the Bible?

What evidence do we have that God loves the race and wants all men to be saved?

The Call to the Spiritually Dissatisfied

How can this section of the lesson text be best understood?

In what way did the prophet emphasize the question of salvation?

How is it that people can have that which is essential to salvation without cost to them?

What three great needs does the human race have?

What is meant by "propitiation" and in what way was it accomplished?

What does the New Testament teach with reference to this question?

Why is that which was provided by Jesus referred to as the way of faith?

What did Isaiah mean by the "everlasting covenant" and the "sure mercies of David"?

What over-all provision has the Lord made for leading men to Christ?

The Time for Action and the Way Made Plain

What was the obvious purpose of verses 6 and 7?

Why is the principle set forth in them always applicable to men everywhere?

In what way does this fit in with the over-all need for pardon?

How do we know that all men stand in need of salvation?

What is the divine will in this respect and how is it implemented?

What do we learn here regarding the time element with reference to salvation?

What is indicated by the term "abundantly"?

What practical meaning should we see in this proposition?

What relationship exists between "thoughts" and "ways"?

Why is this such an important lesson?

The Power and Purpose of God's Word

What area, so far as we are concerned, is covered by God's word?

What is the basis for Christian hope?

What power inheres in God's word?

In what way does the New Testament illustrate this principle?

How do we know that obedient people are purified in God's sight?

What application does the principle of "replacement" have in our lives?

Lesson V—August 1, 1971

A DIVINE COMMISSION

Lesson Text

Isa. 6: 8-11; 61: 1-3

8 And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me.

9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed.

11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste.

1 The Spirit of the Lord Je-ho'-vah is upon me; because Je-ho'-vah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

2 To proclaim the year of Je-ho'-vah's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zi'-on, to give unto them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Je-ho'-vah, that he may be glorified.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*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.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 62: 1-5.

Daily Bible Readings

July 26.	M.	Isaiah's Commission (Isa. 6: 1-11)
July 27.	T.	Jeremiah's Commission (Jer. 1: 1-11)
July 28.	W.	Ezekiel's Commission (Ezek. 2: 1-10)
July 29.	T.	Jonah's Commission (Jonah 1: 1-3)
July 30.	F.	Micah's Commission (Micah 1: 1-7)
July 31.	S.	The Limited Commission (Matt. 10: 1-23)
August 1.	S.	The Great Commission (Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15, 16)

TIME.—740-712 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Isaiah, and the Lord's people.

Introduction

The term "commission" indicates that one is duly and properly authorized to perform a definite or specific duty; and the further implication is, that the person in question has been properly instructed with reference to that which is expected of him. The word "commission" with reference to the Lord's authorization, does not occur anywhere in the American Standard Versions of the Scriptures (cf. Ezra 8: 36; Acts 26: 12); but the idea is found in all parts of the Bible. Noah was commissioned to build an ark; Moses was commissioned to lead the Isra-

elites out of Egypt; Joshua was commissioned to lead the people into the land of promise, drive out the enemies, and divide the land among the several tribes. Every faithful prophet of the Old Testament was commissioned to speak for the Lord; and Jesus commissioned his disciples to preach the gospel to every creature, and to teach those who were won to Christ to obey him implicitly. A divine commission implies that the authority of heaven is behind the charge; and that is the only kind of commission we are concerned with in this lesson.

The vision and call of Isaiah are recorded in the verses of the chapter, which precede the first sections of scripture which we are to study today; and it will help us to get a clearer view of the situation, if those verses are read just here. The first seven verses of the chapter read as follows: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts. "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched

my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven."

The sixth chapter of Isaiah has been described as one of the most important sections of scripture in the history of revelation. The passage just quoted presents a picture of marvelous beauty, and subtle suggestion; and if we are willing to apply ourselves, as we should, to the task now before us, we shall learn lessons which will be helpful to us all the days of our lives. The great words of the chapter were spoken and heard in vision; but they are not visionary in any shallow sense whatsoever. On the contrary, the words which Isaiah heard and spoke were, and are, intensely practical. There are too many people today, who think of the prophets of the Bible as visionaries and dreamers of dreams; and therefore as impractical men. But those men of old had seen the visions of God, and had heard his instruction to them; and they were therefore speaking his message to the people to whom they were sent.

The Golden Text

"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." It is generally true that the significance of a passage can best be understood in the light of its context; and the instance now before us is no exception. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth. 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. Thou shalt also be a crown of beauty in the hand of Jehovah, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah; for Jehovah delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marieth a virgin, so shall thy sons

marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." (Isa. 62: 1-5.)

Although the words of Isaiah were addressed to the fleshly house of Israel, it is certain that his ultimate aim was to describe the future glory of the reign of the Messiah, and the people who would be redeemed by him. The names which best described Israel's past experience were "Forsaken" and "Desolate," but the time was coming when those terms would no longer be applicable. A new name, which would be descriptive of their new relationship, would be needed; and inasmuch as their new station would be so much above the old relationship, it was necessary for Jehovah himself to call into use the new name. Bible expositors, throughout the ages, have endeavored to make it appear that the term "Hephzibah" is the new name, which the Lord would give; but that was not a new name, even in the time of Isaiah, as may be seen by reading 2 Kings 21:

1. The terms "Hephzibah" (*my delight is in her*) and "Beulah" (*married*) are designations used in contrast with *Forsaken* and *Desolate*; and it was in the midst of these new relationship that Jehovah would give a new name to his people.

The new name was to be given to God's people, when "the nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory," and it appears almost certain that these conditions were met when the cosmopolitan church in Antioch of Syria began to flourish. (See Acts 11: 19-26.) The church which Christ built came into being on the first Pentecost, following his ascension; and it was indeed a new organism, and those comprising its membership required a new designation—a name which was divinely given, different from any previously known name, and one which infinitely transcends all earthly designations. (Cf. Acts 11: 26; James 2: 7.)

The original word for "were called" (Acts 11: 26) is *chrematizo* (cf. the related term *chrēmatismos*, found only one time in the entire New Testament—Rom. 11: 4—and means, according to Thayer, Arndt-Gingrich, and others, a *divine statement or response*). The verb

which occurs in Acts 11: 26 (were called), is also found in the following passages, namely, Matthew 2: 12, 22 (warned); Luke 2: 26 (revealed); Acts 10: 22 (warned); Romans 7: 3 (shall be called); Hebrews 8: 5; 11: 7; 12: 25 (warned). If one will read all of the passages just cited, he will easily see that the subject of the verb in each instance, is a divine being or agency; and there is no reason for thinking that the situation is any different in Acts 11: 26, especially in view of the noun form (*answer*, Rom. 11: 4), and Isaiah's prediction, as expressed in the golden text.

The following summary therefore appears to be fully justified, namely, (1) Jehovah promised that a new name would be given, *when* "the nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory," (2) the name *Christian* is the only new name that was given, when the Gentiles came into the church; (3) Antioch was an appropriate place for the name to be given, since it was the first city to have a church composed of both Jews and Gentiles; and (4) the original word for "called," as we have just seen, implies a divine source or agency.

The Text Explained

Isaiah's Response to the Lord's Call
(Isa. 6: 8)

And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me.

This passage, as already indicated, should be considered in the light of the previous seven verses of the chapter, from which it is taken; and if this is done, it will be easy for him to conclude that when a person, by faith, beholds Jehovah, in all his majestic splendor, and is overwhelmed in reverent awe, he will most certainly realize his own undone condition; and when the voice of God speaks to him, through the inspired revelation, he will not hesitate to place himself at the command of the Lord, for whatever work he has for him to do. When people are cleansed from their sins, they are expected to become dedicated servants of the Lord. (Cf. Tit. 2: 14; 1 Pet. 2: 9; Phil. 3: 12.)

Jehovah's Commission and the Issue Clarified
(Isa. 6: 9-11)

And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed. Then said I, Lord how long? And he answered, Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste.

The marginal reading for "indeed," in the expressions "Hear ye indeed" and "see ye indeed," is *continually*; and the idea is to hear and see again and again, or with unceasing succession—indicating the beginning of a public reproach. "This people" suggests an expression of exasperation, since the people them-

selves, in reality, chose their own way of perversity. They were willfully obstinate, and preferred the wrong to the right way of the Lord. The contents of verses 9 and 10 are quoted, in whole or in part, several times in the New Testament; and the reference is made to apply to different people, at different times, but under similar circumstances. (See Matt. 13: 14, 15; Mark 4: 11, 12; Luke 8: 9, 10; John 12: 39-41; Acts 28: 25-27.) This is enough to show that a prediction of the Old Testament may have its fulfillment, in different people and upon different occasions, depending, of course, upon the nature of the case and the disposition of the people.

It should be noted that wherever the passage now under consideration is used, whether in its original setting in the text now under consideration, or its reproduction in the New Testament, the reference is always to those people who reject the message of the Lord; and that, in turn, was the result of their own attitude and disposition. When Jesus was delivering his message in parables (Matt. 13), "the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? And he answered and said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath." (Matt. 13: 10-12.) The difference between the disciples and the multitude was simply this: The disciples were in sympathy with the Lord's teaching, and improved their opportunities for learning the truth (cf. verse 16); but the multitudes were not in sympathy with that which the Lord taught, and made no effort to improve their opportunities for learning the truth. This was the reason more opportunities were given to the disciples, while the multitudes had the opportunities they did have, removed from them. (See Matt. 13: 12; cf. John 7: 17; 2 Thess. 2: 8-12.)

Isaiah evidently understood something of the significance of the terrible pronouncement, which the Lord made against his people in verses 9 and 10, and he apparently felt that

if the implications in the divine declaration should continue indefinitely, it would mean the end of the nation. It appears that it was for that reason that the prophet asked how long the sentence against the people would remain in effect. It should always be kept in mind, that when the Lord pronounces judgment against his people, the reason for it is found in their own attitude and conduct. It is never the Lord's will to punish those people who are doing their best to love and serve him. Jehovah instructed Ezekiel to say unto the children of Israel, "As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 33: 11; cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9.)

The reference to the destiny of Israel, in the passage now under consideration, appears to be to the repeated removals of the people from their homeland by foreign powers, such as Nebuchadnezzar, and others, even down to the Romans, when Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus and his army; and the treatment they receive from their enemies, even down to our day, as any thoughtful observer knows. There is no reason for thinking that the fleshly house of Israel are God's chosen people now, as they were during the Mosaic dispensation; but they do, because of their relationship to Abraham, enjoy a consideration by the Lord, which has resulted, and still does, in their protection from total destruction by their enemies. Even when there is nothing left but the "stump" of the tree, there is hope that it will grow again. (Cf. Job. 14: 7.)

The Glorious Gospel of the Anointed One

(Isa. 61: 1-3)

The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the year of Jehovah's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all

that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah, that he may be glorified.

We are told in the fourth chapter of Luke that Jesus, after his baptism and temptation, returned to his home town of Nazareth, went into the synagogue on the sabbath, and at the proper time stood up to read. The passage which he selected was the first part of Isaiah 61. The congregation was astonished at the selection he made, since it was all in the first person singular, and the young carpenter offered no explanation. It sounded, indeed, as if he were making the words of the prophet his own. But the people did not have to wonder long; for Jesus himself, after a moment of tense silence, having closed the book and sat down, calmly announced, "To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears."

So he *did* mean that which he seemed to imply; and he thereby announced his coming into the world as a Benefactor of humanity. No one in the congregation that day could go home, complaining that the service had been "dull as usual"; for it turned out to be a near lynching. Jesus, from that day forward, was a man to be watched. Unfortunately for us, since our minds are so diverted by the impact of the words of Jesus upon his fellow townspeople, with its dramatic sequel, we tend to overlook the words themselves. Why did Jesus select the passage? Obviously, because it describes to perfection his mission upon the earth; and it is for this reason that we should read it often, and heed it most carefully. Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in Christ; and we should be primarily concerned with the fulfilment.

Although spoken before the people of Judah went into captivity, the prophetic words of Isaiah were intended to proclaim to his suffering countrymen, that God was looking in pity upon their woes, and would set them on their feet again, with their faces toward the sun. Or, to express the same thing in another way, Jehovah was going to call the

exiles home from Babylon, heal the wounded, set the captives free, give his afflicted people "a garland for ashes, the oil for joy for mourning," and "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." This was all for the good of the people and for the glory of God.

It was approximately seven hundred years after Isaiah spoke his prophecy, that Jesus came with his own mission and message. The times had changed, the scene had shifted, and the personnel was different; but Jesus took the words of Isaiah, and applied them to his own work. History was repeating itself, but with this difference: Isaiah's prophecy, in its immediate application, was concerned with a particular people and a specific situation; while the words of Jesus, although expressed in the same terms, had both a particular and a universal application. This is to say that Jesus was sent, not only to the people of his day, but to men of all nations and for all time. This true, because his work and message are perpetuated through his disciples. (Cf. Mark 16: 15; 2 Tim. 2: 2; John 17: 20.)

The world-program of Jesus is concerned with the following: (1) *Preaching the gospel to the poor*, the "poor in spirit" (Matt. 5: 3), the lowly and afflicted, or, which is the same thing, those who feel their spiritual destitution, and who are willing to listen to and give themselves up to the teaching of Jesus. (2) *Proclaiming release to the captives*. Captivity of any kind is always a sorry spectacle; but the crudest chains which shackle men, are the chains of sin and death. But, thanks to the Lord, there is release from that bondage for all who desire it. (Cf. John 8: 31, 32, 34.)

(3) *Recovering of sight to the blind*, that is, the spiritually blind, or those whose spiritual discernment has been blunted. It was difficult for even the holy to see God, before Jesus came; but since he came in the flesh, the pure in heart have no trouble in seeing the Father. (Cf. Matt. 5: 8; John 14: 9; Matt. 11: 25-30.) (4) *Setting at liberty them that are bruised*. The reference here is to those who are broken by calamity, particularly the broken-hearted. (Cf. Psalm 51: 17; Isa. 66:

2.) It is good to know that Jesus is willing to mend broken hearts, like one would mend broken pieces of earthenware, and that "earth hath no sorrow that heaven cannot heal." 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.

(5) *Proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord.* It is very likely that there is here a reference to the Old Testament year of jubilee. (See Lev. 25: 8-13.) But, insofar as the mission of Christ is concerned, the reference is to the time when God is willing to receive the sinners who come to him, according to the terms of the gospel. (Cf. 2 Cor. 6: 2; Heb. 4: 7.) Considered from the Lord's point of view, he will always be successful (cf. Isa. 55: 10, 11); but since he has seen fit to place a large amount of the responsibility for this work in the hands of his people, their faithfulness will always be a large factor in the success of the program. (Cf. Mark 16: 15; 2 Cor. 5: 18-20.) Every Christian therefore has a great responsibility resting upon him; and his attitude toward that responsibility, will have a vital effect upon the success of the Lord's work in this world, the results of which will reach into eternity.

The expression "garland for ashes" in the passage in Isaiah, is rendered "beauty for ashes" in the

King James Version. The reference is to the contrast between the wretched condition of the captives, prior to their redemption, and the blessings which would be theirs, as a result of that which the Lord would do for them. One of the greatest needs any sinner has today, is to realize his miserable and undone condition before the Lord; and until that is done, he can never experience the joys of salvation. But when the sinner does come to see his true relationship before the Lord, and is willing to do that which the Lord commands him to do, the Saviour will gladly welcome him home, and bestow upon him the blessings of salvation. (Cf. Luke 15: 17ff.)

Now, as always, Jesus comes, bringing beauty for ashes, as we may learn by reading that which is contained in the New Testament. He reveals to us in his own person, the loving character of the holy and eternal Father; and that vision which he gives to our blinded sight, is beautiful beyond all description. For the ashes of our futile efforts to save ourselves, he gives us the beauty of God's salvation, wrought in Christ (cf. Tit. 3: 5, 6), by which the Father comes to us and offers us restored fellowship and friendship with him. (See Luke 15: 20ff.) But we should always keep in mind the fact that even God cannot give that which the sinner will not accept. (Cf. Eph. 2: 8, 9.) Man must accept by faith that which God graciously offers to those who are in need.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is the meaning and scope of the term "commission"?

What important lesson do we learn from a consideration of the word itself?

What is the significance of a divine commission?

What preceded the commission which Isaiah received from the Lord?

Why is the sixth chapter of Isaiah such an important portion of scripture?

Tell something of the character and work of the prophets of the Old Testament.

The Golden Text

In what context was this portion of the lesson spoken?

To whom and for whom was the new

name intended? (Discuss in the light of the context.)

When and under what circumstances was the ultimate fulfillment of the promise made?

Isaiah's Response to the Lord's Call

How can one best understand the true meaning and significance of this portion of the text?

What happens when sincere people behold Jehovah by faith?

What is always expected of those who are cleansed from their sins? Why? (Cf. 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20.)

Jehovah's Commission and the Issue Clarified

What message did Isaiah have for the people of Israel?

What was the condition of the people to whom the prophet spoke?

What use did the Lord and others make of the passage now before us?
 What important lesson should we learn from this?
 Why is the principle contained in the passage now before us so important in our day?
 Why, apparently, did Isaiah ask, Lord, how long?
 What is always the Lord's attitude toward his people?
 What did Isaiah predict would happen to the rebellious people of Israel?
 Tell something of the manner in which the prediction has been fulfilled?

The Glorious Gospel of the Anointed One
 What use was made of this section of the lesson text by the Lord Jesus Christ?
 What impression did his words have on the people who heard him speak?

Why did Jesus select the passage from Isaiah to read that day?
 Under what circumstance, and for what reason, did Isaiah utter the words now before us?
 What promises did the prophet proclaim for the Lord?
 In what way were the words fulfilled by Jesus, and with what difference?
 How long are the blessings now under consideration to be available to the people?
 What does the world-program of Jesus embody?
 Who are the poor referred to by the Lord?
 Who are the captives and how are they to be set free?
 Who will have their sight restored?
 What is the acceptable year of the Lord?
 In what sense does the Lord give garlands for ashes and how is it applied to us?

Lesson VI—August 8, 1971

THE MESSAGE OF JEREMIAH

Lesson Text

Jer. 1: 1-10

1 The words of Jer-e-mi'-ah the son of Hil-ki'-ah, of the priests that were in An'-a-thoth in the land of Ben'-ja-min:

2 To whom the word of Je-ho'-vah came in the days of Jo-si'-ah the son of A'-mon, king of Ju'-dah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

3 It came also in the days of Je-hoi'-a-kim the son of Jo-si'-ah, king of Ju'-dah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zed-e-ki'-ah, the son of J6-si'-ah, king of Ju'-dah, unto the carrying away of Je-ru'-sa-lem captive in the fifth month.

4 Now the word of Je-ho'-vah came unto me, saying,

5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou earnest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; I have appointed thee a prophet

unto the nations.

6 Then said I, Ah, Lord Je-ho'-vah! behold, I know not how to speak; for I am a child.

7 But Je-ho'-vah said unto me, Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak.

8 Be not afraid because of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Je-ho'-vah.

9 Then Je-ho'-vah put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and Je-ho'-vah said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth:

10 See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number." (Jer. 2: 32)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Jer. 2: 1-13.

Daily Bible Readings

August 2. M. Jeremiah, a Great Man (1 Chron. 12: 1-4)
 August 3. T. Israel's Great Apostasy (Jer. 2: 1-19)
 August 4. W. Israel's Apostasy Unequalled (Jer. 2: 20-23)
 August 5. T. Jeremiah's Grief Over Judah (Jer. 4: 19-31)
 August 6. F. Judah's Guilt Described (Jer. 5: 19-29)
 August 7. S. Jeremiah, Prophet for God (Jer. 14: 1-8)
 August 8. S. Wicked Opposed Jeremiah (Jer. 26: 1-9)

TIME.—About 610-608 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jehovah and Jeremiah.

Introduction

Jeremiah is one of the better known prophets of the Old Testament era, and his name means whom Jehovah appoints. Those who are familiar with the history of Jeremiah are aware of the fact that he is probably known with greater intimacy and detail, than any other prophet who spoke during the Mosiac age. Many people have mistakenly referred to Jeremiah as "the weeping prophet"; because they have not fully understood his character. If his utterances appeared gloomy at times, it was because he spoke under depressing conditions. If he spoke sternly to his countrymen, it was in an effort to awaken their conscience and correct their mistakes. The phrase "love wearing the disguise of anger" fitly describes Jeremiah's attitude toward his people. The prophet we are now considering began his prophetic ministry during the reign of king Josiah; and he continued his work until the kingdom of Judah ended in the Babylonian captivity. He sought to stem the tides of evil, which grew from bad to worse; and tried desperately to save the kingdom of his people from the terrible fate toward which it was hastening. Another fact of his ministry is also noteworthy, namely, his prophetic utterances regarding surrounding nations were also strikingly fulfilled.

John Foster Kent, in writing of the prophets, notes that "closely associated with Zephaniah was his young contemporary Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a native of the little town of Anathoth, a northern suburb of Jerusalem. He was apparently a descendant of the priestly house of Eli, which had been banished from Jerusalem by Solomon. Naturally shy and shrinking, Jeremiah had the persistency and devotion that have given us the world's greatest martyrs. For fully half a century he was, as he declares, 'a brazen wall against the kings of Judah, its princes, and its common people.' During most of this period they fought against him but did not overcome him, for, as he tells us, Jehovah was ever with him to deliver him. In the opening years of

Josiah's reign, Jeremiah joined with Zephaniah in the attempt to arouse the conscience of the people. The first six chapters of his prophecy contain extracts from the addresses which he then delivered. The event which apparently prepared the way for the public activity of each of these prophets was the approach, about the year 626 B.C., of a horde of Scythian invaders. One of the impressions which convinced Jeremiah that he must assume the role of a prophet was the vision of a caldron, brewing hot and facing the north, which symbolized the fact that 'from the north disaster is brewing for the inhabitants of the land.'"

The Book of Jeremiah is far richer in information, regarding that particular period of Judah's history, than anything we possess, especially during the last days of that kingdom. It is probably true, in fact, that those years are better known than any period in Hebrew history. The northern kingdom, that is, the kingdom of Israel, had gone into Assyrian captivity more than a hundred years before; and Judah therefore was compelled to stand alone against her enemies. But Judah, in the meantime, had grown progressively corrupt; and it is a fact, worthy of note, that the last king of Judah who made any serious effort to stay the flood of increasing wickedness was Josiah who, as has already been noted, was reigning when Jeremiah began his prophetic ministry. Assyria and Egypt, two of the great powers of that age of the world, were contending for the supremacy at the time of Jeremiah's birth; but it was his to see both of those countries subdued by the Babylonians. Jeremiah also foretold the downfall of Babylon, and the deliverance of the children of Israel from the hold which that nation had upon them. "In those days, and in that time, saith Jehovah, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I leave as a remnant." (Read Jer. 50: 1-20.)

The Golden Text

"Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number." One of the very first things which we should note, in the consideration of the passage which serves as the golden text for today's lesson, is that the sin of the people to whom Jeremiah was speaking, lay in the fact that they had forgotten Jehovah. They had persistently banished the thought of God from their minds, and had turned their attention to their idols. Or, to state the same thing in another way, they had become so entangled in the things around them, as to leave no room for God in their hearts and lives. But they were not the only people who were guilty of that great transgression, as may be seen by reading Romans 1: 18-32. The apostle Paul, in the midst of that terrible indictment, says, "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." (Rom. 1: 28.) And one who will read the eighth chapter of Romans, and especially the last paragraph, will have no trouble in seeing that the only thing which can rob people of their fellowship with God, is their own unrighteous attitude and conduct. When people forget the Lord, there is little hope for their ultimate salvation.

A good way for us to apply this lesson to ourselves is to ask, How many days of our lives do we allow to pass without suitable remembrances of God? There are many people who strive so eagerly for an earthly paradise, and worldly esteem, that their outlook is so narrowed by such horizons, as to cause them to lose sight of the heavenly goal. Such people are so intent on improving the present surroundings,

that they have little time, or inclination, to think of the better country. (Cf. Heb. 11: 8-10.) The people of Jeremiah's day did not have as much regard and affection for God, as young women usually have for their jewelry and fine clothing; and the prophet, accordingly, asked, "Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?" The answer to those questions, of course, is No, and the reason for it is obvious, namely, their minds and their thoughts are constantly upon them. It is a sad situation when people are more in love with, and are more eager for, the material things and honors of this life, than they are for God; and those who are characterized by such attitudes and conduct, should know that such is essential worldliness. (See Phil. 3: 17-19; James 4: 4; 1 John 2: 15-17.)

The psalmist David gives the secret for remembering God in these words: "I have set Jehovah always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." (Psalm 16: 8.) This is enough to show us that there is great importance regarding that which is before us. We also learn from the words of David that man has a responsibility in this respect. "I have set Jehovah always before me." Peter, centuries later, made use of this very text, in his sermon on the first Pentecost following the Lord's ascension back to the Father. (See Acts 2: 25-28.) It requires effort on our part to keep God always before us; but there is great reward when that is done. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in Jehovah for ever; for in Jehovah, even Jehovah, is an everlasting rock." (Isa. 26: 3, 4.)

The Text Explained

The Historical Background

(Jer. 1: 1-3)

The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: to whom the word of Jehovah came in the days of Josiah the son of Ammon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came

also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

The long period of Jeremiah's prophetic career embraced many

history-making events; and any one who will consider the chronicles of his ministry, will have an impressive view of the strategic position which he occupied. The text states that Jeremiah's home was in Anathoth, one of the cities of Benjamin which had been set aside for the priests. (See Josh. 21: 18.) Josiah was fatally wounded in a battle, when he undertook to stop Pharaoh-necoh from passing through Palestine, on his way to encounter the king of Assyria at the Euphrates; and three of his sons and one grandson followed him upon the throne of Judah. The first of Josiah's sons to occupy the throne was Jehoahaz; but he was soon deposed by the king of Egypt and his brother, by the same authority, was placed on the throne in his stead. The second son's name was Eliakim, but Pharaoh-necoh changed it to Jehoiakim. This son was permitted to reign eleven years; but it was during his time that the world dominion was shifted from Egypt to Babylon.

The king of Babylon, following the death of Jehoiakim, placed the latter's son, Jehoiachin, also known as Jeconiah and Coniah, upon the throne of Judah; but he was allowed to reign only three months, before Nebuchadnezzar took him to Babylon. Jehoiachin's uncle was the next and final ruler of the kingdom of Judah, before the nation was taken into Babylonian captivity. This uncle's name was Mattaniah, but the king of Babylon changed it to Zedekiah. It should be noted, however, for the sake of the record, that Zedekiah, coming as he did after Coniah, was not considered in the extended line from David. If that line had been continued, it would have been necessary for the new king to be the son of Coniah; and it was because no son of Coniah succeeded him on the throne, that the line of the kings from David ended with Coniah. "Thus saith Jehovah, Write ye this man [that is, Coniah] childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no more shall a man of his seed prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling in Judah." (Jer. 22: 30. Read the entire paragraph, beginning with verse 24.)

Jeremiah, during the trying times

of his long career, lived in the midst of his people, pleading with them, and exhorting them in the name of Jehovah, to renounce their sinful ways. This great prophet had to deal with real problems, but it is interesting to know that he was always bold and courageous. However, as is usually the case under such conditions, his altruistic, but misunderstood, attitude, resulted in his being hated and persecuted by the very people he was trying to help. Jeremiah has a place among the greatest writers and prophets of the Hebrew people; in spite of the fact that little is known of the actual method by which his oral messages came to be written, in the form in which they have come down to us.

However, even a casual reading of the book which bears Jeremiah's name reveals to us, that at least some of that which he spoke was dictated by the prophet to his faithful secretary Baruch. (Cf. Jer. 36: 4.) The Book of Jeremiah contains much biographical material concerning the prophet, especially of events near the end of his life in Judah; and it is altogether possible that Baruch wrote that too. Some of the loveliest passages of Hebrew poetry are found in the book now under consideration. Jeremiah had all the imagination, the passion, and the creative power of the poet, whether he was describing the despair of a prolonged drought (Jer. 14: 1-6); the utter desolation which was to come upon the land of Judah (Jer. 4: 23f); or the lament of Rachel for her children (Jer. 31: 115ff).

Jeremiah's Call and Commission

(Jer. 1: 4-8)

Now the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou earnest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold, I know not how to speak; for I am a child. But Jehovah said unto me, Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid because

of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Jehovah.

Jeremiah, in all probability, had been a student of the prophets of Jehovah, who had preceded him; and had learned much from them regarding the people of the Lord, and his dealings with them. But now the time had arrived for him to speak for Jehovah. His call came directly from the Lord, and that, of course, forever settled the question of his inspiration. Jehovah knows the end from the beginning; and it was for that reason that he knew Jeremiah before his conception and birth. This foreknowledge of God enables him to form his purposes for any individual in advance of his birth; but the Bible nowhere teaches that Jehovah overrules the free-agency of man. God called the name of Cyrus, king of Persia, more than a hundred years before his birth; and that fact had a tremendous effect on the future conduct of that ruler; but there is no indication that Cyrus acted contrary to his own will. (See Isa. 44: 24-45: 13.)

It is fair to assume from Romans 8: 28, that God has a purpose for every responsible person; and this truth should have a profound effect on our thinking and lives. Jehovah had a definite work for Jeremiah to do; and it is just as true that he has a definite work for us to do. God does not, of course, speak directly to people in this age of the world, as he did to Jeremiah; but that does not mean, nor indeed imply, that he does not speak at all. It was through men like Jeremiah, Moses (Ex. 20: 1ff), Paul (Gal. 1: 15, 16), and others, that God made known his will to the peoples of the earth; but since that will has been fully revealed (cf. Heb. 1: 1, 2), any person who is willing to do his best to discover God's purpose for him, will certainly have that desire satisfied. (Cf. John 7: 17; Matt. 13: 12.)

While it appears that Jeremiah's principal work was among his own people, the text now before us makes it plain that he was called to be a prophet to the nations. "I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations." More will be said about this in the last section of the lesson text for today. There is, however, a lesson here which should not be overlooked, namely, Jehovah has

always had a people who were his in a special way; but he has also made it plain that he is the ruler of all mankind. (Cf. Dan. 4: 17; Acts 17: 26; Rom. 13: 1ff.) God can, and often does, use his people in dealing with those who have so far rejected his will; but it should always be kept in mind that this service must be in harmony with his inspired will. Even the Lord's chosen people never have the right to take such matters into their own hands, to deal with them as they see fit.

It is thought by some Bible students that Jeremiah was probably in his late teens or early twenties, when Jehovah called him to the prophetic ministry. The Hebrew word for "child," in the instance now before us, is *na'ar*; and it is the same word which is used to describe Absalom in 2 Samuel 18: 5. (Cf. 2 Sam. 18: 15.) The reluctance which was manifested by Jeremiah when Jehovah called him to be a prophet, was often shown by others when they were summoned to their work. (Cf. Ex. 4: 10; Jonah 1: 1-3.) Jeremiah evidently had some idea of what it meant to speak for Jehovah, as the prophets were required to do; and it was natural for him to shrink from the tremendous responsibility, especially during the critical times which were upon Judah and others to whom he was to speak. Furthermore, Jeremiah was a man of peace; and he no doubt realized something of the ordeal which would be his, as he undertook to warn the people of the punishment which was sure to come upon him, as he undertook to warn the people of the punishment which was certain to come upon them, if they continued in their sins.

But the Lord quickly assured Jeremiah that he would be with him; and he also made it plain to the young man whom he had chosen to be a prophet, that it was not his prerogative to refuse to heed the call which had come to him. On the contrary, Jeremiah would have to go where Jehovah sent him, and speak that which he commanded. The fact that he was young and inexperienced, was no reason that he should not enter heartily into the work, which was being assigned to him. There are far too many professed Christians, who are pleading

the lack of ability today. It is true that no man can do more than his ability will permit; but every person in the Lord's service can do what he is able to do. This lesson is forcefully presented in the Lord's parable of the talents. (Matt. 25: 14-30.) The man with the two talents could not do half as much as the man with the five was able to accomplish; but he could do as much as his more-favored fellow servant, in proportion to their respective abilities. The man with the one talent, instead of doing what he could, yielded to the temptation to do nothing, because of his attitude toward his own meager ability. His lord condemned him for that attitude, and the same principle will hold good in the case of many one-talent people today. The Lord never makes a mistake in calling any person into his service: for he will always supply that which is lacking in ability, et cetera. (Cf. Phil. 4: 19.)

Many young men have been called into the Lord's service, and they have been given tremendous responsibilities; but when God goes with them, they have nothing to fear. Paul often said to Timothy, Titus, and doubtless to others, "Let no man despise thee," or "Let no man despise thy youth"; and such people have every reason to feel the same way about their call to duty. The physical conditions which may characterize a person have nothing to do with the message which he has been authorized to speak; if he is doing that which is God's will for him. It is true that the people to whom Jehovah was sending Jeremiah, were very wicked, and would resent anything which he had to say, which was contrary to their wishes; but that situation made it all the more essential that God's will be made known to them. The New Testament is full of teaching along this line. Jesus has promised to be with his people, when they speak his message; and even the fear of persecution and death must be no barrier to the faithful performance of that which the Lord requires of him. (Cf. John 16: 1, 2; 2 Tim. 4: 1-5.)

The Confirmation of Jeremiah's Call and Commission (Jer. 1: 9, 10)

The?i Jehovah put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and Jehovah said unto me. Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth: see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

The touching of Jeremiah's mouth by Jehovah, was symbolic of the fact that the Lord would give him utterance, in spite of the young man's feeling of his own inability. It meant that Jeremiah would be God's mouthpiece to the people, which is the precise meaning of the word "prophet"—*one who speaks for another*; in this case, one who spoke for Jehovah. (Cf. Isa. 51: 16; Ezek. 2: 8-10; Dan. 10: 16-21.) When Jehovah put his words into the mouth of Jeremiah, the latter was filled with a sense of the inward presence of the Lord. (Read Jer. 15: 15-21.) There is no indication that Jeremiah experienced a feeling of guilt, as Isaiah did when Jehovah touched his mouth. (Isa. 6: 5.) The word which Jeremiah was to take to his people, was filled with energy; and it accomplished the purpose for which it was intended. (See Jer. 4: 14; 23: 29; cf. Heb. 4: 12, 13.)

The task which Jehovah gave Jeremiah to accomplish was twofold in its nature. Not only was he to be a prophet to his own people; he was to speak to other nations as well. One finds, as he reads through the Book of Jeremiah, that the prophet often spoke regarding international affairs, as may be seen by reading such passages as Jeremiah 25: 12-38. A. R. Fausset, in commenting on verse 10 of the lesson text, says, "He was to have his eye upon the nations, and to *predict* their destruction or restoration, according as their conduct was bad or good. Prophets are said to do that which they *foretell* shall be done; for their word is God's word: and his word is his instrument whereby he doeth all things. (Gen. 1: 3; Psalm 33: 6, 9.) Word and deed are one thing with him. What his prophet *saieth* is as certain as if it were done. The

prophet's own consciousness was absorbed into that of God: so closely united to God did he feel himself that Jehovah's words and deeds are described as his."

The Book of Jeremiah is a thrilling record of the faithfulness of the prophet to his call and commission. If any one today should feel that he is excused from doing that which the Lord has ordained for him, because of strong opposition,

even to the extent of persecution and death, he will be greatly strengthened and encouraged, if he will read and study the experiences of Jeremiah. Paul says, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope." (Rom. 15: 4; cf. 1 Cor. 10: 6, 11.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Discuss the nature and the scope of the information which we have regarding Jeremiah.
Why is he sometimes referred to as "the weeping prophet"?
What was the true nature of the prophet, as it respected his prophetic ministry?
When did he prophesy and for how long?
What promise did Jehovah make regarding his work?
What peculiar value do we have in the Book of Jeremiah?

The Golden Text

Against what background did Jeremiah speak the words which serve as the golden text?
Why do so many people, even among professed Christians, so often forget the Lord?
How may we test ourselves in this respect?
What alone can rob the Lord's people of their fellowship with him?
How may one make sure that he always remembers the Lord?

The Historical Background

Discuss the strategic position which the prophet Jeremiah occupied.
Where did Jeremiah live?
Who were the reigning kings of Judah during Jeremiah's prophetic ministry?
Under what circumstances did the last four kings of Judah ascend the throne?
Who was the last king in the direct and extended line of David? Give reasons for your answer.
What was the prevailing attitude of the people of Judah during Jeremiah's ministry?
Why was he called upon to suffer so much?

By whom, and under what circumstances, was the Book of Jeremiah probably written?

Jeremiah's Call and Commission

What can you say regarding this prophet's call and the circumstances surrounding it?
What lesson should we learn regarding our own call into the Lord's service?
What reason do we have for thinking that God has a purpose for every responsible person?
In what way are people today called into the Lord's service?
How wide was the scope of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry?
What was his probable age at the time of his call and commission?
What was Jeremiah's reaction to his call and what lesson is there in this for us?
What assurance did Jehovah give him and what application does this principle have for us?
Why is it always essential that Jehovah's word be spoken to those for whom it is intended?

Confirmation of Jeremiah's Call and Commission

What idea is conveyed by Jehovah's touching the mouth of Jeremiah?
What is the literal meaning of the term "prophet"?
What is said regarding the words which Jeremiah spoke and is the same principle true today?
What, again, was the scope of the prophetic ministry of Jeremiah?
Why were the prophet's words and deeds spoken of as if they were the words and deeds of Jehovah?
What are the principal lessons which we learn from the Book of Jeremiah today?
What important lesson is there in all of this for us?
What does the New Testament teach regarding the value of the Old Testament Scriptures for us?

Lesson VII—August 15, 1971

JEREMIAH WARNS OF FALSE PROPHETS

Lesson Text

Jer. 23: 21-32

21 I sent not these prophets, yet they ran: I spake not unto them, yet they prophesied.

22 But if they had stood in my council, then had they caused my people to hear my words, and had turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.

23 Am I a God at hand, saith Je-ho'-vah, and not a God afar off?

24 Can any hide himself in secret places so that I shall not see him? saith Je-ho'-vah. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith Je-ho'-vah.

25 I have heard what the prophets have said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.

26 How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies, even the prophets of the deceit of their own heart?

27 That think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his

neighbor, as their fathers forgat my name for Ba'-al.

28 The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the straw to the wheat? saith Je-ho'-vah.

29 Is not my word like fire? saith Je-ho'-vah; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

30 Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith Je-ho'-vah, that steal my words every one from his neighbor.

31 Behold, I am against the prophets, saith Je-ho'-vah, that use their tongues, and say, He saith.

32 Behold, I am against them that prophesy lying dreams, saith Je-ho'-vah, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their vain boasting: yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; neither do they profit this people at all, saith Je-ho'-vah.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests hear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so."* (Jer. 5: 31.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Jer. 8: 1-11.

Daily Bible Readings

August 9.	M.	False Prophets Denounced (Deut. 18: 15-22)
August 10.	T.	Isaiah's Woe upon False Prophets (Isa. 10: 1-4)
August 11.	W.	Lying Prophets (Jer. 14: 13-18)
August 12.	T.	Wicked Prophets Condemned (Jer. 23: 9-15)
August 13.	F.	Wicked Prophets Mislead (Jer. 29: 8-20)
August 14.	S.	Foolish Prophets (Ezek. 13: 1-7)
August 15.	S.	False Prophets in Sheep's Clothing (Matt. 7: 15-23)

TIME.—About 599 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jeremiah and the people of Judah.

Introduction

It has frequently been pointed out in these studies, that a prophet is one who speaks for another. When Moses tried to excuse himself from carrying out the commission Jehovah gave him to Pharaoh, he said that he was not a good speaker. But this is the way the Lord answered him: "And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is there not Aaron thy

brother the Levite? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put the words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people; and it shall come to pass,

that he shall be to thee a mouth, and thou shalt be to him as God." (Ex. 4: 14-16.)

The Hebrew word for "spokesman" is *dabar*; and while the term is used hundreds of times in the Old Testament, it is rendered spokesman only once, in the passage just quoted. Brown, Driver, and Briggs (*A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*) notes that the original term occurs three hundred and ninety-four times, with reference to the *word of God*, as a divine communication in the form of commandments, prophecy, and words of help to his people. It is a recorded fact that Jehovah rarely spoke the words himself, but ordinarily employed messengers, both human and divine, to speak for him. The people who were used for such service were usually called prophets, during the Old Testament ages. They were spokesmen for Jehovah, just as Aaron was the spokesman for Moses, as we saw in the passage quoted above. The same idea is found in the following passage where, instead of the word "spokesman," the historian uses the term *prophet*. "And Jehovah said unto Moses, See, I have made thee as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother

shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee; and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land." (Ex. 7: 1, 2.)

The Old Testament original word for "prophet" is *ya'bi*, and it is defined by Brown, Driver, and Briggs, and other Hebrew scholars, as a spokesman, speaker, prophet; and it is interesting to note that the word's first occurrence in the Hebrew Scriptures is with reference to Abraham. (See Gen. 20: 7.) One of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament period was Moses, who spoke for Jehovah in making known the law for the Jewish people; and when the inspired writer came to give an estimate of his place in that role, he said, "And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom Jehovah knew face to face." (Deut. 34: 10.) A prophet who was faithful to Jehovah, always spoke God's word, which had been committed to him, faithfully; but, as we shall see in the lesson now before us, there were men who claimed to speak for the Lord—men who neither received a message from on high, nor represented the Lord faithfully in that which they spoke.

The Golden Text

"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so." The full statement of the immediate context, in which the words just quoted are found, is as follows: "A wonderful and horrible thing is come to pass in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. 5: 30, 31.) The terms "wonderful" and "horrible" should give us some idea of the manner in which God looks upon those who profess to serve him, but who do not follow his directions. The term "wonderful" is used in the sense of being astonished, amazed, or filled with consternation; and that is also the way in which any faithful child of God should feel about such an appalling thing. "Horrible" inspires horror or abhorrence; something dreadful.

shocking. That is the way the Lord felt when the prophets and priests took matters into their own hands; and that is the way any one today should feel, if the word of God is not faithfully proclaimed, and his will is not diligently obeyed.

If one will read the first three verses of the chapter from which the golden text is taken, he will soon see the basis for the appalling conditions about which the prophet spoke. Not only did the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; but *the Lord's people were glad to have it that way*. "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that doeth justly, that seeketh truth; and I will pardon her. And though they say, As Jehovah liveth; surely they swear falsely. O Jehovah, do not thine eyes look upon truth? thou

hast stricken them, but they were not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." (Jer. 5: 1-3.) Thus, instead of the religious leaders influencing the people for righteousness, the people themselves were making it both easy and desirable for the leaders to teach and rule according to their own desires.

Such rebellion against God, as that which the people themselves manifested, distorted both the priesthood and the order of the prophets, and prevented the values; with the result that those who were charged with teaching the truth and directing the worship which God had ordained, were content to go from bad to worse. Jeremiah was in the midst of this kind of a situa-

tion, and was trying to turn all of the Lord's people back into paths of righteousness; but as is usually the case, if it becomes necessary to crucify some one, the crowd is always clamoring for the salvation of Barabbas. But we should not look upon this incident as an isolated situation, never to be repeated; that has been the history of a vast number of God's people all down through the ages. One has only to open his eyes and look about him in order to see that history, in many places, is repeating itself. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 1-5.) It is both "wonderful" and "horrible" when proclaimers of the word are not faithful to their trust, and when those who are in the lead do not direct the people into true worship of the Lord; and especially when professed Christians love to have it that way!

The Text Explained

False Prophets Are Not Divinely Commissioned (Jer. 23: 21, 22)

J se?it?iot these prophets, yet they ran: I spake not unto them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, then had they caused my people to hear my words, and had turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.

False teachers have characterized the human race, since the devil set the example in the garden of Eden. These false teachers were generally referred to in the Old Testament period, as false prophets. But by whatever name they were called, they did not speak God's word faithfully; or, which is the same thing, they did not proclaim the truth. The human race was alienated from Jehovah, when the first man, who was the federal head, turned his back upon that which God told him to do; and it is sad to note that there has never been a time, during the history of the world, when all responsible people gave their undivided attention to the Lord, and walked in his ways (cf. Psalm 145: 17) with a perfect heart.

Jehovah's attitude toward the false prophets during the period of Israel's rebellion, is set forth in the following words: "And I have seen

folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied by Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. In the prophets of Jerusalem also I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies; and they strengthen the hands of evil-doers, so that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them become unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts concerning the prophets: Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall; for from the prophets of Jerusalem is ungodliness gone forth into all the land. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you; they teach you vanity; they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of Jehovah. They say continually unto them that despise me, Jehovah hath said, Ye shall have peace; and unto every one that walketh in the stubbornness of his own heart they say, No evil shall come upon you." (Jer. 23: 13-17.)

The section of the lesson text now before us specifically says that Jehovah did not send the false prophets. They themselves took the initiative, and hastened to proclaim themselves spokesmen for the Lord. If they had been content to allow the Lord to speak his message to

and through them, the result would have been the turning away of the people from their evil ways. But as it was, both the prophets and the people came under the condemnation of Jehovah. "For who hath stood in the council of Jehovah, that he should perceive and hear his word? who hath marked my word, and heard it? Behold, the tempest of Jehovah, even his wrath, is gone forth, yea, a whirling tempest: it shall burst upon the head of the wicked. The anger of Jehovah shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall understand it perfectly." (Jer. 23: 18-20.)

Jehovah, of course, does not speak directly to preachers today; and even if he did, the message would be no different from that which is contained in the Divine Revelation. (Cf. Psalm 119: 89; 1 Pet. 1: 22-25; Jude 3.) The apostle Paul warned that the time would come, when professed followers of the Lord would not endure, that is, put up with or listen to, sound doctrine (see 2 Tim. 4: 1-5); and practically any faithful gospel preacher has seen such a situation in his own ministry of the word. Jesus also cautioned against false prophets, showed how to detect them, and declared just what the results would be. (Read Matt. 7: 15-23.)

The Lord, through an inspired apostle, has made it absolutely certain that no substitute, on the part of either the teacher or the taught, of the leader and those who are led, will be accepted by the Saviour of men. "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called 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.) Any responsible person, whether teacher or learner, can ascertain the will of the Lord for himself, if he is willing to make the

necessary effort. (Cf. Acts 17: 10-12; John 7: 17; Matt. 13: 12; 25: 27.)

The Nature of God and the Divine-Relationship (Jer. 23: 23-28a)

Am I a God at hand, saith Jehovah, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places so that I shall not see him? saith Jehovah. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith Jehovah. I have heard what the prophets have said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed. I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies, even the prophets of the deceit of their own heart? that think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers forgot my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.

Jehovah makes it plain, in the opening verses of this section of the lesson text, that he fully understands the hearts of all men, who profess to speak in his name, that is, all who claim to be teaching his word to others. No one therefore can deceive the Almighty; and he will, as surely as death follows life, have to give an account to God in the last day. The writer of Hebrews says, "For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb. 4: 12, 13.)

It is the height of folly therefore for any professed teacher of God's truth, to turn aside from the divine revelation in any detail whatsoever. The authoritative command is to adhere strictly to the divine revelation. And if any one feels that he is justified in departing from the divine standard, in the slightest degree, let him consider the following: "The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that

are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law," (Deut. 29: 29.) "I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables. But be thou sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry." (2 Tim. 4: 1-5.)

"I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I still striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ." (Gal. 1: 6-10.)

If any one is in doubt about the meaning of a passage of scripture, especially one involving the duty of himself and others whom he is seeking to teach; then the very least that he can do, is simply to quote the passage, and allow it to speak for itself. If there are other scriptures which bear on the passage in question, then read and discuss them; but if the passage in question is the whole truth on the subject, then read it and make certain that all who are concerned clearly understand precisely what the passage actually says. There are two things which vitally affect one's knowledge and understanding of the truth of the Bible, namely, (1) Too many professed students of the Scriptures are content to stop short of all the Bible says on the subject under con-

sideration; and (2) There are those who decide that they know that which the Bible teaches regarding a given subject, and they do not hesitate to use whatever power or influence they have to see that nothing further is said regarding the issue.

Alexander Campbell pointed out that "the spirit and soul of all reformation is free discussion"; while M. C. Kurfrees notes that truth always flourishes in the soil of controversy. Even if a person's views are at variance with the Scriptures, the best and most effective way to get him to recognize and abandon his false conclusions, is to permit a fair and thorough examination of that which he *thinks* that he believes. But when any one professes to teach that which is clearly contrary to the will of God, as in the case of the false prophets of this lesson, the error must be soundly exposed by means of the word of God itself.

The "dreams," referred to in the text now under consideration, allude to teaching which is different from that which God spoke to his prophets. It is true that Jehovah did make known his will to his people in olden times, by means of dreams; but those dreams did not contradict that which he had already said regarding himself, and his will for his people. If a prophet therefore claimed to have a dream which was inspired by the Lord, he should tell his dream, but should also speak the word of the Lord faithfully. No dream, or any other human experience, can ever be inspired by the Lord, if that dream or experience is contrary to the revealed will of God. For example, there are people today who profess to speak for God, who say that salvation is by faith alone. That, of course, is in direct conflict with such revealed truth as Mark 16: 16 and 1 Peter 3: 21. The New Testament does teach that people are saved by faith (cf. Acts 16: 30, 31); but if one will continue his reading, he will find that more is involved than faith alone. (Cf. Acts 16: 29-34; 15: 6-11; 10: 34, 35, 43, 47, 48; James 2: 14-26.)

Adam Clarke, in commenting on the section of the lesson text now before us, says, "In the Book of *Genesis* we find many examples; and although many mistook the

workings of their own vain *imaginations* in sleep for *revelations* from God, yet he has often revealed himself in this way: but such dreams were easily distinguished from the others. They were always such as had no connection with the *gratification of the flesh*; they were such as contained *warnings against sin*, and *excitements to holiness*; they were always *consecutive—well connected* with a proper *beginning and ending*; such as possess the *intellect* more than the *imagination*. Of such dreams the Lord says (verse 28), *The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream*—permit him to show what he has thus received from the Lord: but let him tell it as a *dream*, and speak my word faithfully, lest he may be deceived."

The Contrast between the True and the False

(Jer. 23: 28b-32)

What is the straw to the wheat? saith Jehovah. Is not my word like fire? saith Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith Jehovah, that steal my words every one from his neighbor. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith Jehovah, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy lying dreams, saith Jehovah, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their vain boasting; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; neither do they profit this people at all, saith Jehovah.

Wheat cannot accomplish the purpose for which it was intended, so long as it is united with the straw, that is, chaff or straw threshed into fine bits. (See King James Version; cf. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, by Brown, Driver, and Briggs; Matt. 3: 12. The original word for "chaff" in Matt. 3: 12 is the same as that used in the Septuagint Version, in the passage now before us.) Jeremiah's lesson is simply this: All false teaching must be destroyed before the pure word of God can have the desired effect in the lives of people;

and that can be done only by the word of God itself. "Is not my word like fire? saith Jehovah." Or, to say the same thing in another way, the word of the Lord, when faithfully studied and proclaimed, contains within itself the power to lead into the way of righteousness. (Cf. Rom. 1: 16, 17.) That which has just been said is true; because when God's word is faithfully spoken, his will will be clearly revealed. There are too many preachers today who want to proclaim that which they think God's word means, without even quoting that which has been divinely revealed. This kind of preaching does not benefit the hearers at all.

Not only does God's word destroy the "chaff," it also breaks the rocks in pieces. No opposition, anywhere, can long stand before the faithful proclamation of God's word. This truth has been demonstrated over and over again, in communities, in congregations, and in the hearts of individuals. The story is told of a preacher who was watching a workman break huge rocks into small pieces by the mighty blows of his sledge hammer. After observing the process for a time, the preacher said, "Pat, I wish that I could break the hearts of the people who hear me preach, like you are breaking the rocks which are before you." The workman's simple reply was, "You could, sir, if you would strike enough in the same place!"

No better commentary can be found on the failure to proclaim God's word faithfully, than the closing verses of this section of the lesson text, namely, "Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith Jehovah, that steal my words every one from his neighbor. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith Jehovah, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy lying dreams, saith Jehovah, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their vain boasting; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; neither do they profit this people at all, saith Jehovah."

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is the fundamental meaning of the

term "prophet"? Give reasons for your answer.
 In what connection does the word "prophet" first occur in the Bible?
 Who were some of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament period?

The Golden Text

In what context are the words of the golden text found?
 What was the wonderful and horrible thing which came to pass in the days of Jeremiah?
 In what way are the words of the golden text applicable in our day?

False Prophets Are Not Divinely Commissioned

How long have false teachers afflicted the human race? Give reasons for your answer.
 What has always been the effect which such teachers have had on the human race?
 What is God's attitude toward such teachers?
 Who is responsible for the work which they do?
 In what way is the principle set forth in this lesson applicable to people in this age?
 Why do so many people refuse to listen to or put up with sound doctrine?
 What great responsibility rests upon both the teachers and the taught?
 How do we know that any sincere person can learn the will of God if he wants to know it?

The Nature of God and the Divine-Relationship

What truth does Jehovah make known in

the opening part of this section of the lesson text?
 In what way does the New Testament confirm this truth?
 How may any honest person be certain regarding the principle now before us?
 How may one be sure that he is proclaiming the will of the Lord?
 What are some of the things which affect one's knowledge and understanding of the truth?
 What is one effective way to turn people away from erroneous viewpoints regarding the truth?
 What lesson should we learn regarding dreams from this part of the lesson text?
 What usually characterized the dreams of those to whom God's made known his will?
 In what way were the prophets to deal with their dreams?
 What was required of the prophets in all instances?

The Contrast between the True and the False

What was implied by the question regarding the wheat and the straw?
 What was the evident meaning of the term "straw"? Give reason for your answer.
 Why is it absolutely essential that God's truth be separated from all error?
 What means should be employed in destroying all erroneous teaching?
 In what sense is God's word like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces?
 What important lesson should we learn from this?
 Why have so many professed teachers of the word failed to get this lesson?

Lesson VIII—August 22, 1971

THE NEW COVENANT

Lesson Text

Jer. 31: 27-37

27 Behold, the days come, saith Je-ho'-vah, that I will sow the house of Is'-ra-el and the house of Ju'-dah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast.

28 And it shall come to pass that, like as I have watched over them to pluck up and to break down and to overthrow and to destroy and to afflict, so will I watch over them to build and to plant, saith Je-ho'-vah.

29 In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.

30 But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

31 Behold, the days come, saith Je-ho'-vah, that I will make a new

covenant with the house of Is'-ra-el, and with the house of Ju'-dah:

32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of E'-gypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Je-ho'-vah.

33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Is'-ra-el after those days, saith Je-ho'-vah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Je-ho'-vah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the

greatest of them, saith Je-ho'-vah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.

35 Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirreth up the sea, so that the waves thereof roar; Je-ho'-vah of hosts is his name:

36 If these ordinances depart from before me, saith Je-ho'-vah, then the seed of Is'-ra-el also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.

37 Thus saith Je-ho'-vah: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast off all the seed of Is'-ra-el for all that they have done, saith Je-ho'-vah.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*A new covenant, he hath made the first old.*" (Heb. 8: 13.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Heb. 8: 8-12.

Daily Bible Readings

August 16.	M.	Old Covenant with Israel (Deut. 5: 1-5)
August 17.	T.	Basis of the Old Covenant (Deut. 5: 6-21)
August 18.	W.	Peoples' Acceptance (Deut. 6: 22-23)
August 19.	T.	People Did Not Keep It (Jer. 31: 31-34)
August 20.	F.	First (Old) Covenant Was Not Faultless (Heb. 8: 6-13)
August 21.	S.	Old Covenant Nailed to Cross (Col. 2: 14-17)
August 22.	S.	New Law Written in the Heart (2 Cor. 3: 1-3)

TIME.—About 594 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jeremiah and the people of Judah.

Introduction

The literal meaning of the term "covenant" is an agreement between two parties, binding them to cooperation and mutual service on certain specified conditions, which are designated "the words of the covenant." When two tribes of people, for example, desire to live together in peace, intermarry, and trade with each other, they make a covenant. When a king is chosen to reign over a people, a covenant is made and confirmed between the ruler and the ruled. Even conspirators can bind themselves together by a covenant; and so can friends. "And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved them as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul." (1 Sam. 18: 1-3.)

The idea of a covenant between two parties reach back into the distant past; but its greatest impression on the human mind, is probably to be found in the application of such an agreement between Jehovah and his people. This relationship was a daring conception on

the part of sinful humanity; but there is no irreverence in it, no lowering of the Divine supremacy; for the relationship between Jehovah and his people, does not necessarily imply a relationship of equality. The Speaker's Bible notes that a conqueror might make a covenant with a vanquished people, thereby sparing their lives when they were at his mercy, and thereby admitting them to terms of mutual respect and obligation. There is therefore no arrogance in the idea of a covenant between Jehovah and his people; but it does require courageous faith to conceive of God as being willing to deal with his children after this manner. It may, in fact, be thought of as an anticipation of that "boldness toward God" (cf. 1 John 3: 21), which is the supreme privilege of Christian sonship.

The Hebrew word for "covenant," in the lesson text now before us, is *herith*, and the corresponding Greek term is *diatheke*. William Barclay, in his book, *A New Testament Wordbook*, says that the usual Greek word for a covenant between two people is *suntheke*. This, he says, is the word which is used everywhere for a marriage covenant, or an agreement between two per-

sons or states. *Sunthēkē*, however, is not a New Testament word: and the reason for its omission from the Sacred Volume, according to Barclay, is this: "*Sunthēkē* always describes 'an agreement made on equal terms,' an agreement which either party can alter. But the word 'covenant' means something different. God and man do not meet on equal terms; it means that God, of his own choice and in his free grace, offered man this relationship, which man cannot alter or change or annul, but which he can only accept or refuse. Now the supreme example of such an agreement is 'a will.' The conditions of a will are not made on equal terms. They are made by one person and accepted by the other, who cannot alter them and who could not have made them.

"Our relationship with God is not something into which we entered in our own right and on our own terms; it is something given to us solely and completely on the initiative and in the grace of God. Philo says, 'A covenant is a symbol of grace which God sets between himself who extends the boon and man who receives it.' 'It is fitting for God to give and for a wise man to receive.'

"The very word 'covenant,' *diathēkē*, is a word which in itself sums

up our 'debt' and our 'duty' to God. We are in 'debt' because our new relationship to God is due to the approach of God and to nothing that we could ever have done. We have a 'duty' because we have to accept God's conditions of love and faith and obedience, and we cannot alter them. The very word shows that we can never meet God on equal terms, but only on terms of submission and of gratitude." (P. 31.)

Dora Greenwell, in one of her golden books, *The Covenant of Life and Peace*, says, "I sometimes wish that we were, as a people, more in the habit of considering our relations with God under what may be called their covenanted aspect. Salvation in Christ is not only a gift from God to man, it is also a bond, a living perpetual tie, placing us in assured relations with the Father, and enabling us to take up that ancient plea, 'have respect unto the Covenant,' with all the energies of the renewed nature. 'The writings of the New Covenant'; how I love this, the title by which the Gospel writings collectively were known to the primitive Church! It brings them before us as that which they truly are, the very bonds and indentures of our fellowship in Christ Jesus."

The Golden Text

"A new covenant, he hath made the first old." The statement of the immediate context, in which the words of the golden text are found, is as follows: "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away." This entire statement should be read, and must be understood, in the light of our lesson text for today, and the eighth chapter of Hebrews. Jehovah made it plain through the prophet that the days were coming, when he would make a new covenant with his people; and the writer of Hebrews calls attention to the fact that in doing that, he would, of necessity, make the first covenant old. The terms "new" and "old" are, of course, relative terms; and the very mention of one implies the other. The first covenant, therefore, became old or

antiquated from the very day the prediction of the prophet was made.

It has been pointed out from time to time that the law of Moses, as an authoritative religious code, passed away when Jesus died upon the cross. "Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross." (Col. 2: 14; cf. Eph. 2: 13-16.) God has never had two laws, for the same purpose, in force at the same time. This truth is clearly set forth in Romans 7: 1-6. This means that the people who were living under the law of Moses when Christ died upon the cross, were set free from those legal requirements; so that they might become united with, and obedient to, the one who had died from their sins.

The dullness which often characterizes the human mind prevented

some people from seeing that the law of Moses had been replaced by the authority of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 3: 1-18); and it appears that during the period of transition, the Lord, for wise and benevolent reasons, permitted those who failed to see that truth to continue under the law of Moses for a time (cf. Heb. 8: 4; 10: 11), until they had ample opportunity to be taught the difference between the old and the new. One of the chief purposes of the Book of

Hebrews, is to set forth in detail that which was involved in turning away from the old, and accepting the terms of the new. When the writer of Hebrews said, "But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away," he probably had reference to the complete destruction of the whole Jewish economy, when Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70, which was some six or seven years in the future, when the Book of Hebrews was written.

The Text Explained

God's Providential Rule and the
People's Individual Responsibility
(Jer. 31: 27-30)

Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass that, like as I have watched over them to pluck up and to break down and to overthrow and to destroy and to afflict, so will I watch over them to build and to plant, saith Jehovah. In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every man shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

If one will read the thirtieth and the thirty-first chapters of Jeremiah together, he will have a fuller picture of the restoration of the Lord's people, as predicted by that prophet. "Behold, the tempest of Jehovah, even his wrath, is gone forth, a sweeping tempest: it shall burst upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of Jehovah shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall understand it." (Jer. 30: 23, 24.) The "latter days," apparently, refer to the time of Christ. It is only by and through Christ that such a deliverance can be accomplished; and only then can its full significance be understood. Adam Clarke, in commenting on this passage, says, "by the latter days the Gospel dispensation is generally meant; and the restoration which is the principal topic in this and the succeeding chapter refers to this time. Had the Jews properly considered this sub-

ject, they would long ere this have been brought into the liberty of the Gospel and saved from the maledictions under which they now groan. Why do not the Jews read their own prophets more conscientiously?" (Read Paul's discussion of the rejection of the Jews, in Romans, chapters 9-11.) In answer to the question just asked, it should be noted that the Lord's people today, in many places and instances, have no more interest in reading the scriptures addressed to them, than the Jews did in the days of Jeremiah.

God's purpose in restoring his people to their homeland, and eventually to him through Christ, was due, not to any merit on their part, but rather to his great love for them. "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.) "Thus saith Jehovah: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; and she refused to be comforted for her children, because they are not. Thus saith Jehovah: Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith Jehovah; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope for thy latter end, saith Jehovah; and thy children shall come again to their own border." (Jer. 31: 15-17; cf. Matt. 2: 16-18.)

And again, as Jehovah continued his promises and his encouragement to his wayward people, "Set thee up waymarks, make thee guide-posts; set thy heart toward the highway, even the way by which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel,

turn again to these thy cities. How long wilt thou go hither and thither, O thou backsliding daughter? for Jehovah hath created a new thing in the earth: A woman shall encompass a man." (Jer. 31: 21, 22.) While Bible students differ widely regarding the meaning of the closing part of the passage just quoted, there are many who are of the opinion that the reference is to the virgin conception of Christ, that being the "new thing" which Jehovah created. (See A. R. Fausset, Matthew Henry, E. M. Zerr, *in loco*.)

But whatever may be the true meaning of the passage just referred to, we do know that God's promise was such as to make the future state of his people most attractive. It had been necessary for God to punish his people; but his anger would not last for ever. (Cf. Jer. 3: 5, 12.) As Jehovah had plucked up, overthrown, and destroyed, so he would watch over his people to build and to plant. The remark about the sour grapes, and the teeth's being set on edge, was a proverbial saying, to the effect that the children of Israel would have to suffer the evil consequences of their fathers' sinful conduct. But Jehovah made it plain during the time of Jeremiah, and it is still true today, that every individual will be held responsible for his own conduct. The inexorable law of God is that each and every person shall reap that which he sows. (See Gal. 6: 7, 8; cf. Eccl. 12: 13, 14; 2 Cor. 5: 10.)

The New State Required a New Covenant

(Jer. 31: 31-34)

Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house, of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no

more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.

The first covenant which Jehovah made with the people of Israel, as all Bible students know, was the one he made with them at mount Sinai, soon after they came out of the land of Egypt, where they had been in bondage to the king and people of that country. The basis of the Sinaic covenant was the Ten Commandments; and its primary application was to fleshly Israel. Children who were born to Jewish parents, following the covenant's ratification, were automatically included within its provisions (the male children had to be circumcised at eight days of age), and had to be taught regarding Jehovah and his law, when they were old enough to understand. Children therefore were subject to the terms of the Sinaic covenant, before they knew anything about either the covenant itself, or the God who made it. The first covenant was intended to meet all the needs of the people, so far as government and direction were concerned, as long as it remained in force. The Ten Commandments, as already indicated, may be regarded as the constitution of the theocracy; and all the other statutes and ordinances were based upon, and were entirely in harmony with, that great Code.

A careful reading of the devotional passage of this lesson, will enable one to see that even while the old covenant was still in force, a way was being sought (speaking after the manner of men) for a better covenant, that is, one which would go beyond the fleshly needs of the Lord's people. This is enough to show that the first covenant was never intended to be permanent; it was, instead, a kind of "temporary arrangement" to last until Christ should come. This is made clear by Paul in the following passage: "What then is the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made; and it was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a media-

tor is not a mediator of one; but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law. But the scripture shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." (Gal. 3: 19-22.)

There are several essential differences between the old and new covenants, which should be referred to just here, namely, (1) The statutes of the first covenant were written upon tables of stones, and other material substances; while the law of the new is inscribed in the hearts of those for whom it is intended. (2) The relationship between God and his people, under the new covenant is raised to the point where it includes the end and aim of all true religion. It involves, as Bewer points out, a radical change of the will of the individual who subscribes to it, a renewal of the heart (cf. Jer. 24: 7), and the spontaneously doing of that which God requires. (3) People under the new covenant must be taught about the Lord, before they can become his people. (Cf. Matt. 28: 19; John 6: 44, 45; Rom. 1: 16, 17; 10: 1-3.) All of this, of course, specifically excludes infant church-membership. (4) Sins are instantaneously and completely forgiven, when one becomes a partaker of the provisions of the new covenant; with no further remembrance of them. (Cf. Heb. 10: 1-4.)

God's Immutable Promise Regarding His People

(Jer. 31: 35-37)

Thus saith Jehovah, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, who stirreth up the sea, so that the waves thereof roar; Jehovah of hosts is his name: If these ordinances depart from before me, saith Jehovah, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith Jehovah, If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith Jehovah.

It appears very probable that the passage just quoted has a twofold application, namely, (1) to the continuance of Israel as a distinct people; and (2) to the perpetual endurance of spiritual Israel, that is, the church of the New Testament. If that which has just been said is true, then fleshly Israel will continue as a separate people, as long as the present order of nature remains intact. A. R. Fausset, in commenting on this phase of the subject, says, "Israel's *national* polity has been broken up by the Romans. But their preservation as a *distinct people* amidst violent persecutions, though scattered among all nations for eighteen centuries, *unamalgamated*, whereas all other peoples under such circumstances have become incorporated with the nations in which they have been dispersed, is a perpetual standing miracle." And Adam Clarke, in speaking of the same situation, makes this observation: "Hitherto this prophecy has been literally fulfilled; the Jews are still a distinct people from all the dwellers upon the earth. Every attempt that has been made in any country to *naturalize* and unite them with the people of that country, has proved abortive. The well-circumstanced attempt made this year (1830) in England, when the strongest interest was excited in their behalf, has also utterly failed. And why? Because of God's *purpose* expressed in chap. 31: 35-37 of the *Book of the Prophet Jeremiah*."

But that the prophecy of Jeremiah, in the passage just cited, also has reference to spiritual Israel during the reign of Christ, is made almost certain by a similar prediction in Jeremiah 33: 19-22, namely, "And the word of Jehovah came unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah: If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, so that there shall not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he shall not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured; so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me."

The quotations just cited from Jeremiah, are only two of the many passages in the Bible, which set forth, in unmistakable language, the enduring nature of the kingdom or church of Christ. "And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." (Dan. 2: 44.) "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 [literally, "her," since the pronoun which is rendered "it" is in the feminine gender]." (Matt. 16: 18.) "Wherefore, receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 12: 28, 29.)

One of the great needs of our day, and in fact of every generation, is the ability to distinguish between the authority of the two covenants, or, which is the same thing, the Jewish and the Christian dispensations. The old covenant has been

displaced by the new; and no one can secure the remission of his sins, and serve God acceptably, who attempts to do so under the terms of the covenant which God made with his people at Sinai. It is a prominent fact, to which any thoughtful observer can testify, that many religious teachers proceed on the assumption that the Lord's people today, are indiscriminately under Moses, the prophets, and the Lord Jesus Christ. This, of course, is a fundamental and vital mistake; and unless and until this erroneous viewpoint is recognized and abandoned, many people are going to "miss the mark," as it respects the obtaining of their salvation and their acceptable service in the kingdom of the Lord. If one will read carefully such scriptures as Hebrews 1: 1, 2; 2: 1-4; 10: 28, 29; 12: 25; Matthew 17: 1-5 and Acts 3: 22, 23, it will not be difficult for him to see that neither Moses, the prophets of the Old Testament, nor any one else connected with the old covenant, shares the authority which is exercised by Jesus Christ, as it respects the religion which must characterize those whom the Lord accepts in this age of the world.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is the meaning of the term "covenant"?
Discuss the place that covenants have had in the lives of the peoples of the earth. When and under what circumstances did people come first to realize what a covenant means?
In what sense did Jehovah make a covenant with his people?
What alone can those in covenant-relationship with God do about it?

The Golden Text

By whom, and under what circumstances, were the words of this text written?
Why is the eighth chapter of Hebrews so important in rightly dividing the Scriptures?
When did the authoritative aspect of the law of Moses come to an end?
Why have so many people through the ages failed to recognize this truth?

God's Providential Rule and the People's Individual Responsibility

Why is it important to read the thirtieth and thirty-first chapters of Jeremiah together?

Why is the study of this section of the prophecy so important to us?
Why do so many people fail to read the Scriptures, especially as they apply to them?
What was Jehovah's purpose in restoring the people of Israel?
What was the basis for this great work?
Discuss some of the promises which God made to his captive people.
What do the Scriptures teach with reference to the promises which God makes?
What does the Lord teach regarding personal responsibility?

The New State Required a New Covenant

What, again, was the first covenant which Jehovah made with his people?
What was the basis of that covenant and how were the people related to it?
What was the principal purpose of that covenant?
How do we know that it was never God's intention that the first covenant be permanent?
Why was a way sought for a new and better covenant?
What are some of the principal differences between the old and the new covenants?
Why, then, was the new covenant better than the old one?

God's Immutable Promise Regarding His People

What twofold application did the section of the lesson text apparently have?

Why, seemingly, have the Jews remained a separate people, even in this age of the world?

How, alone, can the Jewish people be saved from their sins?

How can we be certain that this section of the lesson text also refers to the church?

What do the Scriptures teach with refer-

ence to the duration of the church of the Lord?

Why can't the kingdom of Christ be destroyed?

What is one of the great needs of our day regarding the truth of the covenants?

Why can't people today be saved under the terms of the old covenant?

What always happens when people try to come to God according to the law of Moses?

How can we be certain regarding the authority to which we must be subjected?

Lesson IX—August 29, 1971

AN ATTEMPT TO DESTROY GOD'S WORD

Lesson Text

Jer. 36: 20-32

20 And they went in to the king into the court; but they had laid up the roll in the chamber of E-lish'-a-ma the scribe; and they told all the words in the ears of the king.

21 So the king sent Je-hu'-di to fetch the roll; and he took it out of the chamber of E-lish'-a-ma the scribe. And Je-hu'-di read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes that stood beside the king.

22 Now the king was sitting in the winter-house in the ninth month: and *there was a fire in the brazier burning before him.*

23 And it came to pass when Je-hu'-di had read three or four leaves, that *the king* cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was in the brazier, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier.

24 And they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.

25 Moreover El-na'-than and De-la'-iah and Gem-a-ri'-ah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll; but he would not hear them.

26 And the king commanded Je-rah'-me-el the king's son, and Se-ra'-iah the son of Az'-ri-el, and Shel-e-mi'-ah the son of Az'-ri-el, to take Ba'-ruch the scribe and Jer-e-mi'-ah the prophet; but Je-ho'-vah hid them.

27 Then the word of Je-ho'-vah came to Jer-e-mi'-ah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Ba'-ruch wrote at the mouth of Jer-e-mi'-ah, saying,

28 Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Je-hoi'-a-kim the king of Ju'-dah hath burned.

29 And concerning Je-hoi'-a-kim king of Ju'-dah thou shalt say, Thus saith Je-ho'-vah: Thou hast burned this roll saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Bab'-y-16n shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?

30 Therefore thus saith Je-ho'-vah concerning Je-hoi'-a-kim king of Ju'-dah: He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.

31 And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Je-ru'-sa-lem, and upon the men of Ju'-dah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them, but they hearkened not.

32 Then took Jer-e-mi'-ah another roll, and gave it to Ba'-ruch the scribe, the son of Ne-ri'-ah, who wrote therein from the mouth of Jer-e-mi'-ah all the words of the book which Je-hoi'-a-kim king of Ju'-dah had burned in the fire; and there were added besides unto them many like words.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*But the word of the Lord abideth for ever.*" (1 Pet. 1: 25.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 40: 1-7.

Daily Bible Readings

August 23.	M.....	Wicked Men Hate the Bible (2 Pet. 3: 1-7)
August 24.	T.....	The Roll of the Book (Jer. 36: 1-3)
August 25.	W.....	Warnings of the Book (Jer. 36: 4-8)
August 26.	T.....	Book Is Read (Jer. 36: 11-19)
August 27.	F.....	King Seeks to Destroy the Book (Jer. 36: 20-26)
August 28.	S.....	Jeremiah Rewrites the Book (Jer. 36: 27-32)
August 29.	S.....	Word of God Indestructible (1 Pet. 1: 19-25)

TIME.—About 606 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—King Jehoiakim, Jeremiah, Baruch, and others.

Introduction

An attempt to destroy God's word is one of the worst crimes that one can be guilty of today; but, as any informed student knows, no one can succeed in that endeavor. It is well, just here, to keep in mind that there is a vast difference between the actual word of God, as it came from the pen of inspiration, and the translations and versions which are in common use today. Any one can destroy a translation of God's word; but no mortal person can destroy the word of God itself. David says, "The words of Jehovah are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, purified seven times. Thou wilt keep them, O Jehovah, thou wilt preserve them from this generation for ever." (Psalm 12: 6, 7.) "Thou has magnified thy word above all thy name." (Psalm 138: 2b.) And in the words of another Psalm, "For ever, O Jehovah, thy word is settled in heaven." (Psalm 119: 89.) The term "settled," in the passage just quoted, means to be established, stand firm, made to stand. The passage is rendered in the Revised Standard Version in these words: "For ever, O Lord, thy word is firmly fixed in the heavens." When Jesus delivered his discourse on the destruction and the second coming of Christ (Matt., chapters 24, 25), he said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Verse 35.)

Not only will the word of God, which may be defined as that body of revealed and inspired truth contained in the Holy Scriptures, endure for ever; it will also accomplish the purpose for which it was intended. "For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring

forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isa. 55: 10, 11.) The reason why the word which God has seen fit to reveal and make available to the human race will succeed in the purpose for which it was given, is stated in these words, namely, "For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb. 4: 12, 13.)

Some one, in speaking of the attitude which should be manifested toward the Bible, and of some of the things which it is designed to accomplish, has very succinctly noted that "This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand object, our good its design, and the glory of

God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in

life, will be opened in the judgment, and be remembered for ever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents."

The Golden Text

"But the word of the Lord abideth for ever." The words just quoted are found in this context: "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. For,

All flesh is grass,

And all the glory thereof as the flower of grass.

The grass withereth, and the flower falleth:

But the word of the Lord abideth for ever.

And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you." (1 Pet. 1: 22-25; cf. Isa. 40: 6-8.)

It has been about nineteen hundred years since Peter wrote the words just quoted, but the word of God is as fresh and vigorous, as it was when it was first communicated. N. B. Hardeman, in his book, *The Bible Searchlight*, says, "The Bible has, indeed, been an anvil on which many a hammer has been worn out. Old Voltaire, in the generations gone by, proudly boasted that while it took twelve men to write it up, he would show the world that one man could write it down, and predicted that before the close of his century, there would not be one found upon the earth. Following his tracks, our own Tom Paine, who did so much for the cause of liberty and of freedom during the darkest days of the Revolution by bringing out the various issues of 'The Crisis,' became puffed up and inflated and turned his attention to the writing of a wonderful book that he called 'The Age of

Reason.' This spread like wildfire all over the land, and vauntingly and proudly its author and his friends boasted that in fifty years the Bible would be found only in some of the museums of earth. But be it remembered that thrice fifty years have come and gone; Tom Paine has also gone the way of all the earth; his book is scarcely mentioned, read, or heard of; while every year there flows from the presses ten million copies of the book of God." And in the words of Willard L. Johnson,

Generations follow generations—yet it lives.

Nations rise and fall—yet it lives.

Kings, dictators, presidents come and go—yet it lives.

Torn, condemned, burned—yet it lives.

Doubted, suspected, criticized—yet it lives.

Damned by atheists—yet it lives.

Exaggerated by fanatics—yet it lives.

Misconstrued and misstated—yet it lives.

Ranted and raved about—yet it lives.

Its inspiration denied—yet it lives.

Yet it lives as—

a lamp to our feet,
a light to our paths,
a standard for childhood,
a guide for youth,
a comfort for the aged,
food for the hungry,
water for the thirsty,
rest for the weary,
light for the heathen,
salvation for the sinner,
grace for the Christian.

To know it is to love it;

To love it is to accept it;

To accept it means life eternal.

The Text Explained

The Insolent Action of a King

(Jer. 36: 20-26)

And they went in to the king into the court; but they had laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the

scribe; and they told all the words in the ears of the king. So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of the chamber of Elishama the scribe. And Jehudi read

it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes that stood beside the king. Now the king was sitting in the winter-house in the ninth month: and there was a fire in the brazier burning before him. And it came to pass, when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, that the king cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was in the brazier, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier. And there were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words. Moreover Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll; but he would not hear them. And the king commanded Jerahmeel the king's son, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet; but Jehovah hid them.

If one will read the entire chapter from which the lesson text is taken, he will have a much clearer view of the situation in which this study is involved. Jeremiah, at the direction of Jehovah, dictated a message concerning the people of the Lord, and the nations; and Baruch, the prophet's secretary, wrote all that was said and made it into a roll or a book. It is of peculiar interest to note that this is the only detailed account, found in the Old Testament, of the writing of a book of a prophet. Writing was a specialized skill; and was often restricted to a professional group. (Cf. a business or professional man and his secretary. The secretary is usually equipped for work which the man in question is not prepared to do.) Jehovah explained that the message which was to be written, was an effort to bring the sinful people to repentance.

Jeremiah called Baruch, and the prophetic message was duly written; and the prophet directed his secretary to go to the house of Jehovah and read the message to the assembled crowd; since the prophet could not go himself, due to some kind of detention. (See marginal note.) Baruch did all that he was told to do; and when a son of one of the princes heard that which the message proclaimed, he immediately

reported the matter to the assembled princes, who were sitting in a chamber of the king's house. They immediately sent for Baruch, and requested him to read the message in their ears. They then asked Baruch how he came to write the message, and he told them that Jeremiah "pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book." The princes informed Baruch that they were going to report the matter to the king; and they then requested Baruch to "go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah; and let no man know where ye are."

When the matter was reported to the king, he immediately sent one of his aides to bring the roll, so that he himself might listen to its reading, along with all the princes who stood in his presence. The king was sitting in the winter-house; and there was a fire burning in the grate before him. The king was not pleased with the reading of the roll, and when he had heard three or four columns (see marginal note), he took a penknife, cut the manuscript to pieces, and cast it into the fire, until the entire book was consumed. When the princes had first heard the reading by Baruch, "they turned in fear one toward another"; but when they heard the reading in the presence of the king, "they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king nor any of his servants that heard all these words." Some of the princes, however, tried to persuade the king not to burn the roll; but he would not heed their plea. The king, moreover, ordered the arrest of Baruch and Jeremiah; "but Jehovah hid them."

The Roll Rewritten and Punishment Decreed

(Jer. 36: 27-30)

Then the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying. Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned. And concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah thou shalt say. Thus saith Jehovah: Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The

king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them, but they hearkened not.

There are two lessons that people should always keep before them, namely, (1) Burning can never destroy God's word nor his people but it will bring punishment to those who engage in it; and (2) Jehovah never gets in a blind alley; but is ever ready and able to continue the work which has been begun. Burning, however, is not the only way in which people have tried to get rid of the word of the Lord. Some have tried to turn the message around, and thereby seek to make it mean something else, that is, something different from that which the Lord has spoken. A good example of this is found in Galatians 1: 6-9, and the passage is rendered by Goodspeed in these words: "I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from him who called you by the mercy of Christ, to some different good news—not that there is any other, only there are some people who are trying to unsettle you and want to turn the good news of the Christ around. But even if we or an angel from heaven preach to you good news that contradicts the good news we have preached to you, a curse upon him! We have said it before, and I repeat it now—if anyone is preaching to you good news that contradicts the good news you have already received, a curse upon him!"

Any person of even ordinary intelligence can test this principle for himself. When Jesus authorized his disciples to preach the gospel, 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.) When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he said, "For ye are all sons of God, through faith [through the faith in the original], 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.) Paul explained to the Galatians that they were children of God through, that is, by means of or in consequence of their having obeyed, the gospel. Salvation is found only *in* Christ (Acts 4: 12); and the only way that people can get into Christ, is by being baptized into him. (Cf. Rom. 6: 3, 4.) But there are people who like to turn the news concerning salvation around, and try to make it say, He that believeth is saved. He may be baptized later, if he so desires; but he is saved before and without water baptism. (See Acts 10: 47, 48, as to whether or not water baptism is a command of the gospel. Peter preached the gospel to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 15: 7), and he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Then there are those who make an effort to strip the word of God of its divine authority. Philip Mauro notes that "it must be evident to all who pay close attention to the spiritual conditions of our day that there is being made at this time a very determined and widespread effort to set aside entirely the *authority* of the Bible. Let us note that one of the unique characteristics of that Book is that it claims the right to control the actions of men. It speaks 'as one having authority.' It assumes, and in the most preeminent and uncompromising way, to rebuke men for misconduct, and to tell them what they shall do and what they shall not do. It speaks to men, not as from the human plane, or even from the standpoint of superior human wisdom and morality; but as from a plane far above the highest human level, and as with a wisdom which admits of no question or dispute from men. It demands throughout unqualified submission.

"In some quarters the authority of the Bible is directly assailed and its Divine origin disputed in the name of 'Science' and of 'Scholarship.' Much of the learning and theological activity of the day are concen-

trated upon the attempt to discredit the Bible, and to disseminate views and theories directly at variance with its claims of divine inspiration and authority.

"In other quarters the attack takes the form of a pretense of conceding the inspiration of the Bible, coupled with the claim that other writers and other great literary works were equally inspired. 'God is not limited,' we are told, 'and can speak to man, in our day, in like manner as in the days of Moses, Isaiah, or Paul.'"

"Manifestly it makes practically no difference whether the Bible be dragged down to the level of other books, or other books be exalted to the level of the Bible. The result is the same in both cases; namely, that the unique authority of the Bible is set aside.

"But even in quarters where the Divine origin of the Bible is fully recognized, the enemy is actively at work with a view to weakening its influence. There is much teaching abroad (heard usually in connection with certain spiritual manifestations which have become quite common of late) to the effect that those who have the Spirit dwelling in them, and speaking directly to and through them, are independent of the Word of God. This is the form which the idea of a continuing revelation takes in quarters where a direct attack on the authority of Scripture would fail. But the result is the same."

The punishment which will be meted out to those who seek to set aside the Word of God in any way whatsoever, and/or who fail to manifest unquestioned obedience to its requirements, is fully and plainly set forth in the Scriptures themselves, namely. "... and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ..." (2 Thess. 1: 7-9.) "For if we sin willingly after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins,

but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace. For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again. The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10: 26-31.)

"Truth Crushed to Earth Shall Rise Again"

(Jer. 36: 32)

Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire; and there were added besides unto them many like words.

Jehoiakim, of course, was not able to destroy the word of God, by merely burning the manuscript; but his impious action did result in additional words of condemnation for himself. The king was not specifically mentioned in the original transcription, so far as the record goes; but when Jeremiah and Baruch were divinely authorized to take another roll, "and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll," which had been burned, they were told to add the following words concerning the king himself: "He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them, but they hearkened not." (Verses 30, 31.) These and similar expressions were evidently included in "and there were added besides unto them many like words." No one has ever been

able, or ever will be able, to fight a successful war against the Word of God. Some one has said,

Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith's door

And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;

Then, looking in, I saw upon the floor

Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had?" said I,

"To wear and batter all these hammers so?"

"Just one," said he; then said, with twinkling eye,

"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

And so, I thought, the anvil of God's Word

For ages skeptic blows have beat upon:

Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard

The anvil is unharmed—the hammers, gone!

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is it impossible to destroy God's word?
Why is an attempt to do so such a great crime?
What does the Bible teach regarding the permanence of God's word?
What is the meaning of the expression "the Word of God." as used in this lesson?
What is said about its ability to accomplish God's purpose?
What should be the attitude of every responsible person toward God's word?

The Golden Text

In what context are the words of the golden text found?
What is the meaning of the expression "the word of the Lord abideth for ever"?

The Insolent Action of a King

Discuss the full setting of the lesson now before us.
What do we learn from the lesson text regarding the manner in which some of the Bible was written?
Why did Jeremiah request Baruch to read the message to the people and at what place?

How did the word of what was happening reach the king and what did he do about it?

How did Jehoiakim show his contempt for God and his word?

What was the attitude of the princes toward the message which they heard?

What did the king attempt to do next and why didn't he succeed?

The Roll Rewritten and Punishment Decreed

What two important truths should people always keep before them?

In what way do some people who profess to accept the Bible endeavor to get rid of its teaching?

How can one test the principle involved in this for himself?

What authority does the Word of the Lord claim for itself?

How do some people try to circumscribe the authority of God's word?

What does the Bible teach regarding the punishment which will be meted out to those who reject its teaching?

"Truth Crushed to Earth Shall Rise Again"

What happened as a result of Jehoiakim's attempt to destroy the word of the Lord?

What punishment was decreed against him?

Why is it impossible for any one to succeed in his fight against the Bible?

Lesson X—September 5, 1971

JEREMIAH'S ORDEAL

Lesson Text

Jer. 37: 11-21

11 And it came to pass that, when the army of the Chal-de'-ans was broken up from Je-ru'-sa-lem for fear of Pha'-raoh's army,

12 Then Jer-e-mi'-ah went forth out of Je-ru'-sa-lem to go into the land of Ben'-ja-min, to receive his portion there, in the midst of the people.

13 And when he was in the gate of Ben'-ja-min, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was I-ri'-jah, the son of Shel-e-mi'-ah, the son of Han-a-ni'-ah; and he laid hold on Jer-e-mi'-ah the prophet, saying, Thou art falling away to the Chal-de'-ans.

14 Then said Jer-e-mi'-ah, It is

false; I am not falling away to the Chal-de-ans. But he hearkened not to him; so I-ri'-jah laid hold on Jer-e-mi'-ah, and brought him to the princes.

15 And the princes were wroth with Jer-e-mi'-ah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of J6n'-a-than the scribe; for they had made that the prison.

16 When Jer-e-mi'-ah was come into the dungeon-house, and into the cells, and Jer-e-mi'-ah had remained there many days;

17 Then Zed-e-ki'-ah the king sent, and fetched him: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said. Is there any word from Je-ho'-vah? And Jer-e-mi'-ah said, There is. He said also, Thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Bab'-y-16n.

18 Moreover Jer-e-mi'-ah said unto king Zed-e-ki'-ah, Wherein have I sinned against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison?

19 Where now are your prophets that prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Bab'-y-16n shall not come against you, nor against this land?

20 And now hear, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be presented before thee, that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jon'-a-than the scribe, lest I die there.

21 Then Zed-e-ki'-ah the king commanded, and they committed Jer-e-mi'-ah into the court of the guard; and they gave him daily a loaf of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city was spent. Thus Jer-e-mi'-ah remained in the court of the guard.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Be not afraid because of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Jehovah."* (Jer. 1: 8.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 40: 1-8.

Daily Bible Readings

August 30.	M.	Persecution to Be Expected (2 Tim: 3: 1-16)
August 31.	T.	Persecution Brings Blessings (Matt. 5: 3-11)
September 1.	W.	Fellowship in Suffering (Phil. 3: 1-15)
September 2.	T.	Imprisonment of John (Matt. 14: 1-12)
September 3.	F.	Imprisonment of Peter (Acts 12: 1-4)
September 4.	S.	Imprisonment of Paul (2 Tim. 4: 1-18)
September 5.	S.	Jeremiah in a Dungeon (Jer. 38: 1-6)

TIME.—About 590 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jeremiah, some officials, and Zedekiah the king.

Introduction

The careful reader of the Book of Jeremiah will readily recognize that its contents are made up of history, biography, and prophecy; and inasmuch as these different parts are not always arranged chronologically, it is sometimes difficult to get the proper setting of a given lesson. For example, Jeremiah 32: 2 says, "Now at that time the king of Babylon's army was besieging Jerusalem; and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard, which was in the king of Judah's house." And then, five chapters later, we read, "Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people; for they had not put him in prison." (Jer. 37: 4.) The first passage apparently refers to Jeremiah's retention in "the court of the guard," a kind of open

space which was occupied by the guard; but which was not closed to the friends of the prophet, who wished to visit him. (See Jer. 32: 6ff.) The time of the imprisonment just referred to, was during the siege of Jerusalem, which was temporarily lifted when the king of Babylon heard of the movements of the armies of Egypt. (Cf. Jer. 37: 3-10.) On the other hand, the prison referred to in Jeremiah 37: 4, was not the court of the guard; but rather the dungeon which was in the house of Jonathan.

It appears that the king of Judah himself was responsible for Jeremiah's confinement in the court of the guard; but it was the princes who imposed the prison sentence in the dungeon, in the house of Jona-

than, as we shall see in the lesson text for today's lesson. Referring again to chapter 32, we read, "Now at that time the king of Babylon's army was besieging Jerusalem; and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard, which was in the king of Judah's house. For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; and Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes; and he shall bring Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith Jehovah: though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper." (Jer. 32: 2-5.)

As one reads and studies the Bible, he will be impressed with the fact that human nature is practically the same, in any age of the world. Dedicated men have been punished all through the centuries, for telling others exactly that which God wants them to know. Stephen voiced this sentiment, when he said, "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them that showed before the coming of the Righteous One; of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers; ye who received the law as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not." (Acts 7: 52, 53.) And the Lord Jesus Christ himself, in a scathing denunciation

of the religious leaders of his day, said, "Therefore, behold, I send unto you prophets and wise men, and scribes: some of them shall ye kill and crucify; and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar. Verily I say unto you. All these things shall come upon this generation." (Matt. 23: 34-36.)

Not only has the persecution of God's messengers been the sad story throughout the entire history of the Bible; it still is. There are even preachers today, who profess to preach only the gospel of Christ in its ancient purity, who will make trouble for any one who does not agree with them. Any Christian, of course, including gospel preachers, should make every effort to feel that they are right; but it is possible for any human being to be mistaken about some things. Honest discussion and fair treatment of others will usually bring brethren closer together. Furthermore, Jesus will not permit, with his favor, the preaching of any gospel, other than that which is clearly stated in such passages as Mark 16: 15, 16 and Acts 2: 37, 38; but relatively few who have not responded to such preaching will feel kindly toward such preachers. (Cf. Gal. 1: 6-9; 2 Thess. 1: 7-9; 1 Pet. 4: 12-19.) Jeremiah was not the only spokesman for Jehovah who had to suffer persecution for the sake of the word of the Lord.

The Golden Text

"Be not afraid because of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Jehovah." It will help us to appreciate the words just quoted more, if we will consider them in the light of the background against which they were spoken. (See Jer. 1: 4-10.) Jehovah told Jeremiah, who was apparently a young man at the time the Lord spoke to him, that he had known him all of his life; and that he had called him to be a prophet, that is, a spokesman for God, to all to whom he would send him. He further told him that he was to speak whatever he commanded

him to say. And inasmuch as God's thoughts and ways are diametrically opposed to the thoughts and ways of mankind (cf. Isa. 55: 8, 9), that meant that the prophet would frequently find himself in opposition to the people against whom he spoke God's message. The prophet would be called on to suffer, but he would not be forsaken.

The promise which the Lord made to Jeremiah was also made to Paul, and, indeed, to all who are faithful to their commitment. When the apostle Paul was working under difficult circumstances in Corinth, he

received this encouragement: "And the Lord said unto Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have much people in this city." (Acts 18: 9, 10.) And as Jesus spoke of the great work which he was assigning to his disciples a few weeks before he left them to return to the Father, he said, "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.)

There is really no place for fear, so far as other people are concerned, when it comes to the life of a Christian. Jesus himself said, "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: 4, 5.) When God enabled John to see, in a vision, the new Jerusalem, he said, "But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." (Rev. 21: 8.) The "fearful," according to Thayer, are those "Christians who through cowardice give way under persecutions and apostatize." Christians can and should have the same quality of confidence in the Lord, as that of Jeremiah. (Cf. Heb. 11:6; 1 John 4: 4.)

The Text Explained

The Occasion for Jeremiah's Imprisonment (Jer. 37: 11-15)

And it came to pass that, when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to receive his portion there, in the midst of the people. And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he laid hold on Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou art falling away to the Chaldeans. Then said Jeremiah, It is false; I am not falling away to the Chaldeans. But he hearkened not to him; so Irijah laid hold on Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes. And the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe; for they had made that the prison.

Josephus (Ant. 10: 7, 3) says that Zedekiah sought help from the king of Egypt, when the Chaldeans were endeavoring to overthrow Jerusalem; and that when the Egyptian monarch heard that the army of Babylon was indeed besieging Jerusalem, Pharaoh began moving his army toward that city, with the in-

tention of helping Zedekiah. However, when the Chaldeans learned of what was taking place, they temporarily lifted the siege of Jerusalem, went forth to meet the Egyptians, defeated them, and drove them out of the country. Josephus then goes on to say, "Now as soon as the king of Babylon was departed from Jerusalem, the false prophets deceived Zedekiah, and said that the king of Babylon would not any more make war against him or his people, nor remove them out of their own country into Babylon; and that those then in captivity would return, with all those vessels of the temple of which the king of Babylon had despoiled that temple. But Jeremiah came among them, and prophesied what contradicted those predictions, and what proved to be true, that they did ill, and deluded the king; that the Egyptians would be of no advantage to them, but that the king of Babylon would renew the war against Jerusalem, and besiege it again, and would destroy the people by famine, and carry away those that remained into captivity, and would take away what they had as spoils, and would carry off those riches that were in the temple; nay, that, besides this, he would burn it, and utterly overthrow the city, and that they should

serve him and his posterity seventy years."

Jeremiah's home was in Anathoth, a Levitical or priestly city in the land of Benjamin, some three miles north of Jerusalem. (Cf. Josh. 21: 18; Neh. 11: 32.) It appears that the prophet owned some property in Anathoth, probably in addition to that which he was told to purchase (see Jer. 32: 6-25); and, taking advantage of the lifting of the siege, he "went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to receive his portion there, in the midst of the people." The original term which is rendered "to receive his portion" is in keeping with the definition, which is given by Brown, Driver, and Briggs (*Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*); but other versions of the Scriptures give a somewhat different meaning. The King James Version, for example, says that Jeremiah went "to separate himself," while Moffatt, more in keeping with the text now before us, has "to take over some property."

Taking into consideration the fact of the Chaldean siege in that area, it is, of course, possible that Jeremiah took advantage of the absence of the invading army, and intended to go and see about his real estate, and maybe to arrange to live there a part of the time, thereby dividing his time between his home in Anathoth and in Jerusalem. At any rate, there is no indication that there was anything improper about his proposed trip to his native village, and his business while there. But as Jeremiah was about to leave Jerusalem, by way of the Benjamin gate, which was evidently on the north side of the city, a captain of the guard, who was apparently stationed there, laid hold on the prophet, and accused him of being a deserter and a traitor to his country.

It is easy, of course, to impugn the motives of those who are unpopular with the multitude, and especially so if the one so accused has been condemning the course of the others. Hostility toward Jeremiah had been mounting, in Jerusalem, for some time; and now it was about to take on a definite and concrete form. The prophet had told the leaders in Jerusalem that they could not depend upon the Egyptians for help

against the Chaldeans; but that if they would surrender to the army of Babylon, their lot would be much easier. That, to the leaders in the capital city, was nothing short of treason; and it was for that reason that any move on the part of Jeremiah would be subject to the utmost scrutiny. It is very difficult for people, who manifest the attitude of the critics of Jeremiah, to give due credit to others, even in the ordinary things of life. This principal is as obvious in religious circles, as it was in the affairs of state in Jeremiah's day.

The response of Jeremiah to the charge of treason, however, was unmistakable; but appearances under such conditions can be so construed, as to silence the man who had become so sharp a thorn in the political sides of the rulers in Jerusalem. The controlling princes, the ones who were then opposing Jeremiah, were apparently not the ones who had stood by him during the days of Jehoiakim. (See Jer. 26: 10-19.) The princes who had supported the prophet in earlier days, were probably among the "good figs" which had been carried to Babylon; while the ones of the lesson now under consideration, were among the "bad figs" which could not be eaten. (Read Jer. 24: 1-10.) The sentry (Irijah) who arrested Jeremiah refused to accept the prophet's explanation regarding his movements; and took him to the princes. "And the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe; for they had made that the prison."

The King's Interview with Jeremiah (Jer. 37: 16, 17)

When Jeremiah was come into the dungeon-house, and into the cells, and Jeremiah had remained there many days: then Zedekiah the king sent, and fetched him: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from Jehovah? And Jeremiah said, There is. He said also, Thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.

The marginal reading for "dungeon-house" is *house of the pit*. It appears therefore that the prison into which Jeremiah was placed,

consisted of a "pit," that is, a *dungeon*, with vaulted cells, or subterranean rooms, connected with it. It has already been pointed out that this place of confinement was different from the detention center, which was in the king's house. The prison-house of this section of the lesson text, was designed for hardened criminals; while the "dungeon" which is described in the following chapter, was a cistern with no water in it; but only mire. While the dungeon-house, with its cells, and which belonged to Jonathan's house, was suitable for malefactors of any kind; it was also an appropriate place to detain those who were suspected of evil intent, until the proper disposition could be made with them. This, apparently, was the reason behind Jeremiah's being placed in the prison referred to in this section of the lesson text.

We do not know just how long Jeremiah remained in the prison in the house of Jonathan; the text simply says that he remained there many days. It is very probable that the Chaldeans, by this time, had returned from their successful encounter with the Egyptian army, and had resumed their siege of Jerusalem; but if not, the king of Judah would want to try to find out something about what he should expect. He therefore had Jeremiah brought secretly into the royal residence, and asked him the direct question, "Is there any word from Jehovah?" This indicates something of the pitiful plight of the weak king. He apparently was not sure of the wisdom of the war policy of his advisers, and feared the outcome; but he was also incapable of taking a firm stand of his own. It was against this kind of a background that he sought the help of the prophet.

It is pathetic to look at people who need help, and who desperately want it, and who evidently know where to find it; but who are both ashamed and afraid to be seen by their contemporaries, as they endeavor to obtain the heeded information and assistance. That, apparently, was Zedekiah's trouble; but he was not the only one who was caught in such a predicament. "Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed on him; but because of the

Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the glory that is of men more than the glory that is of God." (John 12: 42, 43; cf. 9: 13-34.) Why will people manifest such weakness, when their own salvation is at stake? Cf. Matt. 16: 24-26.) A person who possesses a strong character does not hesitate to seek for the truth from any source; and he is neither ashamed nor afraid to be seen seeking for help, at any place where he thinks he can find it.

Jeremiah was indeed in straitened circumstance himself, when he came face to face with king Zedekiah and was asked a direct question regarding the will of the Lord; but, as one might expect, he was true to the commission which had been his throughout his prophetic ministry. The king had asked Jeremiah if there was any word from Jehovah, and that was evidently what the monarch thought he wanted; but it is interesting to note that the inspired message was the one which had brought the prophet into disfavor with both the king and his princes. The shy and sensitive messenger from Anathoth, who had said at the beginning, "Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold, I know not how to speak; for I am a child," had learned the truth of the assurance which God had given to him, namely, "For, behold, I have made thee this day a fortified city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee, saith Jehovah, to deliver thee." (Jer. 1: 6, 18, 19.)

While it is pathetic to see a weakling, who is ashamed and afraid to turn openly to the source of the help which he so desperately needs; it is even more so to see a man who knows the truth, but is both ashamed and afraid to declare it openly. Some preachers appear to be more interested in protecting their own person and popularity, than they are in trying to save the souls of men. Such men should go into the quiet of their closet, and ask God to help them, as they read the valiant rec-

ords of such messengers of the cross as the apostle Paul. Who does not remember the record which the apostle to the Gentiles left behind him, when he stood before the capricious and grasping Felix, who had the power to set him free from his Caesarean bondage? The governor of Judaea was guilty of some of the blackest sins in the catalogue of wrongdoing; but when he called Paul to speak to him concerning the faith that is in Christ Jesus, the apostle was true to the trust which had been placed in him by the Lord. (See Acts 24: 24-27; cf. 1 Tim. 1: 12-16; Acts 9: 15, 16.)

Then there is the final charge which Paul gave to his son in the gospel, the beloved Timothy (see 2 Tim. 4: 1-8), who also was apparently timid in nature. But in spite of that, Paul could say, "For I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state. For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child serveth a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the gospel." (Phil. 2: 19-22.) Paul and his fellow-workers frequently had to go to prison, because of their loyalty to the Lord; but there are many things worse than prisons, and not the least of them is unfaithfulness to the trust which God has imposed in one. Even in prison, Paul could write, "Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel; so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest; and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear." (Phil. 1: 12-14.)

Jeremiah's Plea for Clemency

(Jer. 37: 18-21)

Moreover Jeremiah said unto king

Zedekiah, Wherein have I sinned against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison? Where now are your prophets that prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land? And now hear, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be presented before thee, that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there. Then Zedekiah the king commanded, and they committed Jeremiah into the court of the guard; and they gave him daily a loaf of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city was spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

After speaking God's message to the king, Jeremiah asked Zedekiah two pointed questions, namely, (1) Wherein had the prophet sinned, that he should be put in prison? and (2) Where were the prophets who said that the king of Babylon would not come against Zedekiah and the land of Judah? The questions were doubtless embarrassing to the king of Judah; but it was to his credit that he did not punish Jeremiah further. Instead of doing that, the king relieved the prophet's situation somewhat.

It was natural, of course, for Jeremiah to plead for his life; for he doubtless realized that if he had to remain in the prison in Jonathan's house, that he would very likely die. However, it is easy for one to conclude that death under such circumstances was much more preferable than unfaithfulness to God. The attitude which Jeremiah manifested in this respect, was not the result of accident; instead, it was the natural consequence of devotion to a trust. (Read Jer. 20: 7-13.) No amount of abuse and persecution could deter Jeremiah from doing that which Jehovah expected to him.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What do the contents of the Book of Jeremiah include and what problem grows out of this?

How is this question illustrated by the places of Jeremiah's imprisonment?
How did the prophet come to be in the different prisons?
Why have the spokesmen for God been so universally persecuted throughout the ages?
What application does all of this have in our day?

The Golden Text

When and under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?
 What application does the truth of God's attitude toward his messengers have for our day?
 What attitude should the faithful child of God always manifest toward "fear"?

The Occasion for Jeremiah's Imprisonment

Discuss the events which led up to the imprisonment of the prophet Jeremiah.
 What did the city of Anathoth mean to Jeremiah and why was he permitted to live there?
 What apparently prompted Jeremiah to endeavor to leave Jerusalem at the time of this lesson?
 Why would it be easy for Jeremiah's enemies to question his motives and movements?
 How does the same principle work in our day?
 Why did the sentry and the princes refuse to believe Jeremiah's explanation?

The King's Interview with Jeremiah

In what kind of prison was Jeremiah placed and where was it located?
 What, apparently, was the main purpose of such a prison-house?
 Why, then, was Jeremiah lodged in such a place?
 Why did Zedekiah want to see Jeremiah and under what circumstance were they brought together?

What question did the king ask the prophet, and what was the prophet's reply?
 What does the action of the king suggest regarding his character?
 Why was Zedekiah such a weak ruler?
 How do we know that such an attitude was not peculiar to that king of Judah?
 What kind of an answer did Jeremiah give to Zedekiah's question?
 Why was the prophet so bold in the face of a king?
 What lessons should we learn from the attitude and conduct of Zedekiah and Jeremiah?
 Why is the principle we are now considering so vital to gospel preachers today?
 How are the lessons now before us illustrated in the New Testament?
 What, alone, will make a teacher of God's word determined to be faithful to the Lord?
 What effect does genuine faithfulness usually have on others who observe it?

Jeremiah's Plea for Clemency

When Jeremiah approached the king in his own behalf, what two questions did he ask him?
 What probable effect did these questions have on Zedekiah and why?
 What commendable trait did the king of Judah manifest toward the prophet?
 What noble spirit did Jeremiah manifest in all of these circumstances?
 What was the result of his plea for mercy?

Lesson XI—September 12, 1971

EZEKIEL, WATCHMAN OF ISRAEL

Lesson Text

Ezek. 2: 1-6; 3: 17-21

1 And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak with thee.

2 And the Spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet; and I heard him that spake unto me.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Is'-ra-el, to nations that are rebellious, which have rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me even unto this very day.

4 And the children are impudent and stiffhearted: I *do* send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Je-ho'-vah.

5 And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious house), yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

6 And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of

their words, though briers and thorns are with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house.

17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Is'-ra-el: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand.

19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

20 Again, when a righteous man

doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he hath done shall not be remembered; but

his blood will I require at thy hand. 21 Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning; and thou hast delivered thy soul.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah."* (Psalm 33: 12.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Ezek. 3: 1-16.

Daily Bible Readings

September 6.	M.	Ezekiel's Call (Ezek. 2: 1-7)
September 7.	T.	Ezekiel Prepares Himself (Ezek. 3: 4-11)
September 8.	W.	Ezekiel's Vision (Ezek. 1: 4-14)
September 9.	T.	Ezekiel's Obligation (Ezek. 3: 16-21)
September 10.	F.	Duties of Watchmen (Isa. 62: 1-6)
September 11.	S.	Careless Watchman (Psalm 127: 1-5)
September 12.	S.	"Watchman, What of the Night?" (Isa. 21: 1-11)

TIME.—595 B.C.

PLACE.—By the river Chebar, in the land of the Chaldeans.

PERSONS.—Jehovah and Ezekiel.

Introduction

The Book of Ezekiel is, on the whole, one of the most difficult portions of the Old Testament to understand. It probably takes first place in this respect, along with such other prophet productions, as Daniel and Zechariah. There are, to be sure, sections of all three of the books just referred to, which are relatively easy to understand; but there is much in all of them which has baffled the greatest minds of Bible students. Dean Plumptre, in giving some idea of the attitude which many Bible students manifest toward the Book of Ezekiel says, "It may be said, I think, without rashness that for every ten readers of Isaiah, readers who think and love, there are seven readers of Jeremiah, and not more than two or three to turn to Ezekiel with a like spirit of reverential study. In the old lectionary of the English Church, the latter prophet was almost conspicuous by his absence, and there were but fifteen lessons taken from his writings. It is one of the many gains from the new table of lessons that the balance is, in some measure, redressed, and that men are taught not to look on one of the great prophets of the Old Testament as too hard for them to understand or profit by. But it may be questioned how far that lesson has as yet been adequately learned."

Andrew W. Blackwood, Jr., says that every Christian today needs Ezekiel's message of hope; while only a small number are receiving it. It is easy, of course, to understand why the prophecy is not widely read and appreciated; for the book is literally filled with material which is difficult for the average student to grasp. But when one devotes himself to a careful and prayerful study of this prophetic production, he will soon find himself face to face, as he begins to discern the prophet's meaning, with a haunting parallel with the events and attitudes of our day. It is, in reality, a case of history repeating itself. It is true that different nations are involved, and men fight with different weapons; but the underlying issues are remarkably similar. When this truth becomes clear to the student, he learns that Ezekiel adds something almost completely missing from modern thought, namely, the element of hope. The embattled prophet teaches us to see that the light of God is still shining. After referring to what some have said regarding the authorship of the book from which our lesson for today is taken, Dr. Blackwood goes on to say:

"My own belief is that there was a man named Ezekiel who lived and worked in Babylon during the early

years of the exile. This man both repelled and attracted his fellow exiles by his descriptions of visions he had seen and by his uncompromising conviction that Jerusalem must fall. When in historic fact Jerusalem fell, this man continued unswervingly on the course of faith. History swerved; he did not. He told the now hopeless exiles that Jerusalem must rise. Some leader, with unspeakable power to stir thought, must have exercised such a ministry among the exiles because, in historic fact, Jerusalem rose again. I believe that this leader was Ezekiel, who wrote the report of his visions and his dramatic parables.

"Almost everything that Christians know about the other Son of Man comes channelled through the life of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John,

I believe that an unknown disciple performed a similar work of love to bring to us Ezekiel's prophetic message by collecting his writings and assembling them into the form we have today. Like Matthew and Mark and other chosen servants of God, he left the imprint of his own personality upon the completed work. I do not share the confidence of many critics that they, or I, have the ability to discern precisely which words the prophet wrote and which are the editor's. Studying the conflicting theories about this matter has, if anything, decreased my confidence. By whatever earthly hand, I believe that the Holy Spirit worked through a human agent to bring a message that the world needs today."

The Golden Text

"Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah." The words just quoted are taken from a psalm which is devoted to the praise of Jehovah, as the creator and preserver of the world; or, as another title has it, praise to the Lord who provides and delivers. The section of the psalm, from which the golden text is taken, reads as follows: "Jehovah bringeth the counsel of the nations to nought; he maketh the thoughts of the peoples to be of no effect. The counsel of Jehovah standeth fast for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah, the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance. Jehovah looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men; from the place of his habitation he looketh forth upon all the inhabitants of the earth, he that fashioneth the hearts of them all, that considereth all their works. There is no king saved by the multitude of a host: a mighty man is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a vain thing for safety; neither doth he deliver any by his great power. Behold, the eye of Jehovah is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his lovingkindness; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine." (Psalm 33: 10-19.)

The scripture just quoted should be sufficient to convince any thoughtful person that Jehovah in-

deed does rule in the affairs of men. Daniel declares, "The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones; to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men." (Dan. 4: 17.) The apostle Paul says, "He made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation." (Acts 17: 26.) The New English Bible renders the passage in these words: "He created every race of men of one stock, to inhabit the whole earth's surface. He fixed the epochs of their history and the limits of their territory." God therefore has determined the destiny of nations, both as to duration of the time of their existence, and the territory which they shall occupy.

The kingdom of Israel was a theocracy, which means that God ruled in all the affairs of both "church (cf. Acts 7: 38) and state"; a thing which was not true of any other people. God chose the people of Israel to be his special people; and he was their God. (Cf. Deut. 4: 32-40.) This was the idea which the psalmist had in mind, when he uttered the words of the golden text. The Wise Man says, "Righteousness

exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people." (Prov. 14:34.) But we must understand that no nation, as that term is used in this lesson, other than Israel, has ever been God's peculiar people. The only way in which a political nation today can have Jehovah for

its God, is for the people who make up the nation to render individual obedience to the Lord. God does rule over a spiritual nation, his church (1 Pet. 2: 9), which is composed of people who have been called unto him by the gospel. (2 Thess. 2: 13, 14.)

The Text Explained

Ezekiel's Prophetic Commission

(Ezek. 2: 1-5)

And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak with thee. And the Spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet; and I heard him that spake unto me. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to nations that are rebellious, which have rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me even unto this very day. And the children are imprudent and stiffhearted: I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious house), yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

If one will read Ezekiel 1 he will learn that when Ezekiel saw the vision of the divine glory, he fell upon his face; and it was from that position that he was told to stand upon his feet, in preparation for the message which Jehovah wanted him to hear. The visions which Ezekiel saw, and which were evidently in preparation for the commission which he received from the Lord, were (1) that of the four cherubim; (2) that of the four wheels; and (3) that of the divine glory. Bible students are hopelessly divided, as to the meaning and significance of the first two visions; but are fairly well agreed regarding the third. The first two visions are linked together, and many students of the Bible regard them as picturing the four great empires, also referred to in the Book of Daniel; while others look upon the two scenes, as picturing a chariot, with the throne of God above it.

But whatever may have been the meaning and significance of the visions just referred to, it is evident

that their practical purpose was to enable the man who was being called to the prophetic office, to get an awe-inspiring vision of the Majestic Glory. This purpose was accomplished by enabling Ezekiel to experience the intense reality of Jehovah, and the direct revelation of his will to him. It also appears that the form of the revelation was in keeping with the prophet's spiritual development, and the mental attitude which was created by the visions which he had seen; or, to say the same thing in another way, the visions which Ezekiel saw prepared him for the message which Jehovah had for him. The "Spirit" which entered Ezekiel, was God's Spirit; and is the same Spirit which is called the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. No man was ever sent by Jehovah to accomplish a work, who was not divinely equipped for it. (Cf. Isa. 6: 1ff; John 16: 13; Luke 24: 48, 49; Acts 1: 8; 1 Cor. 2: 6-13.)

The expression "son of man" is used with reference to Ezekiel more than ninety times; and its apparent purpose was to impress upon him the fact that he was frail, weak, and mortal. This was evidently also true in the case of Daniel. (Dan. 8: 17.) The same expression was also used by Jesus with reference to himself; but inasmuch as he was God manifested in the flesh, the purpose of the expression was probably to identify him with his brethren, who were purely human beings. When Jehovah addressed Ezekiel as son of man, he evidently wanted him to understand that, although he was like other human beings, in and of himself, he was also able to speak for God, when Jehovah sent him to his rebellious people. (Cf. 2 Cor. 3: 4-6.)

While there were miraculous applications in the cases of Ezekiel, Paul, and other inspired messengers, during Bible times; the same prin-

ciple, without the miraculous aspect, is likewise applicable to gospel preachers today. Such men can, and should, regard themselves as being nothing in God's sight; but when they have the word which they have been divinely authorized to proclaim, they can deal with the situations of their day, pretty much as the potter handles the clay. (Read Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus, in the letters which he addressed to them.) The Lord's word will be the standard of judgment in the last day (John 12: 48-50); and preachers and other Christians will be held responsible in God's sight, if they do not proclaim the whole truth.

The manner in which the Jewish people are referred to in the lesson text now before us, seems to indicate that Ezekiel's message was intended for all of them, whether in Chaldaee or elsewhere; and the plural "nations" probably implies that the Israelites had, to a large extent, become like the Gentiles. It appears that both the northern and the southern kingdoms of God's people were taken into captivity in three stages. In the case of the kingdom of Judah, the first contingent went with Jehoiakim, among whom was Daniel (2 Chron. 36: 5-8; Dan. 1: 1-7); the second group went with Jehoiachin, including Ezekiel (2 Kings 24: 10-16); the third and final removal of the people from their homeland was accomplished, when Zedekiah was taken into captivity (2 Kings 25: 1-12). There were three months between the first two removals, and eleven years between the second and third. God's purpose in taking the people into captivity was to punish them for their sins; but it is evident that they had not become penitent when Ezekiel was commissioned to prophesy among them. The second group from Judah had been in Babylon about five years, at the time of this lesson. (Ezek. 1: 2.)

But regardless of the state of one's heart, it is the duty of the Lord's messenger to proclaim the inspired message to him, if God wants him to hear it. Many a preacher has doubtless wondered why he was in such an unpromising field, and working among people who are so unresponsive to the gospel message;

but if he will only remember that the Lord does not require him to be successful, but only faithful, then his burden will be greatly lightened. If men are to be judged by the word of God (cf. 1 Pet. 4: 6), then they must hear it; and it is not likely that they will do that, unless some one declares it unto them.

Some one has said that life is a campaign, not a holiday and it is for that reason that those who have the word of God, must endure hardships as good soldiers of Christ Jesus. "And he said unto all, If any man should come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9: 23.) Cross-bearing is not burden-bearing, that is, the cross-bearing which Jesus has in mind does not consist merely in the hardships which come to saint and sinner alike; the reference, rather, is to those sacrifices which are voluntarily made for the good of others. People can not always refuse to bear burdens (cf. Gal. 6: 5), but they can refuse to bear a cross. However, if they do refuse to bear a cross, they will have to answer to God for that dereliction of duty. And too, people can refuse to accept the benefits of cross-bearing; but they will know that a sacrifice has been made for them, that is, they will know it in the judgment-day if not before. Rebellion against God cannot ultimately destroy the work of a preacher of the gospel. This truth can easily be seen, if one will read Paul's final message to Timothy.

Caution and Encouragement (Ezek. 2: 6)

And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house.

The possibilities which Ezekiel had to face were not unique; that has been the lot of many other prophets of Bible times, and of gospel preachers all down through the ages. God told Ezekiel to speak his word unto the people, whether they listened to it or not; and the same thing is true of gospel preachers today. Jesus said to his disciples,

when he sent them on their limited commission, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." (Matt. 10: 16.) Paul entered the wicked city of Corinth, with the simple gospel message. "And the Lord said unto Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have much people in this city." (Acts 18: 9, 10.)

There is always danger in proclaiming the truth to people, inside the church and out of it, who are indifferent toward or rebellious against it; but there is far more danger in rebelling against God, in refusing to speak his word, than there is in facing a scornful people with the message of truth. "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 you shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." (Luke 12: 4, 5.) There is no better commentary on the portion of the lesson text now before us, than the ministry of the apostle Paul, and his final charge to Timothy. (Read 2 Tim. 4: 1-8.) What can bring more genuine satisfaction to any faithful gospel preacher, than a keen awareness of the fact that he has been true to his trust in proclaiming the word of the Lord?

Ezekiel's Commission Further Exemplified

(Ezek. 3: 17-21)

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked men shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickednesses, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, when a righteous man doth

turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thy hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth no sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning; and thou hast delivered thy soul.

Although Ezekiel was sent to the people of the captivity in general, it is clear from this section of the lesson text, that his responsibility was extended to include individuals as well. Every person is accountable for his own actions, and it is easy to see that this was true of Ezekiel. He was charged with teaching the truth of God to his fellow-captives, which included a warning regarding sin; and his faithfulness to that trust was a matter of life or death. Ezekiel was not required to see that his message was heeded; but he was required to do that which he had been commanded to do.

This is a lesson which every gospel preacher, and teacher of God's word, should learn. No proclaimer of the truth is required to be successful; but he is required to be faithful, even to the point of suffering and death. Every person who enlists in the armed forces of the country, is obligated to serve where the commander-in-chief deems wise; and just so with those who are enrolled in the army of the Lord: they must serve where he, in his providential guidance, directs them. "But thanks be unto God, who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest through us the savor of his knowledge in every place. For we are a sweet savor of Christ unto God, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one a savor from death unto death; to the other a savor from life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as the many, corrupting the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ." (2 Cor. 2: 14-17.)

A classic example of the type of warning we are now considering, was called to our attention in last

week's lesson; and it is repeated here, namely, "But after certain days, Felix came with Drusilla, his wife, who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. And as he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me. He hoped withal that money would be given him of Paul: wherefore also he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. But when two years were fulfilled, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and desiring to gain favor with the Jews, Felix left Paul in bonds." (Acts 24: 24-27.) Felix probably expected Paul to speak of that which is generally thought of as the "doctrinal phase of Christianity"; but Paul knew something about what the governor

needed; and he addressed himself to that issue.

The section of the text now before us, is one of the many passages in the Bible which plainly teach that it is possible for a righteous man to fall from the favor of God, to the extent that he will finally be lost. (Cf. 2 Pet. 2: 20-22.) God lays a stumbling-block before one, when he permits a person to be tried, or when he makes known to him something that the individual does not want to do. God never endeavors to lead or entice one into sin. (See James 1: 13-15; cf. Rom. 1: 28; Ezek. 33: 11; 2 Pet. 3: 9; 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4.) In what Paul considered to be his farewell address to the Ephesian elders, he said, "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: 26, 27.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Tell something about the Book of Ezekiel and how people, generally speaking, feel about it.

What is one of the outstanding features of the book in question?

Why should the Lord's people endeavor to study the lessons which Ezekiel has for them?

What kind of example did this prophet leave for those who believe and accept the Bible?

What can you say regarding the inspiration of the Book of Ezekiel?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text written?

What is the principal lesson which we should learn from this portion of our study?

In what sense only may a nation have Jehovah as its God?

Ezekiel's Prophetic Commission

Did you read chapter 1 before beginning the study of this lesson?

What benefit did you get from it so far as this study is concerned?

In what way was Ezekiel prepared for the commission which he was about to receive?

In what way was the commission made known unto Ezekiel?

Who or what is the "Spirit" spoken of in the lesson now before us?

What was the significance of the expression "son of man" as it was applied to Ezekiel?

How did God evidently want Ezekiel to feel regarding himself?

In what way is the same principle applicable to the Lord's people today?

What was the general attitude of the people to whom the Lord sent Ezekiel?

Why were they in Babylonian captivity?

What was the principal thing involved in Ezekiel's commission?

In what way is the same principle applicable to preachers and teachers of the word today?

Why is it so important that the word of God be proclaimed to all people?

What does al' of this involve on the part of the Lord's people?

What did Jehovah say that the people would know after Ezekiel delivered his message to them?

Caution and Encouragement

Is it, or is it not, true that the possibilities which Ezekiel had to face were unique?

Give reasons for your answer.

Why are there always dangers in proclaiming the whole counsel of God?

What greater danger will those who do not teach the full truth have to face?

How do you account for some preachers and teachers manifesting the attitude they do in this respect?

What is the greatest satisfaction that any preacher or teacher can experience?

Ezekiel's Commission Further Exemplified
What did Ezekiel's full commission include?

What important lesson should we learn from this?

Why does the Lord want people warned concerning their sinful lives?

What do we learn from this lesson regarding the possibility of a saved person's being lost?

Lesson XII—September 19, 1971

A NEW HEART PROMISED

Lesson Text

Ezek. 36: 25-38

25 And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances, and do them.

28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

29 And I will save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the grain, and will multiply it, and lay no famine upon you.

30 And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye may receive no more the reproach of famine among the nations.

31 Then shall ye remember your evil ways, and your doings that were not good; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

32 Not for your sake do I *this*, saith the Lord Je-ho'-vah, be it known unto you: be ashamed and

confounded for your ways, O house of Is'-ra-el.

33 Thus saith the Lord Je-ho'-vah: In the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be builded.

34 And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, whereas it was a desolation in the sight of all that passed by.

35 And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.

36 Then the nations that are left round about you shall know that I, Je-ho'-vah, have builded the ruined places, and planted that which was desolate: I, Je-ho'-vah, have spoken it, and I will do it.

37 Thus saith the Lord Je-ho'-vah: For this, moreover, will I be inquired of by the house of Is'-ra-el, to do it for them: I will increase them with men like a flock.

38 As the flock for sacrifice, as the flock of Je-ru'-sa-lem in her appointed feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men; and they shall know that I am Je-ho'-vah.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth.*" (1 Pet. 1: 22.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Ezek. 47: 1-12.

Daily Bible Readings

September 13.	M.....	A Promise of Blessing (Ezek. 34: 11-16)
September 14.	T.....	A Vision of Hope (Ezek. 47: 1-10)
September 15.	W.....	Return Prophesied (Jer. 29: 10-14)
September 16.	T.....	Return of Remnant (Isa. 10: 20-23)
September 17.	F.....	Woe upon Assyria (Isa. 10: 1-11)
September 18.	S.....	Zion's Happy Future (Isa. 25: 1-10)
September 19.	S.....	Promise of Jehovah (Isa. 42: 1-13)

TIME.—587 B.C.

PLACE.—By the river Chebar, in the land of the Chaldeans.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Ezekiel, and the people of Israel.

Introduction

One of the great injunctions of the Scriptures is found in Proverbs 4: 23, which reads as follows: "Keep

thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Although spoken during the age of

Moses, the exhortation was eminently true then, and it is still true; its relevance to the human race, and especially to the Lord's people, will never cease. That which has just been said is true, first and foremost, because of what the heart of man is. When we think of the physical being, we think of the heart, not only as the center of our being; but also as the organ which is responsible for the distribution of the blood throughout our bodies, without which life would be utterly impossible. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood." (Lev. 17: 11; cf. Gen. 9: 4.) And then, by means of a metaphor, we can easily see why the center of our moral and spiritual being, is also called the heart. Just as the flow of that which is responsible for the animal life goes forth from the physical heart, just so all of our mental and moral activities have their origin in the spiritual heart. Or, to say the same thing in another way, our acceptance of rejection by the Lord depends upon this center of our spiritual being.

The spiritual heart is the source of all our intellectual, emotional, and volitional processes, as well as those of the conscience. For convenience's sake, and in order to make it easier for us to grasp the idea of the spiritual heart, the functions of this heart may be listed in the following four categories, namely, (1) *The processes of the intellect* (a) think (Matt. 9: 4; Heb. 4: 12); (b) reason (Mark 2: 8); (c) understand (Matt. 13: 15) and (d) believe (Rom. 10: 9, 10). (2) *The processes of the emotions* (a) love (Matt. 22: 37); (b) despise (2 Sam. 6: 16); (c) anguish (Psalm 33: 21); (d) suffer anguish (2 Cor. 2: 4); and (e) may be stolen (2 Sam. 15: 1-6). (3) *The processes of the will* (a) purpose (Acts 11: 23; 2 Cor. 9: 7); (b) determine (1 Cor. 7: 37); (c) choose (Josh. 24: 15). (4) *The processes of the conscience* (a) may be

pricked (*katanussō*), that is, stung or stabbed, by something which is said or done—a feeling of a sharp pain in the conscience (this original word is found nowhere else in the New Testament. It is, however, found in Genesis 34: 7 in the *Septuagint*, where the sons of Jacob were said to be grieved or deeply pained); (b) cut (*diaprō*) cut to the quick, infuriated—"a strong figure for exasperation"—found also in Acts 7: 54; (c) condemns or approves (1 John 3: 20, 21). All four of these processes, as we shall see in this study, are involved, when one comes into possession of a new or changed heart.

The editor of *The Great Texts of the Bible*, in speaking of the new heart, says, "How wonderfully the Book of God proclaims the doctrine of the 'new'! It speaks of a 'new covenant,' and a 'new creature,' and a 'new song'; it even asserts that there will be 'a new heaven and a new earth.' It proclaims that he that sitteth upon the throne proposes to 'make *all* things new.' It is the unique claim of the gospel that it makes new men. It professes to alter character, not as all other religious and ethical systems in the world have done, by mere influence of reason or of motives, or by a discipline of the flesh; it professes to alter human character by altering human nature (cf. 2 Pet. 1: 4). It brings truth, indeed, to satisfy the reason, and powerful motives of every sort to tell upon the will, as well as law to stimulate the conscience; but in the very act of doing so, it pronounces all these external appliances to be utterly insufficient without a concurrent action from within the man. The real change it proclaims to be a change of 'heart' or spiritual being; and that is the work of God." It is the purpose of this lesson to show how God makes possible the new heart, which he promised.

The Golden Text

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth." If one will consider the setting of the words just quoted, it will not be difficult for him to see that the statement grew out of the over-all exhortation to a holy life.

(Read 1 Pet. 1: 13-25.) Such a life can come about, only when the sinner is willing to, and actually does, submit to the divine plan for regeneration. The apostle Peter discusses this issue at some length in the first chapter of his second letter:

"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.)

The original term *arete* (virtue), in the expression "called us by his own glory and virtue," in the passage just quoted, has primary reference to God's moral attributes, which include his energy or power that was manifested in making possible our salvation. (Cf. Eph. 1: 19, 20; 2: 1.) This power includes the power of the gospel, and we are thereby informed as to how we may become righteous in the sight of the Lord. (See Rom. 1: 16, 17; 10: 1-3; 2 Pet. 1: 3.) The "word of the truth" and the "gospel of your salvation" are one and the same thing, as one may see by reading Ephesians 1: 13 and 1 Peter 1: 22-25. When one becomes obedient to the truth, he becomes obedient to the gospel, and vice versa; and that is the only way in which one come to have a new heart. "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature [there is a new creation, marginal reading]: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." (2 Cor. 5: 17; cf. Eph. 2: 8-10; Tit. 3: 4-7.)

The process we are now considering is elsewhere referred to as the new birth; and any one who reads the context in which the passage we

are now considering is found, will easily see that that is what Peter is talking about. (Read John 3: 3-5; 1 Pet. 1: 22, 23.) One of the key words in the process is the term *change*; and unless that fact is recognized, it is not possible for one to grasp the situation which the inspired writers have recorded. The Speaker's Bible sums up the issue in these words: "The change which passes over a man when he comes to Christ is so radical and thorough that it can be defined only in these terms: he has become a new creature; he has been born anew; a new life has been begotten within him by the energy of the Spirit of God. He lives from and towards a new centre; new motives inspire him; he is not his own; he has a new Master, even Christ. He does all things now for the sake of Christ. He lives not to please himself but to please God. To be a Christian is not to leave off certain things and to start doing certain other things. We may do that without making any change at the centre. It may be just a rearrangement of things at the surface; probably such a change would effect the character and spirit in some measure in time, but let us realize that the Christian life is not merely change of habit; that may take place from unworthy and impure motive. The Christian life is change of heart; where that takes place change of habit will be sure to follow. But it is more, and more radical, than change of habit; it is change of spirit, change of outlook. We have entered into a new world."

The Text Explained

The Regeneration of Israel
(Ezek. 36: 25-31)

And 7 will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness. and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that

I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. And I will save you from all your uncleanness: and I will call for the grain, and will multiply it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye may receive no more the reproach of famine among the nations. Then shall ye remember your evil ways, and your doings that were not good: and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

Because of the value of contextual

study, in an effort to get the message of a given passage of scripture, the entire thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel should be read, before an attempt is made to explain the lesson text for today; and the section of the text just quoted, should be considered in the light of the three verses which precede it, namely, "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I do not this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for my holy name, which ye have profaned among the nations, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which hath been profaned among the nations, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the nations shall know that I am Jehovah, saith the Lord Jehovah, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all the countries, and will bring you into your own land." (Ezek. 36: 22-24.) With this background before us, we are ready to give attention to the regeneration of Israel, which involved the following:

(1) *"I will sprinkle clean water upon you."* While the primary reference here is to Israel's (cf. Ezek. 37: 15-23; Jer. 33: 7; 50: 4) restoration to their homeland, it is doubtless to the salvation wrought through Christ, that the prophecy ultimately looks. (Cf. Jer. 31: 31-34.) However, we must keep in mind the fact that the language used by Ezekiel, is based upon that which was authorized by the law of Moses; and has therefore no direct reference to any ordinances which are authorized by Christ. The "clean water," which was ritualistically used for ceremonial cleansing, is described in the nineteenth chapter of Numbers; and should be read at this time. The water which was used in the ceremonial cleansings, under the law of Moses, was not "clean" in the sense that it contained no foreign substances; rather, it was a mixture of water and the ashes of the sin-offering, referred to in Numbers 19, which was used to sprinkle upon people who were ceremonially unclean, as the law of Moses required.

The expression "I will sprinkle clean water upon you" was evidently used figuratively; and it

is certain that there was no reference whatsoever to the baptism which is commanded by Christ. Furthermore, one may search the Scriptures, from the first of Genesis to the last of Revelation; and he will not find a single instance of the sprinkling of unmixed water, such as is found in our streams, wells, and other sources of domestic supply, on any person, at any time, in any place, or for any purpose. Jehovah was telling the people of Ezekiel's day that he would cleanse them from all of their idolatry and other sins of unfaithfulness; and it as a fact, worthy of notice, that the Jews, following their return from their exile, never worshipped false gods again. The Seleucid king of Syria, Antiochus Ephiphanes, through an emissary, undertook to force the Jews to offer an unlawful sacrifice; and that very act led to the great Maccabean struggle, which was a bitter experience of God's people, during the period between the Testaments. (Read the first two or three chapters of First Maccabees, one of the books of *The Apocrypha*.)

(2) *A new heart and a new spirit.* If there is any typical import regarding the sprinkling of clean water, it would be in the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, upon the hearts of those who are cleansed from sin in this age of the world. (See Heb. 10: 22; cf. Eph. 5: 25-27.) The cleansing from sin, however, either during the time of Ezekiel, or in the Christian dispensation, would benefit the person involved very little, unless there was, or is, a change in the inward nature. (Cf. Rom. 6: 3-7.) The reference to the new heart should be read in the light of Ezekiel 11: 14-21; 18: 25-32; Jeremiah 31: 31-34. When this is done, it will not be difficult to see that man also has a responsibility in getting a new heart and a new spirit. Although Jehovah wants every man to be saved (cf. Ezek. 33: 11; 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9), it is equally true that he does not save any one against his will, or who will not do his part in the Lord's plan for saving the lost. (Cf. Eph. 2: 8-10.) But when a man does that which God has ordained for him to do, it is then that the Lord can and will give him a new heart and a new spirit;

and that is what is meant by being a new creature in Christ. (See Rom. 6: 1-11; 2 Cor. 4: 16; Col. 3: 9, 10; Rom. 7: 22.) Human nature can be changed, only when a man abandons himself (Matt. 16: 24), and becomes a partaker of 1? divine nature (2 Pet. 1: 3-11).

(3) "*And I will put my Spirit within you.*" The Spirit is never referred to in the Old Testament as the Holy Spirit, with a capital "H"; but is repeatedly so designated in the New Testament. The apparent reason for this is seen in the fact that when the "Word of God became flesh, and appeared in the world as Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God was also personified, and given the title of the Holy Spirit. The impersonal aspect of the Spirit was dropped, when the transition was made from the old order to the new. (Note the personal pronoun, used to designate the Holy Spirit in such passages as John 16: 7-15.)

No one, not even the best of people, can live as God would have them live, without his help; and it was for that reason that he told the people of Israel that he would put his Spirit within them. People receive the Holy Spirit today when they received God's word and obey the gospel. It is no more unusual to expect help from God's Spirit today, than it was during the Old Testament period.

Not only did Jehovah promise to bless the people of Israel spiritually, that is, in forgiving their sins and in restoring them to their former relationship with him; he also promised to bless them materially. This has always been true of God, with respect to his people; and it is still true. (Cf. Rom. 2: 4; Phil. 4: 19.) Moses, in speaking of the bountiful blessings which God bestowed upon Israel, when he led them out of Egypt and on toward the promised land, said, "But Jeshurum [a poetical name for Israel] waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxed fat, thou art grown thick, thou art become sleek: then he forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." (Deut. 32: 15.) But in the case now before us, the people were told that when they were tempted to become proud, they would then remember their former

sinful life, and loathe themselves. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 12-17.)

For Jehovah's Sake and the Effect on the Nations
(Ezek. 36: 32-36)

Not for your sake do I this, saith the Lord Jehovah, he it known unto you: he ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: In the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be builded. And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, whereas it was a desolation in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say. This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited. Then the nations that are left round about you shall know that I, Jehovah, have builded the ruined places, and planted that which was desolate: I, Jehovah, have spoken it, and I will do it.

There are two important truths, in this section of the lesson text, which should be impressed upon our minds; and yet they are so closely bound together, that it is not practical to try to separate them, and discuss them independently. These two truths are (1) Jehovah's regard for his name, and (2) the effect which that which he does for his name has on the people who do not serve him. Moses and Joshua frequently pleaded with Jehovah to spare his rebellious people, for the sake of his name. "Oh, 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?" (Josh. 7: 8, 9; cf. Ex. 32: 7-14; Deut. 9: 25-29.)

We would find, if we should search through the entire Bible, that the first and foremost motive, which Jehovah had for all of his work, was that of his own glory; and the quicker we learn that truth, the better off we will be. (Cf. Matt. 6: 9.) Even the material creation proclaims God's glory (Psalm 19: 1, 2); and his "much-variegated" wisdom is made known through the church

(Eph. 3: 10). David sang, "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." (Psalm 23: 1-3.) Jehovah made man in his own image (Gen. 1: 26, 27); and when man fell into sin, and was threatened with everlasting destruction, only an all-wise and benevolent God could devise a plan, whereby sinful humanity could be saved. (Cf. John 17: 1-6.)

Anything less than a holy jealousy for his name, would have been entirely unlike God. The Old Testament is full of examples of how people came to recognize the majesty of Jehovah's name. (Cf. Isa. 59: 19; Dan. 3: 29; 6: 25-27.) "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the Gentiles, saith Jehovah of hosts. But ye profane it, in that ye say. The table of Jehovah is polluted, and the fruit thereof, even its food, is contemptible. Ye say also. Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith Jehovah of hosts; and ye have brought that which was taken by violence, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye bring the offering; should I accept this at your hand? saith Jehovah. But cursed be the deceiver, who hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a blemished thing; for I am a great King, saith Jehovah of hosts, and my name is terrible among the Gentiles." (Mal. 1: 11-14.)

It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word for "terrible," in the passage just quoted, is identical with the term which is translated "reverend," in Psalm 111: 9. Jehovah is going to be both respected and honored by all the people of the earth, whether in their salvation, or in their destruction. (Cf. 2 Thess. 1: 7-9; Matt. 25: 31-46; Phil. 2: 5-11; Josh. 7: 19.) When people come to realize that their salvation is due, first of all, to God's regard for his name; it is then that they will ap-

preciate it more, and will work harder for it. (Cf. Acts 15: 14-18.)

God's Blessings Must Be Desired and Requested (Ezek. 36: 37, 38)

Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: For this, moreover, I will inquire of by the house of Israel, to do it for them: I will increase them with men like a flock. As the flock for sacrifice, as the flock of Jerusalem in her appointed feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men; and they shall know that I am Jehovah.

There were times in the history of Israel, when Jehovah would not be inquired of (cf. Ezek. 14: 1-5; 20: 3, 20, 32); and the same situation will prevail in the last age of the world (cf. 2 Thess. 2: 8-12). But when people are willing to be taught the will of the Lord, they are always welcome at the throne of mercy. (See Heb. 4: 14-16; Acts 17: 10-12.) The increase in population is compared to the flock of sheep and other animals, which were taken to Jerusalem for the annual sacrifices. (Cf. Ezek. 34: 1-31.) Adam Clarke thinks that the things of the chapter, which we have been considering, belong to the Christian dispensation. His words are: "I do not ask my reader's pardon for having considered this most beautiful chapter as relating, not to the restoration from Babylonish captivity, but to the redemption under the new covenant by Jesus Christ. There is no period of the Jewish history from that time until now, to which it can be applied. It must belong to the *Gospel dispensation*: . . ." Only the pure in heart can see God. (Matt. 5: 8.)

"Give me thy heart," says the Father above,

No gift so precious to him as our love,

Softly he whispers wherever thou art,

"Gratefully trust me, and give me, thy heart."

"Give me thy heart," says the Saviour of men,

Calling in mercy again and again;

"Turn now from sin, and from evil depart,

Have I not died for thee? give me thy heart."

"Give me thy heart," says the Spirit divine,
 "All that thou hast, to my keeping resign;
 Grace more abounding is mine to impart.
 Make full surrender and give me thy heart."

"Give me thy heart, give me thy heart,"
 Hear the soft whisper, wherever thou art;
 From this dark world, he would draw thee apart,
 Speaking so tenderly, "Give me thy heart."
 —E. E. Hewitt.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is Proverbs 4: 23 such a great and important injunction?
 What is the spiritual heart of man and why is it so called?
 What do the Scriptures teach regarding the new or changed heart?

The Golden Text

Against what background were the words of the golden text spoken?
 How alone may one cleanse his heart or soul?
 What is God's part in the process and how is it accomplished?
 What does Paul mean by saying that if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature?
 How is this related to the new birth?

The Regeneration of Israel

Why is it important to read the entire thirty-sixth chapter before beginning this study?
 What did Jehovah say through Ezekiel just before this section of the lesson text?
 What was clean water and in what sense was it used in this text?
 How do we know that such "sprinkling" has no reference to the baptism of the New Testament?
 From what sins in particular did the Lord cleanse the returning captives of Israel?
 What evidence did they manifest that demonstrated that they were free from idol worship?
 What is the meaning of a new heart which Jehovah gave to his penitent people?

What spirit replaced their old spirit?
 Who and what is the Spirit, as revealed in the New Testament?
 How and when do people receive the Holy Spirit today?
 In what other way did Jehovah bless the returning Israelites? And often with what result?

For Jehovah's Sake and the Effect on the Nations

What two important truths are involved in this section of the lesson text?
 What motive always characterized Jehovah in his dealings with his people and others?
 Why is it important that we learn the lesson with reference to this truth?
 Why is God always jealous regarding his name?
 What are some of the ways in which people came to recognize the majesty of Jehovah's name?
 Why does Jehovah refuse to accept inferior sacrifices and service on the part of his people?
 Why is Jehovah's name "terrible" among the peoples of the earth?

God's Blessings Must Be Desired and Requested

Under what circumstances does Jehovah refuse the inquiries of people?
 What effect should this truth have on us today?
 How can people inquire of the Lord today?
 What is the ideal attitude which people should manifest toward the Lord?
 In what way did Jehovah promise to increase the population of his people?
 What should every responsible people make haste to do?

Lesson XIII—September 26, 1971

THE STREAM OF LIFE

Lesson Text

Ezek. 47: 1-12

1 And he brought me back unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward (for the forefront of the house was toward the east); and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house, on the south of the altar.

2 Then he brought me out by the

way of the gate northward, and led me round by the way without unto the outer gate, by the way of the *gate* that looketh toward the east; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

3 When the man went forth eastward with the line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits, and he

caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the ankles.

4 Again he measured a thousand, and caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and caused me to pass through *the waters*, waters that were to the loins.

5 Afterward he measured a thousand; *and it urns* a river that I could not pass through; for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed through.

6 And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen *this*? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the bank of the river.

7 Now when I had returned, behold, upon the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other.

8 Then said he unto me, These waters issue forth toward the eastern region, and shall go down into the Ar'-a-bah; and they shall go toward the sea; into the sea shall *the waters* go which were made to issue forth; and the waters shall be healed.

9 And it shall come to pass, that every living creature which swarmeth, in every place whither the rivers come, shall live; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish; for these waters are come thither, and *the waters of the sea* shall be healed, and everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh.

10 And it shall come to pass, that fishers shall stand by it: from En-ge'-di even unto En-eg'-la-im shall be a place for the spreading of nets; their fish shall be after their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many.

11 But the miry places thereof, and the marshes thereof, shall not be healed; they shall be given up to salt.

12 And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow every tree for food, whose leaf shall not wither, neither shall the fruit thereof fail: it shall bring forth new fruit every month, because the waters thereof issue out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for food, and the leaf thereof for healing.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"He that will, let him take the water of life freely."* (Rev. 22: 17.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rev. 22: 1-5.

Daily Bible Readings

September 20.	M.....	New Heaven and Earth (Isa. 65: 17-25)
September 21.	T.....	Jehovah's Gracious Reign (Isa. 33: 13-24)
September 22.	W.....	Triumphs of the Kingdom (Isa. 25: 1-12)
September 23.	T.....	Everlasting Kingdom (Psalm 72: 1-10)
September 24.	F.....	Peace and Prosperity of the Kingdom (Isa. 9: 1-7)
September 25.	S.....	Provision for All (Isa. 55: 1-5)
September 26.	S.....	Invitation to All (Matt. 11: 25-30)

TIME.—574 B.C.

PLACE.—The temple area in Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—The angel of Jehovah and Ezekiel.

Introduction

Any average person can easily see that the lesson text now before us, is one of the most figurative passages which we have had to deal with. Any reader of the Scriptures is well acquainted with the fact that the Bible, throughout its record, abounds in symbolical language; and no one who does not come to understand something of the significance of such phraseology, will ever be able to get the meaning of that which has been written. There are, of course, many different types of figurative language, but we shall not

go into that phase of the subject just here. A. Berkeley Mickelsen has written a book which he calls *Interpreting the Bible*, and its purpose is to set forth the basic principles for understanding the Scriptures. Dr. Mickelsen, in writing on distinguishing the figurative from the literal, says, "Figurative language is a pervasive feature of human discourse. It lends vivacity to expressions and adds depth of meaning. In order to understand any figure, one must of course first recognize the literal meaning and then, by re-

fleeting on the relevant points of similarity, interpret the significance of the figure. Fortunately it is usually easy to recognize a figurative expression and to make the necessary distinctions."

Dean Sperry has pointed out that a good figure of speech will often say for us, that which we have tried to say and failed. Such a form of words can gather around it all the vague thoughts and feelings, which we have been unable to express. And so it was in the case of Ezekiel; his words which we are to consider today are a faithful, though figurative, portrayal of the blessing which flowed to God's people, out of a seemingly hopeless situation. But, as Zerr has noted, all figures of speech must have some literal facts or truths for their basis. If this were not true, there would be no meaning in the figures which are employed. Berkeley observes that nearly all figures of speech grow out of the life of the speaker or writer who uses them; and that means that if one is familiar with the background of the one who employs the various symbols, he will be in a much better position to understand them. Most writers for example, use comparisons of the unfamiliar with the familiar, in order to get their lessons over to their readers;

and this, apparently, is what Ezekiel did in the passage which we are to consider today.

Speakers or writers who use figurative language do not, as a rule, stop to give the meaning of the figures which they employ; but if their readers are familiar with the general background against which they spoke or wrote, in this case the history and topography of Jerusalem and its environs, it will be much easier for them to get the idea which was intended. The last nine chapters of Ezekiel (40-48), the final section of the book, have been described as the most puzzling passages in the Old Testament. This section may be thought of as the restoration of the temple, the blessings of which will continue as long as time endures. Andrew W. Blackwood, Jr., in speaking of this section of Ezekiel, notes that the reader must often remind himself, that he is not primarily concerned with architectural drawings; on the contrary, the words of the prophet are intended to help troubled people think magnificently about God, as he works out his purpose, and reveals himself to the peoples of the earth—the Gentile world—through the very tribulations of the Israelites themselves.

The Golden Text

"He that will, let him take the water of life freely." The Books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, of the Old Testament, and Revelation of the New Testament, are generally regarded as the most pronounced apocalyptic portions of the Bible. An apocalyptic book is one which, along with other characteristics, habitually employs symbolism. Apocalyptic literature is, in reality, an "unveiling," since its purpose is to make known the purposes of God, especially as they relate to the end of the world. The Greek word for "revelation," which is the first word in the last book of the New Testament, is *apocalupsis*; and it is the term from which we have "Revelation," the title of that book. It is also, as one can easily see, the word from which we have "apocalyptic." Apocalyptic literature reaches its climax in the Book of Revelation; and, as the careful reader can see, there

is a striking resemblance of Ezekiel's visions to those of John in the closing part of the Bible.

The blessings which God has prepared for his people, especially in the world to come, are beyond description, that is, no human being can adequately describe them; and neither is he capable of comprehending their true nature or character. When Paul was endeavoring to make known to the Corinthian brethren something of that which God has in store for his people, even in this life, he adapted a passage from Isaiah, and said, "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him." He then went on to say, "But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Cor. 2: 9, 10.) But the

things of heaven are completely beyond the ability of any man to discover. (Cf. 2 Cor. 12: 1-4.)

Water is absolutely essential to life here upon the earth; and it is easy to see that the spiritual blessings which the Lord has made available to men here and now, are pictured as the water of life. The words of the golden text were spoken in this context: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say. Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water

of life freely." (Rev. 22: 17.) The last revelation was virtually completed, when these words were spoken; but the author, as it were, came back from the great finalities, to the world where decisions still had to be made, and once more urged those who had not yet done so, to accept the "elixir of life" without delay. Or, to express the same thing in another way, Let every one who is thirsty, and every one who will, take of the water of life free. (Cf. Isa. 55: 1.)

The Text Explained

A Vision of the Temple Waters

(Ezek. 47: 1, 2)

And he brought me back unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward (for the forefront of the house was toward the east); and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house, on the south of the altar. Then he brought me out by the way of the gate northward, and led me round by the way without unto the outer gate, by the way of the gate that looketh toward the east; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

Parables, which are in reality extended figures of speech, require the application of a specific principle in their interpretation, namely, try to discover the primary lesson which is intended to be taught, and refrain from trying to make every detail of the passage require a particular application. The lesson intended is the principal part of the parable, while the details may be regarded as merely the drapery, or the embellishments which are meant to add elegance and interest. This same principle should be applied, when one endeavors to interpret such figurative language as we have in the text for today's lesson. Symbolic language, on the whole, is permitted to picture conditions which would never happen, if taken literally; and it is for this reason that such language should not be taken literally.

It was pointed out earlier in this study that figurative language must have some literal facts or truths for their basis. If this were not true, the figure itself would have no

meaning. When the facts or truths in question have been established, then we can reflect on the similarity between the literal facts and truths, and the figures which are employed; and we should experience no great difficulty in reaching a scriptural conclusion. Or, to go a step further, we must endeavor to make certain that the explanation which is offered, is in harmony with the general teaching of the Scriptures, here and elsewhere; for it is a demonstrable fact that truth never contradicts itself. Any interpretation of any figurative language, anywhere in the Bible, cannot be true, if it is not in harmony with any known truth which is found in the Scriptures. This is a basic principle, and it needs to be kept in mind, and adhered to, at all times and under all circumstances.

The issuance of water from a "sacred place" is depicted in many parts of the Bible. "And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was carted, and became four heads." (Gen. 2: 10-14.) "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the books of Judah shall flow with waters; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of Jehovah, and shall water the valley of Shittim." (Joel 3: 18.) "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." (Zech. 13: 1.) "And it shall come to pass in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the eastern sea, and half of

them toward the western sea: in summer and in winter shall it be." (Zech. 14: 8.) "And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof." (Rev. 22: 1, 2.)

The heavenly guide brought Ezekiel back to the door of the temple, which was the center of the Divine Presence; and it was from there that the prophet saw the waters of life flow in an easterly direction. The temple faced the east, but it should be noted that the inspired guide brought the prophet away from the temple, not by way of the east gate, but through the north gate. Ezekiel was then led "round by way without unto the outer gate, by the way of the gate that looketh toward the east." The evident reason why the prophet was not led out of the temple area by way of the east gate, is stated in these words: "Then he brought me back by way of the outer gate of the sanctuary, which looketh toward the east; and it was shut. And Jehovah said unto me, This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, neither shall any man enter in by it; for Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it; therefore it shall be shut." (Ezek. 44: 1, 2; 43: 4; 46: 1.) The important lesson to learn from this section of the lesson text, is that the life-giving waters always come from the Lord, and originate in the place, and under the circumstances, which are designated by him.

A Stream Which Became a Mighty River

(Ezek. 47: 3-5)

And when the man went forth eastward with the line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits, and he caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the ankles. Again he measured a thousand, and caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand: and it was a river that I could not pass through; for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed through.

There appears to be no doubt but that the stream which Ezekiel saw flow from the temple of God represents the healing waters of the gospel plan of salvation, which was set in motion on the first Pentecost, following the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ to the Father. It indeed began as a small stream, as it were; but it was not long until it became a mighty river, as it made its way through the "waste places" of the habitation of lost humanity. The increase of its volume reminds one of the growth and development of the kingdom of Christ, as it was pictured by another of the apocalyptic prophets. After reminding king Nebuchadnezzar of the image which he had seen in his dream, the prophet said, "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." (Read Dan. 2: 31-35.)

The exact length of a biblical "cubit" is not definitely known. It apparently at first was based on the length of a man's forearm, hand, and finger; or, which is the same thing, from one's elbow to the tip of his middle finger. This was usually about eighteen inches. This, of course, would vary, depending on the person whose measurements were taken. The question of the exact length of the cubit, referred to by Ezekiel, is, however, relatively unimportant, so far as the lesson which he presented is concerned. The idea which we should get is that every eighteen hundred or two thousand feet, the stream of water which was flowing from the temple toward the sea, became deeper and wider, until at length it became a river, too deep and wide for crossing without swimming.

Although there may not be any specific application of the four measurements which the angelic guide made, it is a historical fact that the stream of God's grace, that is, the

waters of salvation which went out from Jerusalem, or, which is the same thing, from the Lord, did reach the lost "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1: 8.) Something of the rapidity with which the "waters of life" made their way, in their ever deepening and widening course, to the lost, may be learned from a statement which Paul made, some thirty years after they began their flow in Jerusalem, may be learned from such passages as Colossians 1: 23, namely, "If so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister." (Cf. Mark 16: 15; Matt. 28: 19; Luke 24: 47; Rom. 15: 19-24.)

The Wholesome Effects of the Waters Wherever They Flow

(Ezek. 47: 6-12)

And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the bank of the river. Now when I had returned, behold, upon the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then said he unto me. These waters issue forth toward the eastern region, and shall go down into the Arabah; and they shall go toward the sea; into the sea shall the waters go which were made to issue forth; and the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every living creature which swarmeth, in every place whither the rivers come, shall live; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish; for these waters are come thither, and the waters of the sea shall be healed, and everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh. And it shall come to pass, that fishers shall stand by it: from En-gedi even unto En-egla'im shall be a place for the spreading of nets; their fish shall be after their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. But the miry places thereof, and the marshes thereof, shall not be healed; they shall be given up to salt. And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow every

tree for food, whose leaf shall not wither, neither shall the fruit thereof fail: it shall bring forth new fruit every month, because the waters thereof issue out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for food, and the leaf thereof for healing.

It has already been noted that John has a similar vision of water flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, as he neared the close of Revelation. After the remarks regarding the river, the inspired writer says, "And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." (Rev. 22: 1, 2.) There is evidently a very close connection between the visions of Ezekiel and of John; and it appears that they both have their roots, to some extent at least, in the garden of Eden. The original paradise had a river and trees for food (there was no need for healing at first); but after sin entered into the hearts of the human race, the need for water, food, and healing were all needed. The grace of God, as revealed in the gospel, meets those needs in this life, to all who will yield themselves to it; but when the redeemed are safe in heaven, where they will for ever be one with the mind and will of the Father, their needs will continue to be met, in perfect harmony with God's will for his people, by the celestial stream, and the trees which grow upon its banks.

As the waters in Ezekiel's vision left the temple area, they flowed in an easterly direction, until they descended into the Arabah, and on into the Dead Sea. The "Arabah" is that depression, some parts of which are extremely desolate, extending from the Sea of Galilee to the Gulf of Aqabah, through which the River Jordan flows, and at the bottom of which the Dead Sea lies—some thirteen hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean only a relatively few miles to the west. Scientists say that the bottom of the Dead Sea is twenty-six hundred feet below normal sea level, and that its salt-content is 25-per cent, as compared to the 3.5 per cent of the salt-content of the Atlantic and Pacific

oceans. This is due to the fact that the Dead Sea has no outlet, and the only way that the waters which flow into it can be removed, is by the process of evaporation, thereby leaving the salt and other minerals in the sea itself. There are no visible signs of life in the Dead Sea; and one of the pathetic things which the traveller sees in connection with the Dead Sea, is in the village of Madaba, in the land of Moab near mount Nebo, where a mosaic depicts some fish, in the mouth of the Jordan, endeavoring to turn back up stream, before being swept into the deadly waters of the Salt Sea.

These facts are essential to an understanding of the section of the lesson text now before us. Ezekiel was told that the river which he saw would flow into the Dead Sea, and that the deadly waters would be healed; and everything in it would live. In other words, the sea which hitherto contained no life, would become the habitation of fish; and even the towns upon its banks, which before this had enjoyed no such privileges, would find themselves face to face with a thriving business involving fresh water fish. The term "fish" is evidently used metaphorically, as is the picture generally speaking, to indicate people who are subjects of salvation. As Jesus was beginning his great Galilean ministry, he called four fishermen into his service, to be his full-time disciples, saying unto them, "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matt. 4: 18-22; cf. Luke 5: 1, 11.)

But there are always areas which will not respond to the healing powers of God's beautiful goodness; and so we read, "But the miry places thereof, and the marshes thereof, shall not be healed; they shall be given up to salt." We are not told just why the healing waters did not reach the miry places and the marsh or swampy areas; but taking into consideration the truth that God is no respecter of persons (cf. Acts 10: 44, 45), the implication is that his offer of mercy was rejected. No better commentary can be found on the attitude of people toward the

Lord and his cause, and his counsel to those who are willing to accept him than the words of Jesus himself:

Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Hades: for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have remained unto this day. But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

"At that season Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: ye, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight. All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. 11: 20-30.)

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Luke 13: 34, 35.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction
What is the nature of the lesson text
which we are to study today?

What is the proper way to deal with figurative language?

In what way is figurative language related to literal facts or truths?

Where are those facts or truths usually found?

What was Ezekiel's purpose in using the phraseology which he employed?

The Golden Text

In what setting are the words of the golden text found?

What do the Books of Ezekiel and Revelation have in common?

Discuss the manner in which Jehovah has revealed himself unto the peoples of the earth.

What does it mean to drink the water of life freely?

A Vision of the Temple Waters

Discuss the principles which are essential to the interpretation of figurative language.

What should we always look for in a highly figurative passage and what should we not try to do?

How may one know whether or not his interpretation of figurative language is correct?

What vision did Ezekiel see in this section of the lesson text?

How did the guide direct the prophet out of the temple area and apparently why?

What is always the source of the life-giving waters?

A Stream Which Became a Mighty River

What did the stream which Ezekiel saw evidently represent and why do you say so?

What was the "cubit" of which the prophet spoke and what part did it play in this lesson?

What do we know regarding the origin and progress of the river of God's grace?

The Wholesome Effects of the Waters Wherever They Flow

How does the vision which Ezekiel saw compare with the one which was revealed to John?

What, if any, relationship did those two visions have with the garden of Eden? Give reasons for your answer.

What was and is the purpose of the water, the trees, and the leaves?

Where did the waters in Ezekiel's vision flow after they left the temple area?

What was the "Arabah"?

What are some of the principal facts regarding the Dead Sea?

Why does that body of water have no life in it?

What spiritual significance does that fact have in our lesson today?

What effect did the celestial guide tell Ezekiel the waters would have on the sea?

What was the meaning of healing the waters?

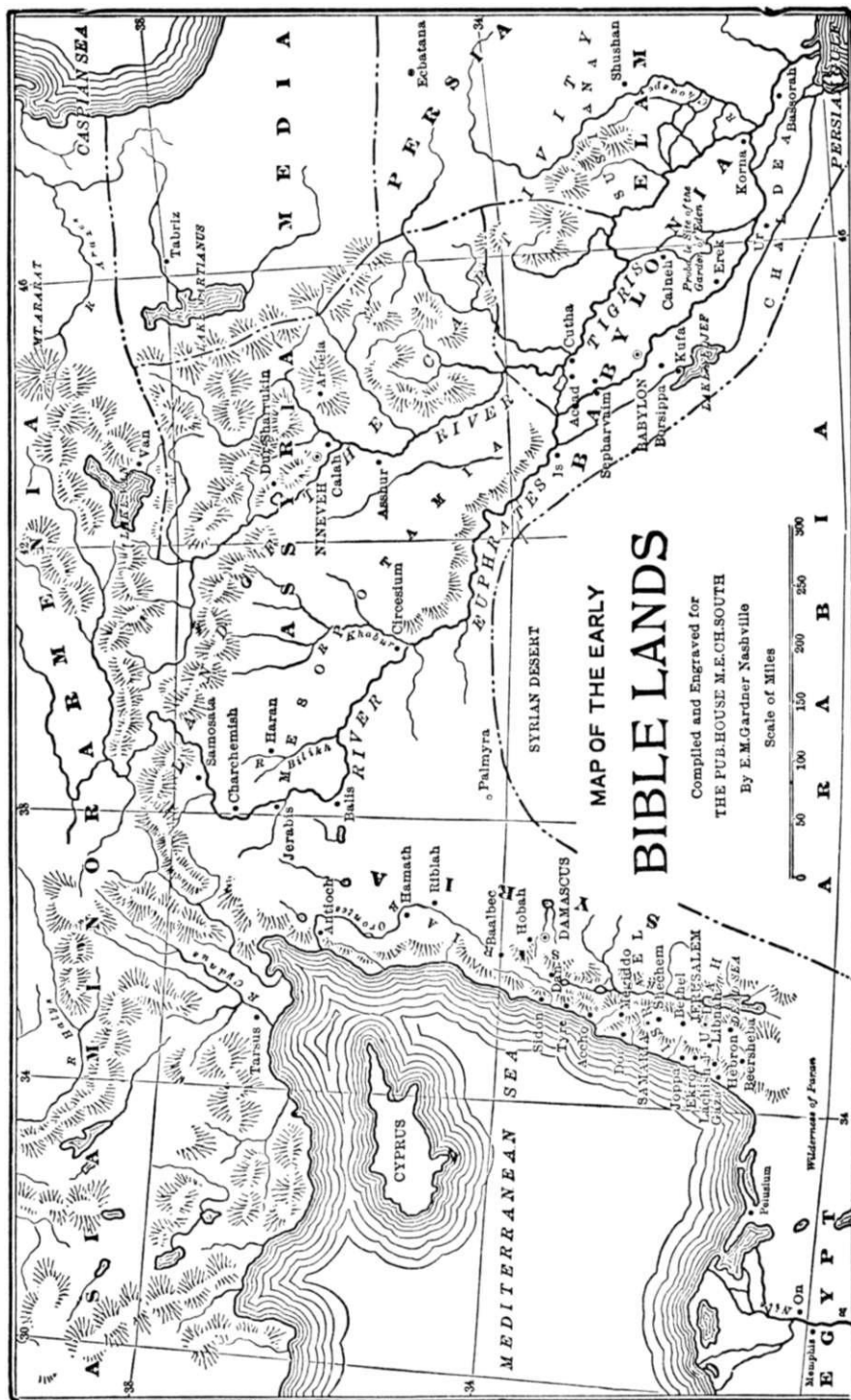
Why are "fish" mentioned here and with what evident significance?

What lesson did Jesus teach by means of the business of fishing?

What portions of the country failed to receive the healing effects of the water of life?

Why, apparently, was this true?

What lesson does Jesus teach regarding the attitude of people toward him?



MAP OF THE EARLY

BIBLE LANDS

Compiled and Engraved for
THE PUB. HOUSE M.E.C.H.SOUTH
By E.M.Gardner Nashville
Scale of Miles

Scale of Miles

FOURTH QUARTER

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLES OF JAMES,
PETER, JOHN AND JUDE

AIM.—*To study carefully the Epistles of fleshly brothers of our Lord (James and Jude), and the Epistles of two devoted apostles of Christ (Peter and John), and from them learn principles and precepts so vital to all of us today.*

Lesson I—October 3, 1971

DOERS OF THE WORD, NOT HEARERS ONLY

Lesson Text

James 1: 18-27

18 Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

19 Ye know *this*, my beloved brethren. But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

21 Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves.

23 For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto

a man beholding his natural face in a mirror:

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But he that looketh into the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing.

26 If any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain.

27 Pure religion and undefined before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock."* (Matt. 7: 24.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—James 1: 1-12.

Daily Bible Readings

September 27.	M.	James, Servant of God (James 1: 1-12)
September 28.	T.	Doers of the Word (James 1: 18-27)
September 29.	W.	Hearing and Doing (Matt. 7: 24-27)
September 30.	T.	Doers of the Law (Rom. 2: 13-15)
October 1.	F.	Doing Christ's Commandments (Rev. 22: 14-22)
October 2.	S.	Must Keep His Commandments (1 John 2: 1-4)
October 3.	S.	Blessedness of the Obedient (Luke 11: 27, 28)

TIME.—Uncertain, but possibly as early as A. D. 45.

PLACE.—The epistle was probably written in Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—James and the twelve tribes of the Dispersion.

Introduction

The epistle of James has been called the epistle of practice. A. T. Robertson, in fact, delivered a series of lectures on the epistle, which

form a kind of commentary; and when the lectures were put in book form, the author entitled his book, *Practical and Social Aspects of*

Christianity, with a subtitle, *The Wisdom of James*. Dr. Robertson, in discussing the style of the epistle, notes that "James assumes the doctrinal features of Christianity, but he is concerned mainly with the ethical and social aspects of the gospel that Jewish followers of Christ may square their lives with the gospel which they believe and profess. But this fact does not justify Luther in calling the Epistle of James 'A veritable Epistle of straw.' Luther imagined that James contradicted Paul's teaching of justification by faith. That is not true and the criticism of Luther is unjust. We shall see that, though James and Paul use the same words (faith, works, justify), they mean different things by them."

Any one who reads the Epistle of James, can easily verify the contention that the epistle is remarkable for its omission of any reference to the distinctive doctrines of Christianity, such as the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection, the ascension, and the Holy Spirit. The name of Christ appears only twice in the entire epistle, while the term "gospel" does not occur at all; and neither is there any reference to the work of redemption. James was not primarily concerned with what the world calls "theology." His emphasis is on the moral demands of Christianity; and he, accordingly, states the Christian faith in terms of moral excellence, and instructs his readers in Christian morals.

It should be noted, however, that Christianity is more than a set of moral rules; it is far more than that. The Christian system owes its very genius and existence to the supreme authority of Christ. But

Christianity does involve morality; and it places great stress upon that aspect of the system. It is with reference to this latter phase of the question that James deals. Taken alone, the emphasis on morality is not enough; but when the writing of James is read in connection with the other facts and truths of the New Testament, we have before us all the aspects of the Christian system. Or, to state the same thing in another way, the Epistle of James complements the other writings of the New Testament.

But any one who is acquainted with the New Testament, knows that there is no justification for concluding that James is not a doctrinal teacher. On the contrary, there is every reason for thinking that he was (cf. Acts 21: 17ff; Gal. 1: 19; 2: 6-10); but he is, in the epistle now before us, as already indicated, primarily a moral teacher. This may have been due to the fact that the moral aspect of Christianity was being neglected, at the time James wrote his letter. Vincent quotes Dr. Scott as saying that "the epistle strikes the ear from beginning to end as an echo of the oral teaching of our Lord. There is scarcely a thought in it which cannot be traced to Christ's personal teaching. If John has lain on the Saviour's bosom, James has sat at his feet." And in the words of Hort, "The style is especially remarkable for constant hidden allusions to our Lord's sayings, such as we find in the first three Gospels." There is, in fact, no other book in the New Testament which reflects more of the teaching of the Lord's sermon on the mount, than the Book of James.

The Golden Text

"Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall he likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock." The words just quoted are taken from the closing part of the Sermon on the Mount, and are found in this context: "Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon

that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof." (Matt. 7: 24-27.)

It is easy to see that Jesus, in the parable just quoted, recognizes that every man is a builder; and he em-

phasizes the supreme importance of the foundation upon which the building rests. Furthermore, the Lord points out that the day of testing is not one of sunshine, but rather one of tempest and storm. But there is no need for fear on the part of the wise builders; for those who build upon the teaching of Christ, will find that what they build will stand unmoved; while those who build upon other foundations will have their building swept away by the storms and the floods. Those who build upon the teaching of Christ, build for eternity; and there is no storm which can destroy their structures.

Jesus, as any thoughtful reader can plainly see, constantly divided people into two principal classes. (Cf. Matt. 7: 13, 14, 17, 18; 12: 30.) There is, strictly speaking, no such thing as neutrality in religion. When any one hears the gospel of

Christ, he is never again exactly the same person, as he was before he came in contact with that divine message. Even the seeming indifference which is manifested by some hearers, is in reality a positive hardening of the heart against the influence of the gospel. All men are builders; and they are, to drop the figure which Jesus employed, building character, which is the only thing that they can take with them into eternity. The contrast which Jesus presents, is not between building and not building; but between building wisely and building foolishly. Character has been defined as the sum total of all that one thinks, feels, purposes, and does. It has also been called the deepest fact of human life, and the essential truth concerning the person in question. Character is what one is in the sight of God; and that is what counts with him.

The Text Explained

God's Purpose Regarding His People
(James 1: 18)

Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. This portion of the lesson text can best be understood in the light of the entire paragraph, of which it is the closing part. (Read James 1: 12-18.) Man is a responsible being, and he must therefore be adequately tested before God approves him as a fit subject for heaven (verse 12); and then, beginning with verse 13, we are informed regarding the source of evil. But James wants his readers to know that God is the source of good, of all good, and nothing but good. (See verse 17.) Thus, if God has his way with his people, they will always be good; but alas! that is precisely what has not happened. Man was alienated from God in the garden of Eden; and, with rare exceptions, that has been the history of the race throughout its history.

James, in the section of the lesson text now before us, cites one of the greatest examples of God's goodness on record, namely, the salvation of his sinful people; and the inspired writer quickly adds that this is due to God's own will, and not to any external circumstances, thereby

showing that his essential nature is to do good and not evil. Sin always results in death, if left to itself (cf. verse 15; Eph. 2: 1f); but God has both the will and the power to make alive, those who are dead in trespasses and sins. The first part of the sentence now under consideration—"Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth"—is equivalent to the new birth (John 3: 3-5), or, which is the same thing, the making of a new creature (2 Cor. 5: 17; Tit. 3: 4-7). This is another way of referring to conversion; and it is about as near to a discussion of the scheme of redemption, as is found in the Book of James. Peter expresses essentially the same truth in 1 Peter 1: 22-25.

The words "that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures," indicates the figurative nature of the expression. The figure is taken from the requirements of the Mosaic law, which required that the first-born of men and cattle, along with the first-harvest of fruits and grain, be consecrated to Jehovah: and the point which James emphasizes is that Christians, as firstfruits, are to be consecrated to the Lord. The use of the term "firstfruits" is frequently found in the New Testament. "And if the firstfruit is holy, so is the lump: and if the root is holy, so are

the branches." (Rom. 11: 16; cf. 8: 23; 16: 5; 1 Cor. 15: 20, 23; 16: 15; Rev. 14: 4.) The writer of Hebrews had this basic need for devotion to God in mind, when he wrote, "Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification [consecration] without which no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12: 14.)

James therefore, in describing the greatest possible good which comes from above, specifies the new birth, by which sinful men become God's children. The whole process was due to God's will, rather than a response to our pleading; for the writer specifically says that "of his own will he brought us forth ['begat us'] by the word of truth." When Jesus was about to leave his disciples, to return to the Father, he charged them to preach the gospel to the whole creation (see Mark 16: 15, 16); and Paul told the Romans that the gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1: 16, 17); and the reason for this is seen in the fact that the gospel is God's "dynamite" which moves the one who believes it to do that which God commands. (Cf. Heb. 5: 8, 9; John 3: 36.) No one should ever charge that God is not good, and that he interferes with man's greatest happiness; for he is the giver of the greatest gift which can possibly come to the human race—sonship.

An Exhortation to Self-Control

(James 1: 19-21)

Ye know this, my beloved brethren. But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

Just what does James tell his readers that they know? Bible students have never been able to agree on whether the reference is to that which has just been said regarding God's goodness, or to that which follows; but it is certain that in either case, the lesson is the same, that is, that the Lord's people must act in keeping with their knowledge. (Cf. James 4: 17.) However, it seems to be in harmony with the context to say that the readers know

that good comes from God; and inasmuch as the Lord's people have been made his own by the word of truth, they have the solemn obligation to endeavor to practice self-control, as set forth in the following verses.

Every person who has been converted to the cause of Christ, should cultivate a willingness to hear with promptness, that which God's word teaches. To be swift, that is, quick, to hear is one of the Lord's requirements for his people; for it is only in this way can one come to know the truth as he should. An attitude of this kind is demanded by military commanders, and no student in school will succeed as he should, unless he makes it a practice to give close attention to that which the instructor places before those who are under his tutelage. It is only in this way that one can come to a knowledge of the truth. The Hebrew brethren had failed in this respect, that is, they had "become dull of hearing"; and it became essential that they be retaught the truth. (See Heb. 5: 11, 12.)

Not only should the disciples of Christ be swift to hear that which the truth proclaims; they should also be "slow to speak, slow to wrath," which is also an obvious reference to their attitude toward the truth. Verse 19 is rendered by Phillips in these words: "In view of what he has made us then, dear brothers, let every man be quick to listen but slow to use his tongue, and slow to lose his temper. For man's temper is never the means of achieving God's true goodness." People should exercise great care when speaking regarding the truth; and they should never allow anger or wrath to enter into the discussion of that which the Bible proclaims. James MacKnight paraphrases the apostle's statement in this way: "Since God has willed to regenerate us by the gospel, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear the gospel, and slow to speak concerning it till he understands it; slow also to wrath in religious matters." (Cf. Eccl. 5: 1, 2.) The Jewish rabbis were wont to say, "Two ears are given to us, but only one tongue: the ears are exposed, while the tongue is walled in behind the teeth."

The cause of Christ is never advanced by ill-advised speech, and by exhibitions of anger, while discussing religious matters. Man's wrath is rarely, if ever, justified; and even "righteous indignation" is too often intermixed with other elements. Frail humanity, unlike God, seldom, if ever, knows all the circumstances involved in a given case. And so, in the words of the wise, "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but a grievous word stirreth up anger. The tongue of the wise uttereth knowledge aright; but the mouth of fools poureth out folly." (Prov. 15: 1, 2.) Although, as already indicated, James seems to limit his remarks regarding anger to one's attitude toward the truth, it is well to keep in mind the fact that anger must also be controlled in other areas of the Christian's experience. (Cf., for example, Matt. 5: 22f; Eph. 4: 26, 27, 29, 31.)

Turning now to verse 21: Filthiness refers to moral uncleanness and vulgarity, involving the individual himself; while overflowing of wickedness [*malice*, marginal note] probably means wickedness which extends to and affects others. At any rate, the reference is to wickedness over which the person in question has some control; for he is told to put it away. All of these unholy things must be removed before the word of God can have its effect in the heart and life of the individual. Verse 21 is rendered by Barclay in these words: "So then, you must strip off everything that would soil life and all that malice that is like an alien growth on life, and in a teachable spirit you must receive implanted in your heart the word which is able to save your souls."

The "implanted word" is the gospel message, which is sown in the heart (cf. Matt. 13: 19); and one receives it with meekness, when he is teachable. "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein." (Mark 10: 15.) The word of God is able to save the soul, because it contains the necessary information, as well as the essential motivating power, which one must have, in order to do that which is pleasing to God. (Read Rom. 1: 16, 17; 10: 1-3.)

The Balance between Hearing and Doing Must Be Maintained

(James 1: 22-27)

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves. For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing. If any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

James, in the preceding section of the lesson text, exhorts his readers to "receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls", but he wants them to know that "receiving" alone will not benefit any one. The closing paragraph of the Sermon on the Mount, already quoted in this lesson (see treatment of the golden text), is perhaps the best commentary available on the passage now under consideration. There is heavenly wisdom in good listening; but unless one puts into practice that which he hears from the inspired teachers, his listening efforts will be worse than futile. Any reasoning therefore which leads one to conclude that it is not necessary for him to put into practice that which he hears, results in self-deception, with the consequent injury only to himself. (Cf. James 2: 14-26.)

The natural face which one sees in a mirror, is the one with which he was born; and the lesson which grows out of the mirror-experience should enable one to see the futility, and consequent self-deception, suggested in verse 22. The man sees himself as he is, while looking in the mirror; but when he turns away and becomes absorbed in other things, he immediately forgets that which needs attention, and so does nothing about it. That is precisely

what happens when people read the word of God, and do nothing about it. As long as people look into God's mirror, they can see their true spiritual condition; but when they turn away from it, without a determination to obey that which they learned, and become absorbed in other things (Mark 4: 14, 15, 18, 19), they soon forget that which they saw, and so do nothing about it.

The expression "looketh into" denotes a penetrating effort to determine the very essence of the law of the Lord. The primary meaning of the original word for "looketh," is to look with head bowed forward and body bent; to stoop and look into (Thayer), as in Luke 24: 12; John 20: 11; 1 Peter 1: 12. When one stoops down and takes a close look, he is endeavoring to learn the facts in the case. The picture of a man poring over a roll of the law, is a good illustration of that which is meant here.

The "perfect law" is the gospel of Christ. It is perfect because it furnishes a man completely unto every good work. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17; 2 Pet. 1: 10, 11.) This law is also called the "law of liberty," because it makes men free. (See John 8: 31, 32.) The psalmist sang, "And I shall walk at liberty; for I have sought thy precepts." (Psalm 119: 45.) But it is not enough for one to be a hearer of the truth, however attentive and critical his hearing may be; he must also be a doer of that which he learns. Furthermore, he must continue to hear, that is, learn; and he must not forget that which he learns. Such a man continues to seek for truth, and puts it into practice as he learns it. A man who does this shall be blessed in his doing. David says that there is great reward in keeping the precepts of Jehovah. (See Psalm 19: 11.)

It appears that the last two verses of the lesson text now under consid-

eration, are intended to illustrate that which has just been said about doing that which one learns from the law of the Lord. Thus, if any one supposes himself to be religious, but does not control his speech, that man's religion is vain. His religion is worthless, because he is acting in violation of God's will, as expressed in his law. It is not necessary for one to violate every precept of the law, in order for him to be unacceptable to the Lord. (Cf. James 2: 10, 11.) To stumble in one point is to set aside, or disregard, one thing which the Lord requires—controlling the tongue, in this instance. James discusses this subject at length in chapter 3.

The original word for "religious" is found only here in the New Testament, while the Greek term for "religion" occurs only in Acts 26: 5; Colossians 2: 18; and James 1: 26, 27. The English word for "religious" is found in Acts 17: 22; but it is from an original word which means "demon-fearing." And in a similar manner, the English "religion" is found in Acts 25: 19; but it is from a Greek word which means "demon-worship." The term "religion" in Galatians 1: 13, 14 is from an original word meaning "Judaism." *Religion*, as used in James 1: 26, 27, means the "ceremonial" or external service which one performs, prompted by a pure heart, as guided by the word of the Lord.

Self-deception is referred to three times in the first chapter of James (16, 22, 26). That is a serious issue, and its consequences are far-reaching. The writer of the epistle now before us, in keeping with his practical observations, stresses two aspects of acceptable religion, namely, (1) benevolence; and (2) personal purity. The over-all question of religion embraces much more; but one can get an idea of the basic requirements from that which is said here.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is the general nature of the Book of James?
Who was probably its author? Give reasons for your answer.

In what way has the epistle been misunderstood?
In what way is the Book of James related to the rest of the New Testament writings?

The Golden Text

In what context are the words of the golden text found?

What is the principal thing which all men are building?

God's Purpose Regarding His People

How can the first section of the lesson text be best understood?

What two great truths are taught in the preceding verses of the paragraph?

What is one of the greatest manifestations of God's goodness and why is it true?

In what sense are Christians a kind of firstfruits of God's creatures?

What is the meaning of being brought forth by the word of divine truth?

An Exhortation to Self-Control

What did James tell his first readers that they knew?

What should characterize every one who has been converted by the truth?

What does it mean to be swift to hear?

What does James say that Christians should be slow to do and why?

Why can not the wrath of man work the righteousness of God?

What lesson, then, should we learn from James' exhortation in this respect?

What further teaching do we have in the New Testament regarding man's anger?

What does the writer of this epistle exhort the Lord's people to put away?

What is the "implanted word" and in what way is it to be received?

What is the word of God able to do and why is this true?

The Balance between Hearing and Doing Must Be Maintained

What must always follow the reception of God's word, if he is to be saved?

Why will hearing alone not suffice?

How does James illustrate and enforce this lesson?

What is the force of the illustration of one's looking into the mirror?

What is the meaning and significance of one's looking into the law of the Lord?

What is the perfect law of liberty?

What apparent use does James make of the last two verses of the lesson text?

What importance does the writer of the epistle attach to the controlling of one's tongue?

Why is such a person's religion worthless? How many violations of God's will are necessary in order to render one unacceptable to him?

What two aspects of acceptable religion does James emphasize?

Lesson II—October 10, 1971

THE FAITH THAT SAVES

Lesson Text

James 2: 14-23

14 What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food,

16 And one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit?

17 Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself.

18 Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith apart from *thy* works, and I by my works will show thee *my* faith.

19 Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up I-saac his son upon the altar?

22 Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect;

23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.*" (Matt. 7: 21.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—James 2: 1-9.

Daily Bible Readings

October	4.	M.	Chapter on Faith (Heb. 11: 1-10)
October	5.	T.	Faith Looks for a Better Country (Heb. 11: 13-16)
October	6.	W.	Abraham's Faith (Heb. 11: 17, 18)
October	7.	T.	Faith of Moses (Heb. 11: 24-28)
October	8.	F.	Faith of Many Great Men (Heb. 11: 32-40)

- October 9. S. Faith of a Woman (Luke 7: 36-50)
 October 10. S. Faith of a Blind Man (John 9: 13-28)

TIME.—Uncertain, but possibly as early as A.D. 45.

PLACE.—The epistle was probably written in Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—James and the twelve tribes of the Dispersion.

Introduction

Christianity, as every informed student of the Scriptures knows, is pre-eminently a religion of faith. This fact should be firmly fixed in the mind of every follower of Jesus; for no one can please God without faith. (Cf. Heb. 11: 6; Mark 16: 16b; 2 Cor. 5: 7; 1 John 5: 4.) Faith, along with hope and love (cf. 1 Cor. 13: 13), is one of the greatest motivating forces known to man. It is a demonstrable fact that a person with genuine faith in the Lord, is willing to go any lengths, and make any sacrifice, in order to please him. Those who understand the teaching of the New Testament, are aware of the fact that faith which pleases God, is more than a mere statement of that to which one is willing to give his mental assent. *Our faith must be reduced to a way of life.* No ideals have been tenable for long, unless they were reducible to the fabric of living. When men begin to see that faith works, achieves results, and changes people, they will soon adopt it as their own way of life.

The term "faith" occurs several times in the first two chapters of James; and that fact should be taken into consideration, as we begin the study of the lesson which is before us at this time. The word "faith" is first mentioned in James 1: 2; and it is there that we learn that the Lord expects that our faith be proved or tested. Something of the great importance of one's per-

sonal faith can be learned from James 1: 5-8; for it is there that we are told that the man who lacks faith, or, one who doubts, has no justifiable right to think that any petition he makes of the Lord will be granted. The "faith" of James 2: 1 is the faith of the gospel; while to be "rich in faith" (James 2: 5) indicates something of the lot of Christians; they are rich because of their position as believers.

It will be much easier for us to understand the teaching of James, in the lesson now before us, if we will first endeavor to get some idea of the background against which he wrote. Beginning with the first verse of chapter 2, the apostle (cf. Gal. 1: 19) gives his readers this specific admonition, namely, "My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons"; and then, in verses 2-13, he points out to his original readers just how they were actually violating, or how they could violate, the faith or teaching of Christ. The same principle is just as applicable to people in any age of the present dispensation; hence applicable to people of our day. And when James came to pen the portion of his epistle, which serves as the text for today's lesson, he was ready to point out to his readers, and through them to all of us, the real place that faith has in the lives of the Lord's people.

The Golden Text

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." The words just quoted are found in a section of the Lord's sermon on the mount, which may be referred to as his treatment of the question of spurious discipleship, following the warning which he issued in Matthew 7: 15-20. The warning and the reference to spuri-

ous discipleship are both a part of the Lord's over-all exhortations regarding the kingdom of heaven. (See Matt. 7: 13-27.) The immediate context of the words quoted above, is "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy

name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7: 21-23.)

Strict adherence to God's will as the standard, both for profession and conduct, is a principle of discipleship with Jesus, which holds good without exception. A mere profession of loyalty, or even the performance of deeds, however great they may be, will not avail, unless such is according to the will of God. Jesus, all through the second part of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5: 17-7: 12), had been setting forth the righteousness of the kingdom, or, the will of God; and in the passage which we are now considering, he emphasized the necessity of doing that will. The will of God includes, of course, that which Jesus teaches as a way of life of his people, and that which his inspired messengers taught, as the divine revelation gradually unfolded itself.

The importance of this principle cannot be too greatly emphasized. Even Jesus himself could not please

God, without doing his will. "For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent him." (John 6: 38.) "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.) If Jesus could not please the Father, without strictly adhering to his will, much less can any human being justly hope to meet God in peace, who does not endeavor at all times to live as the Lord directs. Paul warned the Corinthians that they should "learn not to go beyond the things which are written" (1 Cor. 4: 6); and John admonishes, "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).

The Text Explained

The Proposition Stated

(James 2: 14)

What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him?

"That faith" is faith without works; and James asks the specific question, Can such a faith save its possessor? The term "faith," when used with reference to salvation, never means mere intellectual belief or assent, although that, of course, is implied. The predominant idea in the word is that of trust in God, or the giving over of one's self to him. Faith, in this sense, stands in sharp contrast with meritorious works; but it is never placed in contrast with works, which are produced by faith. The latter's works are referred to as "obedience of faith," and by them faith is made perfect. (Cf. Rom. 1: 5; 16: 26; James 2: 22.)

Paul, in Romans 3: 27, refers to "a law of faith," that is, the divine arrangement for saving the lost, or,

the gospel plan of salvation. The term "law" is frequently used to denote the whole legal system under Moses; and inasmuch as *faith* is the leading and characteristic feature of the religion of Christ, that term is often employed to indicate the New Testament scheme of human redemption. Faith, of course, implies *believers*; but, as we shall see in this study, all believers do not belong to the same category.

Harold Lindsell notes that James argues against the idea that a man can be saved by a faith which does not radically change his thinking and conduct. This makes plain the truth that there can be no genuine faith, that is, no true or acceptable faith, in the absence of evidence to prove that such faith does indeed exist. The apostle does not argue that we are saved by works, that is, meritorious works; but he does contend that works which grow out of faith are essential to demonstrate that genuine faith does exist. This view of James' argument is consist-

ent with the teaching of Paul, which declares that the believer in Christ is a new creature (2 Cor. 5: 17), and that as such he will manifest a new kind of character and behavior, which will reflect the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

With the facts just presented in mind, it is easy to see that James was particularly concerned with the common tendency to substitute a lifeless assent to the truth of the gospel, for real conversion and zealous obedience to that which they profess to believe. Many religious people, down through the ages, have sought to discredit James, by endeavoring to show, as already indicated, that there was a basic difference between him and Paul over the question of faith and works. (Cf. Eph. 2: 9.) But the truth of the matter is that James was not opposing Paul, but was, instead, writing in opposition to those who were abusing Paul's teaching.

Although both James and Paul were inspired writers, it is necessary to keep in mind that they were dealing with two entirely different situations. Paul had in mind meritorious works, the kind which no human being could perform, while James was discussing works of obedience, or works which grow out of, and are authorized by, the gospel of Christ. (See again Rom. 1: 5; 16: 26.) If this distinction is kept in mind, it will be easy to see that both James and Paul were in perfect agreement, regarding the subject of faith and works.

The Issue Clearly Set Forth

(James 2: 15-20)

If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith apart from thy works and I by my works will show thee my faith. Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren?

The full context of the passage which is used for today's study, is

James 2: 14-26; and it should be read as a whole. When this is done, it is easy to see that the apostle is presenting a series of illustrations, which demonstrate beyond the shadow of a doubt, that faith and works, as prescribed by the Lord, are inseparably joined together. James shows that faith must go further than mere assent to the truth; for the faith that justifies must include obedience. (Cf. Matt. 7: 21; Heb. 5: 8, 9.) The writer's questions in verse 14 clearly set forth the specific subject which the apostle is discussing, namely, faith without works; and in verses 15-26 he records a series of illustrations, each followed by the conclusion that there is no profit in such faith. These illustrations and conclusions are (1) *an illustration from life* (verses 15, 16), and the conclusion (verse 17); (2) *faith, that is, conviction, alone will not suffice* (verses 18, 19), and the conclusion (verse 20); (3) *the case of Abraham* (verses 21-23), and the conclusion (verse 24); and (4) *the case of Rahab the harlot* (verse 25), and the conclusion (verse 26.)

The emphasis in the passage just cited (James 2: 14-26) is not on the ground of salvation; but on the evidence of faith. (Cf. Mark 16: 15, 16.) No man can demonstrate that he has faith, except by some form of action; and since our faith must be in the Lord, we can give evidence of it, only by doing that which *he* commands us to do. (Cf. Acts 16: 30-34 — "*having believed in God.*") Thus, according to the inspired historian, the jailor gave evidence of his faith by his action; and so must every one else.

And so, in the section of the lesson text now under consideration, James employs two of his four illustrations, the first one being an illustration taken from life, something which any observer might see almost any day. Thus, if a destitute brother or sister should be addressed in this manner by a member of the church, the needy one would doubtless expect to receive some appropriate assistance: for that alone would relieve the situation. When Peter and John were about to go into the temple, as recorded in the third chapter of Acts, they came to the place where a lame man was, "who seeing Peter and John about

to go into the temple, asked to receive an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, *expecting to receive something from them.* But Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." (Acts 3: 3-6.)

The conclusion drawn from this first illustration, is expressed in these words, namely, "Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself." This is to say that faith alone is as empty and worthless, as the words addressed to the needy person in the preceding verses; and any one who is not blinded by a theory, can easily follow James' reasoning.

The second illustration which James uses, is clearly intended to show that faith, that is, conviction, alone will not suffice; and it is stated in these words: "Yea, man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith. Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder." Ruskin said that he never met with but one book, in his life, that was clear on the subject of faith and works; and that book is the Bible. That famed author, in a letter in which that statement is found, further says:

"Christ says—'When ye have done all that is commanded you, then say we are unprofitable servants.' He does not say—Do *nothing* that is commanded you, and all is right if you say you are unprofitable. Read the Sermon on the Mount. It is work, work, work, from beginning to end. And I believe all the divisions of Christians are caused by their hatred of the simple text—'Whoso heareth my words and *doeth* them.' The Romanists substitute paying and praying for doing; the Scotch, believing for doing; the English, reverence for doing; and so on. Plain taking up of the hard, heavy cross is the last thing with them all. Strive always to do—acknowledge continually, that it is Christ which worketh in you, both to will and to do. And you will soon know the doctrine whether it be of God."

When James says, "Show me thy

faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith," he is proclaiming the fact that works are the outcome, that is, the result, of faith; they do not precede it. The faith which is not followed by works is dead; and the works which are not the outgrowth, or the consequence, of faith are unacceptable in the sight of God. The order just indicated always determines the character of the works; for the man who professes to produce works, while confessing that he has no faith, is trusting in his own ability, rather than in Christ the Saviour; and such an attitude is nothing short of presumption, which is always associated with the "great transgression." (Cf. Psalm 19: 13.) Faith, on the other hand, can only be demonstrated by doing that which is specifically commanded.

Faith, it should be carefully noted, is much more than simple conviction; it is conviction plus confidence, or, trust. "And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe [that is, be convicted or convinced] that he is, and that he is a rewarder [that is, have confidence or trust in] of them that seek after him." (Heb. 11: 6.) Russell Bradley Jones notes that "Saving faith is the opposite of worthless faith. Claims are matched by conduct. As it talks, so it walks. It proves its sincerity by its action. It believes to the point of commitment. It trusts to the point of dependence. It loves to the point of obedience. It does not attempt the impossible feat of taking Jesus as Saviour of the soul while refusing to follow him as Lord of the life."

Even the demons, as James points out, are believers in the existence of God, and they even shudder when they contemplate that profound realization; but who would think for a single moment that the evil spirits would be benefited by such a faith? It is interesting to note that the original term for "shudder" occurs only here in the New Testament; and the idea expressed by the word is that the demons, believing as they do in the existence of God, are terrorized, or filled with extreme fear, by the very thought of it. Demons possess genuine faith in God, insofar as his existence is con-

cerned; but they do not put their confidence or trust in him. Most any rational person can believe that God is one, or, that there is one God, without endeavoring to do that which he has commanded, and thereby putting his trust in him—even the demons do that, as James points out; and it is with this thought in mind that the apostle concludes, "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren?"

The Case of the Father of the Faithful

(James 2: 21-23)

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God.

The section of the lesson text just quoted is James' third illustration regarding the question of faith without works; and it may be regarded as an inspired commentary on such passages as Genesis 15: 1-6; 22: 1-19; and Romans 4: 1-25, where the case of Abraham is set forth in greater detail. It is not possible for one to read that which the Scriptures say about the father of the faithful, and reach the conclusion that there is a conflict between faith and works, as they are discussed in James 2: 14-26. Works are the evidence of faith, and faith has its necessary fruition in works; or, works complete faith, or, make it perfect.

If one looks at the over-all example of Abraham's faith, he is inclined to agree with Clarence S. Roddy, when he, in commenting on Hebrews 11: 8-10, says, "Here is the perfect example of faith that looks beyond. All around the world today Abraham is known by believer and non-believer as the great example of *faith*. He is 'the Father of the Faithful.' What a monument! What a testimony! It was an obedient faith. 'When he was called . . . obeyed.' The force of the sentence is that he did not argue but immediately obeyed and set out.

He committed his life and his future to God. That is just what we do in conversion. We commit ourselves and our lives, absolutely to him. One never knows what God may ask of him when he surrenders, and perfect trust cares not. It is content to go where he leads or sends. His was a faith that looked to the future. He was not glued to this earth. He gave up living in a great city in the East for wandering in Palestine, but that was not all; not by any stretch of the imagination! Abraham had gotten hold of something more important and valuable. 'He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.' We need to capture the spirit. The truth is that, for the best of us, the world, this present world, is too much with us and we hate to let go."

Herbert F. Stevenson notes that "nothing could seemingly be more provocative, in the faith-works dispute, than the assertion of James that Abraham was justified by works, in offering up Isaac—as he was ready to do, and in fact *did*, in heart and intent—since Paul cites Abraham, and this supreme incident in his life, as the chief witness in support of justification by faith! In fact, however, this is not a 'confrontation' between James and Paul, but the most notable example of their oneness in essential belief. Paul stresses the *faith* which inspired the act of Abraham; James points out that the reality of his faith was proven by his *act*. They are emphasizing two aspects of one truth; looking at the one incident from different angles. James does not dispute that faith was the impelling factor: indeed, he declares that 'faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect'—or as the *RSV* illuminatingly renders it, 'faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works' (2: 22). Paul would agree with that. He never implies that faith is merely a matter of inward conviction or attitude: it is a dynamic which will ever express itself. And so James thrusts his lesson home: 'You see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.'

The student can read James'

fourth illustration, and the conclusion he draws, in the closing verses

of the second chapter of the book from which this lesson is taken.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is faith so important in the Christian life?
What is the true scriptural meaning of the term "faith"?
How does James deal with the question of faith in the first two chapters of his epistle?
Against what background did he write the passage which serves as the lesson text for today?

The Golden Text

In what setting are the words of the golden text found?
Why is it so essential to adhere strictly to that which God says?
What, then, does the doing of God's will involve?
In what way is the principle we are now considering applicable to our day?

The Proposition Stated

What does James mean by "that faith"?
What is the over-all relationship of "faith" and "works"? Why?
In what sense does the New Testament refer to the "law of faith"?
Why does James teach that a person cannot be saved by faith only?
With what was he particularly concerned in his discussion of faith without works?
Why have people tried to show that there is a conflict between James and Paul regarding faith and works?

The Issue Clearly Set Forth

What is involved in the full context of the passage we are considering at this time?
How, alone, can one demonstrate that he is actually a believer in the Lord?
What is James' first illustration in his discussion of the subject of faith without works?
What conclusion did he reach?
Discuss his second illustration.
What is the true relationship between faith and works?
In what way do demons illustrate this point?
What conclusion is drawn from the second illustration?
What are the two basic ingredients in faith and why can't people please God without faith?

The Case of the Father of the Faithful

What are some of the experiences in the life of Abraham which give some idea of the greatness of his faith?
In what way are the words of James related to them?
In what ways did Abraham demonstrate his faith in God and why is he called the father of the faithful?
Why does all of this imply so far as we are concerned?
Why can't a person be called faithful who does not surrender his all to God?
How do we know for certain that James and Paul are in perfect agreement regarding the question of faith and works?

Lesson III—October 17, 1971

SUNDRY ADMONITIONS

Lesson Text

James 4: 7-17

7 Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded.

9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you.

11 Speak not one against another, brethren. He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh against the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judgest the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

12 One *only* is the lawgiver and

judge, *even* he who is able to save and to destroy: but who art thou that judgest thy neighbor?

13 Come now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain:

14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that.

16 But now ye glory in your vauntings: all such glorying is evil.

17 To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God."* (James 4: 4.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—James 4: 1-6.

Daily Bible Readings

October 11.	M.	Whence Come Wars (James 4: 1-4)
October 12.	T.	Resist the Devil (James 4: 7-10)
October 13.	W.	Heavenly Treasure (Matt. 6: 19-21)
October 14.	T.	Sin of Covetousness (Col. 3: 1-11)
October 15.	F.	Grace Available from God (Heb. 4: 14-16)
October 16.	S.	Walk in Love (Eph. 5: 1-5)
October 17.	S.	Christian Armor (Eph. 6: 10-20)

TIME.—Uncertain, but possibly as early as A.D. 45.

PLACE.—The epistle was probably written in Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—James and the twelve tribes of the Dispersion.

Introduction

The world in which we live is diametrically opposed to God. This is true because of Satan's influence and his determined effort to lead every responsible person away from Jehovah. This has been the history of the evil one, since he began his nefarious work in the garden of Eden. The devil, who apparently was an angel in the beginning (cf. Isa. 14: 12-14; Ezek. 28: 11-19; 1 Tim. 3: 6), rebelled against God, and became hopelessly estranged from Jehovah who created him. There is no good whatsoever in the devil, and he is for ever at work trying to seduce all men to his philosophy of life. There is therefore no possible hope for Satan to return to his original purity; and, as Milton puts it,

So farewell hope, and with hope
farewell fear,

Farewell remorse! All good to me
is lost;

Evil, be thou my good.

And so, with total depravity as his lot, it is not surprising therefore to see the devil at work, day and night, in his effort to defeat every possible righteous act. God, of course, knows this; and he has commanded his servants to be on the watch for the evil one at all times, and to resist his every effort at seduction. The situation just referred to accounts for the many admonitions against wrongdoing, and in favor of righteousness, which are found in the Bible. The Lord has faithfully promised to help his people, when the task against Satan becomes too

great for them. "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.) Paul states this promise in clear and unambiguous language; and if one will read James 1: 2-8, he can easily see just how the tempted believer can claim that promise for his own. John assures us that we can overcome those who are evil; "because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." (1 John 4: 4.)

The many admonitions in the New Testament are sufficient to show that God wants his people to be pure and holy. (Cf. 1 Pet. 1: 15, 16.) Paul told the Corinthians that he had espoused them to one husband, that he might present them as a pure virgin to Christ. (See 2 Cor. 11: 2.) No decent man wants an impure wife, and vice versa; and it is certain that Jesus does not want his bride to be guilty of sinful relationships with those who are opposed to him. Jehovah created man in his own image, and he has made it plain that he loves his creature, especially those who are in covenant relationship with him, with an everlasting love. (See Jer. 31: 3.) And as long as God feels that way about his people, we may be certain that he will never cease, through his inspired word, to admonish them to refrain from evil, and strive to do good.

The Golden Text

"Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God." The immediate context of the words just quoted reads as follows: "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." It would be difficult, if not indeed impossible, to find a passage of scripture which marks the distinction, in clearer terms, between God and the world, than the one just quoted. John makes a similar statement, when he says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2: 15-17.)

The Interpreter's Bible notes that friendship with the world is equivalent to the adoption of the philosophy of *hedonism* as one's own. Hedonism is denned by Webster (*New Collegiate Dictionary*) to mean "the doctrine that pleasure is the sole or chief good in life and that moral duty is fulfilled in the gratification of pleasure-seeking instincts and dispositions." The term in question is derived from the Greek *hedone*, and the original word

occurs in the New Testament in the following passages: Luke 8: 14; Titus 3: 3; James 4: 1, 3; and 2 Peter 2: 13. It is easy to see that the New Testament use of the word always indicates a situation, which is in opposition to the will of God; and that is why such a philosophy, or view of life, can never be pleasing to God. One man who declares himself a proponent of this philosophy, says,

"It is necessary to undermine with skepticism (a) the duty of serving humanity (b) the pursuit of truth. . . . A person who has found the secret of a thrilling life of happiness, why should he bother with a lot of people? He has no wish to convert them, no wish to change them, no wish to gain their admiration. His only wish concerning them is that they should take themselves off and leave him alone." (John Cowper Powys, *In Defense of Sensuality*, p. 91.) Such an attitude defies God; and we may be certain that he will never allow any person to do that with impunity. (Cf. Gal. 6: 7, 8.) The desires of the worldly-minded man are stimulated by his lusts and the world's temptations; and sinful pleasures are the direct outgrowth of lusts. (Cf. James 1: 13-16; 4: 1-3.) Augustine, in his younger days, was a hedonist, but he says in his *Confessions* that he was attracted to the Christian way of life, because he found within it a joy, untainted by the dregs of dissipation.

The Text Explained

The Lord's Way to Victory
(James 4: 7-10)

Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you.

The final word of the gospel of Christ will never be *condemnation*, until the individual in question makes it so. It matters not how defiant and rebellious a person may

have been, the Lord will welcome him into the fold of salvation, if only he will turn to God, and submit himself to the divine will. (Cf. Luke 15: 11-24.) Subjection to God, however, implies resisting the devil; and that is just exactly what James says. The verse which precedes this section of the lesson text says that God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. The idea in the term "resisteth" is based on military strategy; and it is as if the writer says that God sets himself in array against the proud. Or, to say the same thing in another way, pride calls out the armies of God, and it is no wonder that the

Bible says that pride goeth before destruction; for Jehovah never fails in such a confrontation. (Cf. Prov. 16: 18.) When one *resists* the devil, he sets himself against the evil one, and withstands him. (Cf. 1 Pet. 5: 8, 9.)

Inasmuch as God and the devil are diametrically opposed to each other, it is utterly impossible for any person to have fellowship with both at the same time. It appears that the point which James is here emphasizing, is that of curbing the proud spirit of man. The choice must be made between submission to God, and the giving way to the leadings of a proud spirit, which, of course, is inspired by the devil. When one subjects himself to God, he places himself under God's will; or, which is the same thing, he becomes obedient to God, and subordinates his will to that of Jehovah. This, of necessity, places the subjected one in array against the devil; and when the devil is resisted, with the strength which comes from God (1 Pet. 5: 6-10); he will flee from the divinely-equipped believer.

If one wants to submit himself to God, James shows just how to go about it. His words are: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you." Herbert L. Stevenson notes that submission to God is the key to all which follows. It is the secret to the deliverance from inward strife and the outward manifestation of sin. It is in the restored relationship with God, that the wayward child of God can find forgiveness and peace and victory. It is indeed the only way; but it is not an easy way. The proud will and the strong desires of self-assertion are not easily bowed in humble submission—even to God; but until that is accomplished there can be no grace which can heal the damage which has been done.

But submission, even to God, is not enough; one must continue to draw closer to him, and, when that is done, the erstwhile sinner will

have the assurance that God will reciprocate. But no one can draw near to God, until his hands have been cleansed and his heart made pure. Or, to say the same thing in another way, James continues to insist that faith without works is dead. Not only must one cease from overt acts of sin; he must experience an inward change of heart. Repentance and the return to God must be completely sincere; or, which is the same thing, they must be without reservation, and there must be no backward look. (Cf. Luke 17: 28-32.)

Sin, however, is so subtle and insidious, and insofar as the believer is concerned, so tenacious, that James, humanly speaking, seems reluctant to leave the subject, and so he drives home his lesson with repeated appeals. The Lord's people are often accused of being overly puritanical and gloomy, because of their insistence upon the defiling character and power of sin; but when one comes to read that which James says regarding the question, in the text now under consideration, he can hardly reach the point where too much emphasis is placed upon our attitude toward wrongdoing. The wages of sin is death, and the whole system is so revolting in the sight of God, as to require that his only begotten Son be sacrificed, in order to make it possible for mankind to escape from its clutches. The word of God always deals with such a malady in the most solemn manner; and so should we. And so, when the penitent child of God will humble himself in his sight, he may be assured that he will be lifted up; or, which is the same thing, be restored to his former place in the Lord's presence. (Cf. Luke 15: 22-24; Heb. 8: 12.)

Friendship with God Implies Respect for His Law (James 4: 11, 12)

Speak not one against another, brethren. He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh against the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judgest the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. One only is the law-giver and judge, even he who is able to save and to destroy: but who art thou that judgest thy neighbor?

This section of the lesson text should be considered in the light of such passages as Matthew 5: 22 and 7: 1-5. It should be noted, however, that neither Jesus nor James condemns all kinds of judging; if that were true, then no one, not even the most dedicated teacher of God's word, could ever call in question anything a fellow Christian could say or do. Jesus says, "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment." (John 7: 24.) A "critical faculty" has been divinely planted within us; and the Lord expects us to use it as he intended. There is not a day which passes, in which we are not called upon to form judgments on people and things, and on our own conduct; but we are not to stop simply with judging. It is our solemn obligation to prove all things; and then hold fast that which is good. (See 1 Thess. 5: 21; 1 John 4: 1.)

The kind of judging which both Jesus and James condemn, is the practice of ill-natured criticism, hasty and half-formed opinions, the open and even unconscious assertion of our own superiority, the malicious whispers, and the cruel sneers which do so much harm in everyday relationships of human life. In a word, we are to refrain from self-righteous, loveless, and censorious judgments. (Cf. Luke 6: 27-38.) Some one has said that one of the greatest issues is the pain which we have caused; and it is certain that there is coming an awful day of reckoning for the man with an uncharitable tongue. Such a person is, without a doubt, among the greatest of the mischief makers of the earth.

The law which James refers to is probably the law of Christ, either his specific injunction against judging, or his law as a whole, which certainly includes such irresponsible use of the tongue, that is, all such censorious judging; and it is for that reason that such an offender speaks against the law when he speaks against a brother. The Speaker's Bible notes that the detractor of his brother virtually condemns the ethics of the New Testament as being unsound, and pronounces its moral standard as being unworthy of obedience. He sets up his own opinions against the plain revelation of God, and shows him-

self to be contemptuous toward the law of love, and acts as if he were in possession of some higher principle by which he tests the Lord's way, and finds it to be wanting.

But James makes it plain that the professed Christian who presumes to speak contrary to the royal law, is guilty of arrogant impertinence, and is therefore charged with a grave offense in God's sight. No human being has the God-given right to adopt any other standard for governing his own conduct, than that which has been made known by the inspired writers of the New Testament. God alone is the law-giver, and he has both the power to save and the power to destroy; and he alone is the judge of such matters. When James asks, "Who art thou that judgest thy neighbor?" he is calling attention to their lack of both the right and the ability for such a course of action. If we were allowed to judge, our judgment would be inadequate; for we do not have sufficient insight to know all the facts in the case. So then, after all, what does our judgment of our neighbors amount to? (Read 1 Cor. 4: 1-5.)

The Sinfulness of Arrogant Self-Confidence

(James 4: 13-17)

Come now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that. But now ye glory in your vauntings: all such glorying is evil. To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

This section of the lesson text introduces another, and perhaps a graver fault, which James seeks to correct, namely, that of presumptuous confidence of one's own future, or, which is the same thing, the making of plans for the future, without taking into consideration the uncertainty of life, and our absolute dependence upon God. This question is more comprehensive than that of controlling the tongue;

for it has to do with the over-all ordering of everyday life, and involves the very principles by which we live. Ambitious people who make no pretense at following the Lord, usually have a clear idea of that which they want; and they plan their lives accordingly. (Cf. Luke 12: 13-21.) This is a foolish course of action, even for the non-believer; but how much more so for the professed follower of Christ! We have no idea what the future holds for us; and even if we did, our lives are not our own—they are no more than a vapor, which may vanish at any moment.

The expression "Come now" (found only twice in the New Testament, here and James 5: 1) is meant to arrest the attention. The passage is rendered by Phillips in these words "Just a moment, now, you who say: . . ." James wrote to the Jews of the Dispersion (probably to both believers and unbelievers); and it appears that they were no longer engaged in the pastoral pursuits of their homeland, but were living in the cities of the nations and engaged chiefly in commercial enterprises. Many of the Jewish people had become wealthy; and it appears that one of the principal interest of many was that of accumulating worldly wealth. But James wanted them to stop and have a look at the realities of life. Edersheim quotes one of their rabbis as saying, "Care not for the morrow, for ye know not what a day may bring forth. Perhaps he may not be alive on the morrow, and so have cared for a world that does not exist for him." (Cf. Matt. 6: 31-34.)

The thoughtful Christian will readily recognize that our times are in the hands of the Lord (cf. Psalm 31: 14, 15), and it is therefore fitting that he should say, "If the Lord will, I shall do this or that." Any one who reads the writings of James and Paul cannot fail to have this idea impressed upon his mind. (Cf. Acts 18: 20, 21; 1 Cor. 4: 19.) The Latin equivalent to "if the Lord will" is *Deo volente*, and the latter is often abbreviated, in present-day usage, as *D. V.* It is, of course, possible for Christians to employ the phrase "if the Lord will" without giving due consideration to its actual significance, and that would not

be beneficial to the user; but any informed child of God ought to train himself to make a practice of recognizing the sovereignty of God, and his overruling providence, at all times; or, which is the same thing this attitude toward God should underlie and control our every thought, purpose, and plan. The dominant guiding principle of our life should be, "Not my will, but thine be done"; or, "What shall I do, Lord?"

But, as just about every thoughtful Christian has observed, there are many professed followers of Christ, who fall far short of that which James enjoins in this section of the lesson text. They make their own plans and go their own ways, without too much consideration for the Lord; and then, after deciding what they want to do and where they want to go, they do, occasionally at least, ask the blessings of God upon that which they have worked out for themselves. But James solemnly warns, "All such glorying is evil"; and he adds, "To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." This is the way the apostle leaves the matter. It is now up to the readers of his epistle to heed his instruction, and adjust their behavior accordingly.

The remark of James regarding the sin of omission recalls other teaching in the New Testament on the same subject. For example, Jesus says, "And that servant who knew his Lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." (Luke 12: 47.) And the writer of Hebrews notes, "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; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will." (Heb. 2: 1-4.)

The principle which we are now considering is just as true now, as it was when James wrote his message. Knowledge without practice always involves the possessor in sin. Some one has noted that nothing injures the soul more, than wasted impressions. Feelings exhaust themselves and evaporate, if they are not reduced to practice. No one is going to act, until he feels that he should; but if one does not act out his feelings, he will soon cease to feel.

The Interpreter's Bible points out that when one becomes a child of God, he voluntarily takes upon himself the responsibilities and obligations, which the people of the world do not acknowledge. The average person, to be sure, does recognize responsibilities within the circle of certain limited relationships; but what lies beyond that circle is not

his concern. No one is compelled to become a Christian. The duties which belong to the life of a follower of Christ can only be assumed willingly. Thus, no one needs to be in the dark as to what is expected of him; for Christ does not want blind followers. But when any person, of his own free choice, decides to become a Christian, he cannot, with impunity, refuse to discharge the obligations which his new relationship imposes upon him.

There is another important lesson which we should learn just here, namely, Those who seek to win people to the Lord, should make it plain to prospective disciples, that which the Lord expects of them; and no one can follow the terms of the great commission without doing this very thing. (Read Matt. 28: 19, 20; cf. Acts 2: 42; Luke 9: 57-62.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is a lesson on admonitions so important to the Christian life?
What is the attitude of Satan toward God and why is the conflict between them inevitable?
What great responsibility does this situation place upon the child of God?
What promise has the Lord made to his people regarding needed assistance?
What is God's ultimate aim regarding his people?

The Golden Text

In what context are the words of the golden text found?
What important lesson should we learn from this text?
What are the chief characteristics of friends of the world?
Why can not such a person please God? Think!

The Lord's Way to Victory

How only can the final word of the gospel of Christ be *condemnation*?
What does subjection to God always imply and why?
In what way are we to understand the significance of the term "resist" in this lesson?
What particular point does James seem to be emphasizing here?
How alone can one submit himself to God, that is, what does James say about the matter?
Why do not people, as a rule, feel toward sin as James exhorts?
Why do you suggest that should be done

in order to cause people to have a keener sense of sin?

Friendship with God Implies Respect for His Law

How can one best understand the point which James is making in this section of the lesson text?
What is the basic teaching of the New Testament regarding the question of judging?
What kind of judging is James condemning here?
Why is this issue so serious?
What "law" does James apparently have in mind? Give reasons for your answer.
Who alone is the lawgiver and what significance does that fact have for us? Discuss.
What is actually accomplished when one undertakes to judge his neighbor?

The Sinfulness of Arrogant Self-Confidence

What important subject does James introduce in this section of the lesson text?
What is the nature of the sin herein involved?
Why is the question herein discussed so far-reaching?
How does James go about bringing this issue to the attention of his readers?
What should Christians always do under such circumstances?
Why do so few people, relatively speaking, preface their plans by thinking first of God's will?
What does James say regarding the folly of such an attitude?
What does he teach regarding the sin of omission?
Why is the principle underlying all of this so vital to us today?

Lesson IV—October 24, 1971

GROWTH IN SPIRITUAL STATURE

Lesson Text

1 Pet. 2: 1-10

1 Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

2 As newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation;

3 If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious:

4 Unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious,

5 Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Je'sus Christ.

6 Because it is contained in scripture,

Behold, I lay in Zi'-on a chief corner stone, elect, precious:

And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame.

7 For you therefore that believe is the preciousness: but for such as disbelieve,

The stone which the builders rejected,

The same was made the head of the corner;

8 And,

A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence;

for they stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

9 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:

10 Who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Love one another from the heart fervently."* (1 Pet. 1: 22.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Pet. 2: 11-17.

Daily Bible Readings

October 18.	M.	Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1: 1-10)
October 19.	T.	Peter, a Great Preacher (Acts 2: 1-47)
October 20.	W.	Proper Conduct of Christians (1 Pet. 1: 11-16)
October 21.	T.	Reasons for Faith and Hope (1 Pet. 1: 17-21)
October 22.	F.	Grounds for Brotherly Love (1 Pet. 1: 22-29)
October 23.	S.	John's Description of Good People (1 John 3: 13-18)
October 24.	S.	The Christian Graces (2 Pet. 1: 5-11)

TIME.—First Peter was written in A.D. 63.

PLACE.—The epistle was apparently written in Babylon.

PERSONS.—Peter and those to whom he wrote.

Introduction

The immortal nature of man is the most important truth about him, and that means that the responsible person's first consideration should be with reference to that truth. Practically any child of God will say that he was dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2: 1), when the Lord, through the gospel, called him into his kingdom or church (2 Thess. 2: 13, 14; Col. 1: 13); and it was then that he really began to live in God's presence (Rom. 6: 3, 4; 2 Cor. 5:

17). Growth is one of the fundamental laws of our being, but it is an indisputable fact that there can be no growth before there is life; and it is for that reason that no one was ever urged to grow, while still alienated from the source of all spiritual life. (Cf. Col. 3: 1-4.) Or, to say the same thing in another way, it is always the living creature who is exhorted to grow. A mere pebble, however well-shaped and beautiful it may be, will never

grow, under any circumstances; and it is also true that the most perfect seed, in which is the germ of life, will never grow, as long as it remains in a secluded place and away from soil and moisture. (Cf. John 12: 24.)

And so, notwithstanding the soul's immortality, it must grow if the blessings which it is capable of enjoying, and which the Lord has made possible for it, are to be received. It is always sad to see a human being who never grows, either physically or mentally; but there is a situation which is infinitely worse, namely, that of a re-deemed child of God, who not only fails to grow, but who actually goes backward. The writer of Hebrews describes such a condition: "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." (Heb. 5: 11, 12.) A similar situation, though probably not as pronounced, was also present in Corinth: "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?" (1 Cor. 3: 1-3.)

The growth and development of a Christian, is not merely an academic question. Jehovah, in whom we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17: 28), is a living entity; and if we are to serve him acceptably, we must show a great deal of vitality in our own lives. As long as there is life, there must be growth; and since it is the purpose and will of the Lord that his people have life (John 10: 10), their growth must be continuous. Some one has said that the Lord does not estimate us by the level of our spiritual attainments; but rather by the amount of real moral movement our lives manifest. We must never be content to stop in our progress toward a higher life with God. (Cf. Luke 18: 9-14.) The spiritual growth and development which is possible for, and which God expects of his people, is expressed in many parts of the New Testament, as, for example, Colossians 1: 9-12; Ephesians 4: 11-16.

The Golden Text

"Love one another from the heart fervently." Love is, without a doubt, the greatest single force depicted in the Bible. John 3: 16, which tells of God's love for sinful humanity, is often referred to as the Golden Text of the Bible. (Cf. Rom. 5: 6-8.) Paul compares love with faith and hope; but he declares that the greatest of these is love. It is only from God that we can learn how to comply with the words of the golden text for today's lesson. The passage we are now considering is found in this setting: "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." (1 Pet. 1: 22, 23.)

The passage just quoted is rendered by Barclay in these words:

"Now that obedience to the truth has purified your souls, and now that you have reached a genuine love for your brother-Christians, you must love each other sincerely and intensely, for you have been born all over again through the agency of the living, and lasting word of God, and this time your father is not a mortal man but the immortal God." If one should read, "Seeing you have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth *unto* (eis, cf. Acts 2: 38) a right relationship with the Lord," he would naturally understand that he had reached that desired end; and so it is with the passage now under consideration—those who have been born again are members of the body of Christ; and they have reached a relation with other members of the church, which is described by the expression "unfeigned love of the brethren." That is the background against which the exhortation "love

one another from the heart fervently" is given.

The words "love of the brethren" are the rendering of a single Greek word, namely, *Philadelphia*, a compound word, composed of two other Greek terms: *philos*, love, and *adelphos*, brother. This kind of love is called forth from one's heart, because he delights in the person whom he loves; and it has been called the love of "liking." The word was originally applied to blood kin, but its New Testament use is to those who are brothers in Christ. (See Rom. 12: 10; 1 Thess. 4: 9; Heb. 13: 1; 2 Pet. 1: 7, the

only other places where the term occurs.) The word "unfeigned" literally means without hypocrisy; and, having reached that attitude toward the brethren, Peter urges the Lord's people to "love one another from the heart fervently." The word for love here (*agapao*) is stronger than *philos*; and is based on moral choice, and, as such, it can be commanded. (Cf. Matt. 5: 43-48; 1 John 3: 13-18; 4: 20, 21.) The original term for the adverb "fervently" carries with it the idea of loving intensely and earnestly. (Cf. Luke 22: 44; Acts 12: 5, where the same word is found.)

The Text Explained

The Way for Brotherly Love to
Manifest Itself

(1 Pet. 2: 1-5)

Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocries, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that he may grow thereby unto salvation; if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious: unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

One of the great hindrances to profitable Bible study, or more particularly, that which keeps people from obtaining the kind of results which they should from the study of the Scriptures, is their failure to try to enter into the spirit and aim of the writer. Or, to say the same thing in another way, too many people try to get the meaning of that which has been written, by focusing their attention on isolated passages, instead of considering the context as a whole. If the latter is done in the case now before us, it will be easy to see that 1 Pet. 1: 13-2: 10 is a discussion of the general subject of holiness. God is holy, and his children must be like him. A new birth is absolutely essential to membership in the Lord's family; and those who have been born again become a part of the Christian brotherhood; and they are expected to love each other fervently. This means, of

course, that the old life must be done with, and unceasing efforts must be made to become the kind of people whom God wants them to be.

The gospel usually finds people in transgressions and sins (cf. Eph. 2: 1), and that means that the former lives of people who respond to the Lord's invitation (2 Thess. 2: 13, 14) are totally unacceptable to him. They are created anew in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2: 10; 2 Cor. 5: 17; Tit. 3: 5, 6); and that means that they are to begin living a new kind of life (Rom. 6: 3, 4). But since the Lord's way, and that of Satan, are diametrically opposed to each other, the way of the devil must be abandoned, before the life of God can be lived. It is for this reason that the sins of the flesh, such as those mentioned by Peter in verse 1, must be put away, so that the kind of growth which God expects and requires can begin. Paul discusses this question at length in Ephesians 4: 17-32.

The two conditions for growth "unto salvation," or, which is the same thing, the kind of spiritual development which is acceptable to the Lord, are (1) love for other Christians, and (2) a faithful use of God's word. Cary N. Weisiger III notes that love conditions the heart, while the Scriptures condition the mind. Peter makes it plain that they both work together; and that failure to love is a denial of the word of God, which was instrumental in their conversion. Furthermore, a failure to love will keep one from a proper grasp of the word; and a failure to find proper

nourishment in the word will almost certainly make it impossible for the newly born babe in Christ to deal properly with the corrupt and self-ish tendencies of the soul.

The fact that man's religious experience in the Lord begins as a newly born babe, and ends in maturity, if he is spared to develop as he should, is sufficient, in and of itself, to show that growth is a major factor in the life of a Christian. And, as in the case of the natural state, the babe must begin with milk. The writer of Hebrews notes that "every one that partaketh of milk is without experience in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for full-grown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil." (Heb. 5: 13, 14.) Peter describes the food for babes in Christ as "spiritual milk which is without guile." The original word for "spiritual" is *logikos*; and its only other occurrence in the New Testament is Romans 12: 1. The marginal reading in both instances is "belonging to the reason"; and the idea seems to be that this food, agreeable to reason, is ideally suited for the nourishment of the young in the Lord.

The milk now under consideration is also said to be "without guile." The Greek word for "guile," in verse 1, is *dolos*; and when the first letter of the Greek alphabet, *alpha* (α), is added as a prefix, the term becomes *adolos*, and means the opposite of what it meant before, that is, without guile; or, which is the same thing, unadulterated or having no admixture of human error. The word of God has no ulterior motives, as is so often the case of human teaching; its only purpose is to nourish and save the soul. The Greek *adolos* is found nowhere else in the New Testament.

Babes in Christ are expected to "long" for the food which they need. The original word for "long" is the compound *epi-pothēō*; and it carries with it the idea of intense yearning. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 2; Phil. 2: 26; 1 Thess. 3: 6, where the same original word is found.) But how does one acquire a longing for the word of God? The answer is found in the fact that sin has been put out of

one's life, and he has *tasted* the salvation of the Lord. (Cf. Psalm 34: 8.) Wuest notes that "sin in the life destroys the appetite for the Word. The Christian who tries to find satisfaction in the husks of the world, has no appetite left for the things of God. His heart is filled with the former and has no room for the latter. A healthy infant is a hungry infant. A spiritually healthy Christian is a hungry Christian. This solves the problem of why so many children of God have so little love for the Word."

There are other conditions of spiritual development, as one may see by reading verses 3-5. The Lord's people must seek a close fellowship with Christ; since it is only through him that we have access to the Father. (Cf. John 14: 6; Rom. 5: 1, 2.) The obedient believer comes to Christ when he experiences the new birth (cf. Gal. 3: 26, 27); but he must continue to draw closer to him, as he lives the Christian life (cf. Heb. 4: 14-16). The world has rejected Christ, but God approves him; and so must we. Believers are also "living stones," and they are used to build the spiritual house, in which they also, as priests, are engaged in spiritual service to the Lord. (Cf. Eph. 2: 19-22.) No child of God can experience a greater blessing, than to be conscious of the fact that God is pleased with his spiritual service.

Christ—A Corner Stone or a Rock to Stumble Over
(1 Pet. 2: 6-8)

"Because it is contained in scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame. For you therefore that believe is the preciousness: but for such as disbelieve, The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner: and, A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; for they stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."

This section of the lesson text may also be described as the preem-

inence of Christ. (Cf. Col. 1: 18.) Jesus himself discussed this issue in his conversations with the unbelieving Jews of his day. (See, for example, Luke 20: 17.) If one will consider all that is said in the Bible about 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; cf. Job 38: 6); and (2) a stone which crowns the building (Zech. 4: 7). It appears that it is correct to assume, therefore, that the term "corner stone" is equally applicable to the chief stone in the foundation of the building, and the one at the top. (Cf. Acts 4: 11; 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 people who rejected the stone which God chose for his house were, so to speak, placed in the ridiculous position of refusing the very stone which God selected for the most important place in his building!

It appears that Peter's aim in this section of the lesson text, was to strengthen and firmly establish the faith of those to whom he wrote, in the meaning and significance of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and their relationship to it. It is certain that this lesson needs to be proclaimed and re-affirmed today. The church which Jesus built is based upon the rock of the truth concerning his relationship to God (see Matt. 16: 13-18); and that truth must be accepted by all who are pleasing to God. It should be obvious to any thoughtful person that the "living stones" which make up the building, must come to, and maintain their proper relationship with, the chief corner stone. No individual Christian makes a church, but all the members together are essential to the Lord's house. The apostle Paul views the church as the sum-total of all of its members (1 Cor. 12: 27); and the New Testament clearly teaches that a member of the church who is severed from Christ, is hopelessly lost. (Cf. John 15: 1-6.)

The term "precious" is frequently used by Peter, and means that which is of great worth or value. (Cf. 1 Pet. 1: 19.) The idea of rev-

erencing or holding in honor, also is present. The apostle actually uses three Greek words for "precious" and "preciousness" (*entimos*, *time*, and *timios*); but there appears to be little practical difference in meaning which he attaches to them. The Interpreter's Bible points out that precious as this stone is to God and believers, Peter voices the threat of eternal doom to all who reject it as the corner stone in God's economy. No one therefore can afford to treat it lightly or defiantly in trying to build his religious structure upon any other foundation (cf. 1 Cor. 3: 10-15), and integrate it into other edifices of fellowship. Towers of Babel are certain to crumble; for they are based upon assumptions, which have no foundation in God's word. The church is an impossibility without Christ and his truth; and the sooner people accept this fact, the better it will be for them.

The True Mission of the Lord's People

(1 Pet. 2: 9, 10)

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: who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

The passage just quoted 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. In the past you were not 'a people' at all: now you are the people of God. In the past you had no experience of his mercy, but now it is intimately yours."

The term "but," with which this section of the lesson text opens, introduces a contrast between the disobedient of the previous section, and the people of God who are described here. All people who are redeemed by Christ belong to God (cf. Tit. 2: 14); and that which Peter says about them here, is one

of the many instances in the New Testament, where they are referred to from different points of view. It is worthy of notice that no distinction between the so-called "clergy" and "laity" is mentioned. All Christians are on an equality before God; and they are associated together by reason of the calling which they received from God, and their common new life which they share in Christ. The word "Race" emphasizes the idea of descent; "priesthood" gives some idea of the service they are expected to render; "nation" tells of their new relationship to the world; while a "peculiar people" reveals their relationship to God.

When Jesus began his personal ministry here upon the earth, he had a commission from the Father to reclaim the human race for the cause of righteousness; and when the time came for the work actually to begin, the kingdom of Christ was established, into which peoples of all nations were to be called and made citizens. Men who were to take the lead in this great work were carefully trained and equipped; and the gospel of salvation was authorized to be preached to all nations. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18-20; Mark 16: 15, 16; Luke 24: 46, 47.) This kingdom is also called the church (cf. Matt. 16: 18, 19); and Paul indicates something of the mission and great responsibility of the church, when he says, "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." (Eph. 1: 22, 23.)

The term "fulness," in the view of many Bible students, carries with it the idea of complement, or that which makes complete; and if this view is correct, the meaning is that the church has the responsibility of continuing the work which Christ came to do, that is, the work of trying to claim the lost for Christ, and that of helping the redeemed to fit themselves for a home in heaven. And with this view of the question

in mind, we may look upon the section of the lesson text now under consideration, as a fourfold description of what is expected of the Lord's people. "Ye are . . . that ye may!" This is enough to show that more is expected of the redeemed, than nominal membership in the church. If one will read the Lord's letters to the seven churches in Asia, it will not be difficult for him to see what he thinks about, and how he feels toward, the church of today.

The church, as an *elect race*, is under obligation, as were the Israelites, to live in such a way, as to lead other peoples of the earth to recognize the true God, and to want to enter into his service. The church, as a *royal priesthood*, must continuously engage in sacrificial service to God. (Cf. Heb. 13: 15.) The church, as a *holy nation*, is composed of people of all races and climes. This nation is welded into a united whole, and is, in contrast with other nations of the world, characterized by holiness. The church, as a *people for God's own possession*, emphasizes primarily their relationship to God. (Cf. Isa. 43: 21; Tit. 2: 14.)

Referring again to the over-all question of holiness, of which the lesson text for today is a part of a wider discussion, alluded to earlier in this study, The Speaker's Bible notes that this holiness is embodied in the moral and spiritual splendor of God's people. And as this holiness enters into and permeates the lives of other peoples, there will be created out of the chaos of human selfishness, greed, and discord, a new nation of order, beauty, and harmony; and this is to continue until the nations of the earth become the kingdom of the Lord and his Christ. Or, to say the same thing in another way, the church of the Lord is to grow and expand "into the world-unifying, world-comprehending, and world-glorifying society in which humanity will realize its true ideals and know the plenitude of life."

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is the most important truth about a person and why is this true?

In what way is "growth" related to a normal human being, both physically and spiritually?
 What always happens spiritually when growth is not maintained?
 Why is the subject we are to discuss today so vital to us all?

The Golden Text

What is your view regarding "love" as a motivating force and why do you say so?
 Why are Christians exhorted to love each other fervently?
 What is the literal meaning of "love of the brethren"?
 What does it mean to love one another fervently?
 The Way for Brotherly Love to Manifest Itself
 What is a principal difficulty which prevents many people from understanding the Bible?
 How can one best overcome such a situation?
 Discuss the setting of the lesson text which we are to consider today.
 Where does the gospel usually find people and what happens to them when they accept it?
 What changes take place in the lives of those who are truly converted?
 What two conditions for spiritual growth are set forth in this part of the lesson text?
 What specific proof do we have here that growth is absolutely essential?
 In what way is the food for young Christians described?
 What should be their attitude toward this spiritual milk?

Why are so many people not interested in Bible study?
 What other conditions of spiritual growth are listed in this section of the lesson text?
 In what way is their relationship to the Lord described?

Christ—A Corner Stone or a Rock to Stumble Over

In what other way may this section of the lesson text be described?
 What is meant by the "corner stone"?
 Why is it so ridiculous and sinful to reject the corner stone of God's choosing?
 What appears to be Peter's aim in this section of the lesson text?
 Why is a study of the church so important to a vital understanding of God's eternal purpose?
 Of what is the church built?
 What does the New Testament teach regarding the relationship of the members to Christ?
 What is the meaning and significance of the term "precious" as used by Peter?
 In what way should this affect the thinking of people with reference to the church?

The True Mission of the Lord's People

What is the significance of the term "but" at the beginning of this section of the text?
 In what ways does Peter refer to the Lord's people?
 How did Jesus go about the work which God commissioned him to accomplish?
 In what way is the church related to that commission?

Lesson V—October 31, 1971

BLESSEDNESS OF SUFFERING FOR CHRIST

Lesson Text

1 Pet. 3: 13-22

13 And who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good?

14 But even if ye should suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed *are ye*: and fear not their fear, neither be troubled;

15 But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear:

16 Having a good conscience; that, wherein ye are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ.

17 For it is better, if the will of God should so will, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing.

18 Because Christ also suffered for

sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

19 In which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison,

20 That aforetime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water:

21 Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, *even* baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Je-sus Christ;

22 Who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye."* (1 Pet. 4: 14.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Pet. 3: 1-12.

Daily Bible Readings

October 25.	M.	How to Love Life and See Good Days (1 Pet. 3: 1-12)
October 26.	T.	Persecution Evidence of God's Love (Heb. 12: 7-13)
October 27.	W.	Suffering as a Christian (2 Tim. 3: 1-12)
October 28.	T.	Paul's Great Sufferings (2 Cor. 1: 1-6)
October 29.	F.	Christ Our Example (1 Pet. 2: 13-25)
October 30.	S.	Hope and Faith (Heb. 6: 1-11)
October 31.	S.	Blessed Assurance (2 Cor. 5: 1-10)

TIME.—First Peter was written in A.D. 63.

PLACE.—The epistle was apparently written in Babylon.

PERSONS.—Peter and those to whom he wrote.

Introduction

Suffering for Christ is, and will be, essential, as long as evil continues in this world; and that means to the end of time. The devil will never be content to allow righteous people to live in peace; he will continue to attempt to alienate them from the Lord, and will not hesitate to place them in situations where they will have to suffer, if they insist on remaining faithful to their Lord and Master. (Cf. Job.) The apostle Paul says, "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3: 12.) And he then goes on to say, "But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Tim. 3: 13.) Evil men are agents of the devil, in accomplishing his will; and he does not hesitate to inspire them to go to any length, which is necessary to achieve his purpose. And even men whose motives are high, but who are nevertheless grossly mistaken in their judgment, are also used by Satan to bring about suffering for Christ's sake. Jesus, on the eve of his suffering and death, said, "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." (John 16: 1-3; cf. Acts 26: 9-11; 1 Tim. 1: 12, 13.)

The history and circumstance of Saul's conversion to Christ, is always both interesting and instructive. He was brought to the ground on the Damascus road, some distance outside the city; and it was

three days before he actually found peace with the Lord. Not only had he learned of his mistaken view of Christ, and had been brought to believe that he is the Christ who was to come; he had to be taught the way to him as his Saviour. The Lord gave the responsibility of teaching the truth to Saul into the hands of Ananias. Ananias, however, in view of Paul's previous record, was not certain that it would be safe for him to go into the presence of the erstwhile persecutor; and he demurred, as he called attention to Saul's previous activities. "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." (See Acts 9: 10-16.) It is doubtful if any person ever suffered more for his Lord, than did the apostle Paul. (Cf. 2 Cor. 11: 23-28.)

Suffering for righteousness' sake is always painful, and it requires one's own best effort, and often strength from the Lord (1 Cor. 10: 13) to endure it; but we are not to conclude that there is not a good side to the experience. Job said, "But he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23: 10; cf. 1 Pet. 1: 6, 7; James 1: 2-4, 12.) Elvis E. Cochrane notes that life can be made sweet and desirable, by looking upon it as a field for triumph. It is not a matter of endurance of that which we do not want, but rather an opportunity to build one's self into a stronger being, a being who has, through these hard-

ships of life, risen to a higher level of righteousness. Some one else has pointed out that heroic and saintly-spirits find in the prospect of suffering for a great cause and a beloved Master, a charm beyond every other charm; and even the less heroic and the less saintly find in these appeals something which lays hold on a genuine part of themselves. And so, in the words of Jesus, "Blessed are

ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same manner did their fathers unto the prophets." (Luke 6: 22, 23.)

The Golden Text

"If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye." This beatitude has a direct connection with the one just quoted from Jesus; and it is altogether possible that it grew out of the one which was expressed by Jesus. Peter's words are found in this context, which should be carefully read, as we enter into this study: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you: but insomuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy. If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye; because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you. For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters: but if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name. For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God: and if it begin first at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator." (1 Pet. 4: 12-19.)

Suffering, in and of itself, will not necessarily bless any one, as we learn from the passage just quoted, and as we shall see further on in this study; the suffering which

brings a blessing must be according to the will of God, or, for righteousness' sake. Job and Paul, and many, many other Bible characters demonstrated in their lives the meaning of this truth. Job often felt that he was suffering unjustly, but in the end he came to realize that his mistake was not the sins with which he had been charged by those men who posed as his friends; but rather his failure to recognize and submit to God's providential directions, which were operating in his life. His was a clear demonstration that the Lord could take care of him in any eventuality, and bring him to a greater blessing than he enjoyed before his suffering began. (Cf. 2 Cor. 12: 7-10.)

If we exclude the sufferings of life which are common to all men, and if we do not take into consideration the peculiar sufferings which Christ endured upon the cross, as he died for the sins of all mankind, it is pertinent to ask, What are the sufferings which we are privileged to share with our Lord? The answer seems to be in our relationship to him as members of his body, or, as members of his church. It required the greatest of sufferings in order to make salvation for the lost possible; and it often takes unusual suffering on the part of the Lord's people to endure the trials which the wicked inflict upon them. (Cf. Col. 1: 24ff.) And too, it often becomes necessary for the righteous to suffer in order to reach others with the gospel message. This is one way Paul served the Lord in prison. (Acts 16: 19ff. 24: 24-27.)

The Text Explained

The Christian Answer to Persecution
(1 Pet. 3: 13-16)

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is

good? But even if ye should suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye: and fear not their fear, neither be troubled; but sanctify in your

hearts Christ as Lord: being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, wherein ye are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ.

If one will carefully consider the epistle of 1 Peter as a whole, it will not be difficult for him to see that the lesson text for today's consideration, is the beginning portion of a section of the letter, which deals with a major question which confronted the Lord's people of that day, namely, that of unjust suffering, or, persecution. (See 1 Pet. 3: 13-4: 19.) In the words of Weisiger, "It indicates that black clouds of adversity were lowering over the heads of the Asian Christians. They might even die for the faith! Peter could easily recall the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7) and the beheading of James the son of Zebedee (Acts 12). Peter himself had been under the threat of Herod's sword but had been delivered from prison by an angel in answer to prayer (Acts 12). He was also, probably, well aware of the many sufferings of Paul. Yet he was not cowed into a defeatist attitude, and here in the first division of this section he urges 'Confidence in Suffering.'"

Peter begins this section of the lesson text with a rhetorical question, with the apparent aim at arousing and challenging the thinking of his readers. Such a question, of course, requires no specific answer; but it is easy for the child of God to see that the obvious answer is, "No one." Those who are faithful to Christ have a certain immunity from damage, but not from sufferings; or, to state the same thing in another way, their bodies may be injured, but not their souls. When Ernest Renan came to comment on the suffering and death of Christ, he said, "At the price of a few hours of suffering, which did not even reach thy grand soul, thou hast bought the most complete immortality." This, of course, is, to a limited degree, also true of those who remain faithful to the Lord, as they suffer for him.

John, in the midst of his description of the new Jerusalem, and the

glories of the righteous, injects this sordid picture of those who will not enter the holy city: "But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." (Rev. 21: 8.) The original word for "fearful" is *deilos*, and it is found in the New Testament in two other places (Matt. 8: 26; Mark 4: 40), which are parallel passages. Thayer defines the term, as used in Revelation 21: 8, "of Christians who through cowardice give way under persecutions and apostatize." This should give us some idea of the seriousness of enduring trials and tribulations for Christ's sake.

We are told that in the expression "But even if ye should suffer," that the grammatical construction in the Greek refers to a possibility, rather than to a probability. The idea, then, appears to be something like this. If matters, in spite of the tone of optimism in verse 14, should come to actual suffering for righteousness' sake, you should look upon your lot as a blessing in disguise. Phillips, beginning with verse 14, translates this section of the lesson text in these words: "And if it should happen that you suffer for 'righteousness' sake,' that is a privilege. You need neither fear their threats nor worry about them; simply concentrate on being completely devoted to Christ in your hearts. Be ready at any time to give a quiet and reverent answer to any man who wants a reason for the hope that you have within you. Make sure that your conscience is perfectly clear, so that if men should speak slanderously of you as rogues they may come to feel ashamed of themselves for libeling your good Christian behavior."

The word "sanctify" means to set apart, and the idea is to give Christ the chief place in our hearts. When Jesus was in the boat with his disciples (Mark 4: 35-41), no harm came to them, as the storm raged about them; and the same will be true of those who have Christ in their hearts, during the times of persecution and evil-speaking. If Christ is indeed our Lord, then our lives must be lived in accordance with his will.

(Cf. Luke 5: 1-11, where the word "Master" is used in the sense of *Commander*.) And so,

"With Christ in the vessel
I smile at the storm"

for

No water can swallow the ship
where lies

The master of ocean and earth
and skies;

They all shall sweetly obey thy
will,

Peace, be still! Peace, be still!

The Bible never encourages defeatism. Christ wants, and must have, first place in our hearts; and when that is given to him, he wants us to face the world with a daring and romantic trust in him. And with this kind of confidence in him, he wants us to be ready to give to any one who asks us, a reason for the hope which is in us; that is, tell him why we rely on Christ and hope for the best at the end of the way. However, the Lord wants us to temper that answer with meekness and reverence, rather than with arrogance and pride. The very attitude which we manifest toward others can have a powerful effect upon them.

The story is told of a young woman and her brother, during the Armenian atrocities, who were pursued down the street by a Turkish soldier. The fleeing Armenians were cornered in an angle of the wall, and the brother was brutally slain before the eyes of his sister. She dodged down the alley, leaped a wall, and escaped. However, later on, being a nurse, she was compelled by the Turkish authorities to work in a military hospital. One day, while she was on duty, the very soldier who had killed her brother, was brought into her ward. He was very ill; and a slight inattention would have resulted in his death. The young woman, after reaching safety in America, confessed to the bitter struggle which took place in her mind. The old Adam cried, Vengeance; but the new Christ urged, Love. She responded to the plea of Christ, and gave her very best in her efforts to nurse the stricken soldier back to health, thus making no distinction between him and the other patients in the ward to which she was assigned.

Both the nurse and the soldier-patient recognized each other, but neither said anything about it for awhile. Finally the soldier was no longer able to restrain his curiosity, since he fully realized that he would have died, if the nurse had only been slightly inattentive to him; and so he asked her why she had not permitted him to die. Her reply was, "I am a follower of him who said, Love your enemies, and do them good." The soldier was silent for a long time; and then he said, "I never knew that there was such a religion. If that is your religion, tell me more about it; for I want it." Such answers as the nurse gave to the soldier who had been so cruel to her, can be a great aid in speaking the gospel. And if Christians would make it a point to live for the Lord, and talk more about their relation to him; many questions regarding their profession would be addressed to them.

The entire passage, from verse 14 through verse 16, is expressed in a single sentence; and it is easy to see why the Christian, even the suffering Christ, should always have a good, that is, a clear conscience; and that is possible only as one continuously does that which he understands and believes to be right. A good conscience does not, in and of itself, guarantee that its possessor is always right; for it is the judgment, and not the conscience, which determines right and wrong. (Cf. Acts 23: 1; 24: 16; 1 Tim. 1: 12, 13.) But when one is correctly informed regarding the truthfulness of a proposition, he cannot have a good conscience concerning it, unless he acts in keeping with his understanding. There is nothing which negates one's good personal testimony regarding the gospel, more than his unrighteous conduct. Some one has said that our Christian influence will only go so far as the projectile power of our conduct will throw it. And so, it is only when our testimony and our life are in harmony with each other, that we can give an answer to the inquirer with assurance, boldness, and reverential awe. It should be noted that one's good manner of life must be in Christ, if God is to be pleased.

The Preceding Exhortation Confirmed

(1 Pet. 3: 17)

For it is better, if the will of God should so will, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing.

Frail human beings should always keep in mind the fact, that God knows what is best for us, as well as for others; and we should therefore humbly submit to his will. We have already seen that suffering can, and often does, bring a blessing to the one who is afflicted; and in case God's people are called on to suffer, it will be infinitely better for them, if the suffering is for well-doing, rather than for evil-doing. The prophet Malachi pictured the work of Christ under the figure of a refiner; and any one who has any idea of what that process involves, will readily understand that suffering is essential to purity.

The refining work of Christ has to do with the process of cleansing his people from all dross and alloy, and then imparting unto them those holy qualities, which will prepare them for their work in the church, and eventually in the home of the soul. (See Tit. 2: 14; 1 Pet. 4: 12, 13; cf. 1 Cor. 10: 13.) Most people long for the purity which will fit them for fellowship with God; but they frequently rebel against the process which is necessary to make it possible. The reason for this attitude is mainly due to the fact that we do not understand the process itself. Fire does not destroy the gold which is subjected to it; it takes the dross away. (Cf. James 1: 2-8; Heb. 12: 4-13; Rom. 5: 1-5; 8: 28.)

Christ Provides the Perfect Example of Suffering for Well-Doing

(1 Pet. 3: 18-22)

Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water: which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even bap-

tism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ; who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

It is certain that no one ever reached the degree of righteousness, which belonged to Christ; and it is equally certain that no human being ever suffered as much as he did: for the simple reason that no one ever had the capacity to endure so much. But Peter tells us that the purpose of the suffering of Christ, was that he might bring us to God. When Jesus came to the earth, the Divine was united with humanity, and Jesus lived his life in the flesh under human conditions. His fleshly nature died like other men, and his spiritual nature was made alive like others will be, in the resurrection at the last day. "In the body he was out to death; in the spirit he was brought to life." (New English Bible.) "His body being put to death, but his spirit entering upon new Life." (The Twentieth Century New Testament.)

It was "in spirit," rather than *in person*, that Christ, who prior to the incarnation was the Word of God (John 1: 1; Rev. 19: 13), preached to the spirits in prison. The *spirits* are identified as those who "aforetime" were disobedient, "when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." The preaching therefore was done through Noah, to the people who lived during the time the ark was being built. Bible students, however, are not agreed as to the "location" of the prison. Some hold that Peter meant to say that the spirits who were, at the time he wrote, in Hades, or more particularly, Tartarus, a division of Hades where the wicked are (2 Pet. 2: 4), and that their disobedience was aforetime in the days of Noah; while others are of the opinion that the people were in prison at the time of the preaching, since their time and opportunities were limited to the time of Noah's activities. Or, to say the same thing in another way, they were bound within the period before the flood; and that

they had no means of escape, except through the Lord's offer of mercy.

Salvation which was opened to the people of Noah's day could be had only in the ark, which passed through the waters of the flood; and Peter uses that circumstance as a type of the means of our salvation today. Passing through water in both instances was and is essential to salvation. Salvation today can be found only in Christ (Acts 4: 12), and the New Testament specifically says that people are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3: 26, 27). The baptism authorized by the Lord is not for the purpose of removing filth from the body (which suggests immersion); but as an appeal to God

for a clear conscience. A clear conscience can be had, only when one does that which he believes to be right; and inasmuch as Christ authorized baptism as a condition of salvation (Mark 16: 15, 16; cf. Acts 2: 38), no one who believes that statement can have a good conscience, while remaining in disobedience. When one submits to baptism, as authorized by Christ, his conscience is not only cleansed from guilt (Heb. 9: 11-14); he also receives new vital power through the resurrection of Christ (cf. Rom. 6: 3ff). The reference to Christ's present position and authority should be understood in the light of Matthew 28: 18; Eph. 1: 22, 23.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Why is suffering for Christ the lot of all who faithfully follow him?

Who is behind all this evil and how does he accomplish his work?

In what way was the principle we are considering illustrated in the case of Paul?

What further lesson do we learn from the over-all question of suffering from Christ's sake?

The Golden Text

In what setting are the words of the golden text found?

What is also a necessary condition for acceptable suffering as a child of God?

Show how this issue was illustrated by such men as Job and Paul.

What serious mistake did Job make with reference to his suffering?

What is the nature of the suffering which we are privileged to share with Christ?

The Christian Answer to Persecution

In what general setting is the lesson text for today's study found?

What must have been some of the thoughts of Peter as he wrote this section of the text?

How does Peter introduce this part of the lesson?

How can we learn something of the seriousness of enduring trials for Christ's sake?

What should the faithful Christian always be prepared to do and why?

What does it mean to sanctify Christ as Lord in one's heart?

What effect will this have in the life of the faithful Christian?

What is one of the most effective ways of leading people to Christ?

What part does a good conscience have in living for the Lord?

Where alone can an acceptable life in God's sight be lived?

The Preceding Exhortation Confirmed

What should always be the attitude of God's people toward suffering?

What, then, should such a person always be prepared to do?

What well known figure is used to indicate the work of Christ with his people?

What will always be the outcome of suffering for Christ's sake?

Christ Provides the Perfect Example of Suffering for Well-Doing

Why is Christ the perfect example of the right kind of suffering?

Why did he suffer so much for the human race?

What were the major experiences through which he passed, according to Peter?

What does the apostle say regarding his preaching to the spirits in prison?

In what way was this preaching done?

What and where was the prison referred to by Peter?

How were the eight souls in the ark "saved through water"?

What use does Peter make of that incident?

How, then, are people today saved through water baptism?

How does baptism in water contribute to a good conscience?

What reference is made of Christ's present position and authority?

Lesson VI—November 7, 1971

GRACES WHICH ADORN THE CHRISTIAN

Lesson Text

2 Pet. 1: 1-11

1 Si'-mon Peter, a servant and apostle of Je'-sus Christ, to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and *the* Saviour Je'-sus Christ:

2 Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Je'-sus our Lord;

3 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;

4 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.

5 Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in *your* vir-

tue knowledge;

6 And in *your* knowledge self-control; and in *your* self-control patience; 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 READING.—2 Pet. 1: 12-21.

Daily Bible Readings

November 1.	M.	Called by Glory and Virtue (2 Pet. 1: 3)
November 2.	T.	According to Knowledge (1 Pet. 3: 7)
November 3.	W.	Reasoned of Self-Control (Acts. 24: 24-27)
November 4.	T.	Bring Forth Fruit with Patience (Luke 8: 1-15)
November 5.	F.	Godliness Profitable for All Things (1 Tim. 4: 1-8)
November 6.	S.	Brotherly-Kindness (Rom. 12: 9-21)
November 7.	S.	Love (1 Cor. 13: 1-13)

TIME.—Second Peter was written in A.D. 67 or 68.

PLACE.—The epistle may have been written in Babylon.

PERSONS.—Peter and those to whom he wrote.

Introduction

The life of Christ was the most beautiful ever lived in the flesh; and its appeal to the human race, we may be certain, was by design. Christianity has been defined as the reproduction of the life of Christ in the human heart; and it is easy to see from this that the life of a Christian does make a deep impression, for good, upon the thinking of those who may chance to be around him. The expression "graces" may be thought of as charms which

adorn the child of God, while the term "adorn" itself carries with it the idea of embellishing or beautifying that upon which the charms are worn. The word adorn is not uncommon in the Scriptures; and if one will read such passages as Luke 21: 5; 1 Timothy 2: 9; Titus 2: 10; 1 Peter 3: 1-5; and Revelation 21: 19f, he can easily get the idea which the subject of this lesson is meant to convey.

Edgar DeWitt Jones, in his book,

Ornamented Orthodoxy, says, "The word 'adorn' is applied not to architecture, but to womankind, in the twenty-first chapter of Revelation. There John describes the New Jerusalem coming 'down out of heaven from God made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.' That is one of the loveliest figures in all the Holy Scriptures. No finer simile has ever been applied to the church triumphant than that. Though social customs vary, every nation adorns the bride, ornaments her, graces her in jewels and gown. Whether the bride be rich or poor, of high or humble degree, she comes to the marriage altar not without some kind of ornament. The phrase, 'a bride adorned for her husband,' suggests a figure in white with a filmy veil and the scent of orange blossoms in her hair. And more, it suggests an adorning more beautiful than rich gown or costly jewel: the adorning of a pure and virtuous soul, the very acme of girlhood loveliness. On the whole, the word 'adorn' is pleasant to the ear and captivating to the eye. It means to 'beautify' and the appeal of beauty is universal."

That which has just been said should give us some idea of that

which the Lord expects of his people, during their time of preparation for the dwelling in the foursquare city of our heavenly Father. When Paul wrote his letter to Titus, he said that the Lord's people should conduct themselves in such a way, so "that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." (Tit. 2: 1-10.) The words just quoted were addressed, particularly, to people who were slaves; and that should be enough to convince any thoughtful person, that that is what is expected of any child of God. The world is fairly well acquainted with so-called intellectual and somewhat popular Christianity; but it has not often seen, especially on a wide scale, a Christianity which is beautified in thought, word, and deed, and which has for its principal aim the diffusing of a spirit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control; because it puts God first in its life. The life of a Christian can be, and in fact is, beautiful; and those professed followers of Christ who are negligent and indifferent toward adorning their lives for his sake, will have much to answer for in the final day of accounts.

The Golden Text

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The word "but," at the beginning of the golden text, introduces a contrast between the fate described in verse 17, and the desired goal set forth in verse 18. It will be much easier to grasp the idea which Peter has in mind, if we can view the text in the light of the setting in which it is found. "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 of 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 destruc-

tion. Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness. 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 for one to grow *into* the grace and knowledge of our Lord, but being already in his favor, and possessing some knowledge of him, we are to continue our growth in that favor and knowledge. That part of man's nature which will never die, is the most important truth concerning him; because it came directly from God, and has a direct connection with him. But notwithstanding its immortality, the soul of man must continue to grow, if the blessings which it is capable of enjoying, and which God has provided for it, are to be received and enjoyed; and,

like all other growth, it must be according to the fundamental laws which God gave to regulate such development. "Grace" means favor, primarily with reference to God, while "knowledge" is that which we may gain through the study of his revealed will, and by observing and experiencing its practical operations in ourselves, other Christians, and the world in general.

One grows in grace as the result of diligent work, based upon unswerving determination to advance in our spiritual calling; and it is for this reason that all New Testament exhortations to growth, are intended to arouse the will, strengthen one's purpose, and impel to progress in the direction of the Lord's goal for his people. With this view of the issue before us, it is not difficult to see that Peter's exhortation, now before us, naturally grows out of that which he discusses in the preceding paragraphs. The presence of false teachers and subversive efforts on the part of the forces of evil, are always striving to lead the Lord's people away from him;

and there is never a time when they should not be aware of this, and should strive, by their growth in God's favor and knowledge of his will, to overcome the enemy. Growth on the part of the determined Christian is possible in any environment. And so, in the words of the anonymous poet who wrote *The Lily*,

"O star on the breast of the river,
O blossom of marvel and grace!
Did you fall right down from
heaven,

Out of the sweetest place?
You're as fair as the thoughts of an
angel,

Your heart is steeped in the sun;
Did you grow in the radiant city,
My pure and holy one?"

"Nay, nay," said the lily, "I fell not
from heaven,

None gave me my saintly white;
I slowly grew in the darkness,
Down in the dreary night.

From the ooze and the slime of the
river

I won my glory and grace;
White souls fall not, O my poet,
They rise to the highest place."

The Text Explained

God's Purpose and Plan for His
People

(2 Pet. 1: 1-4)

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and the Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue: 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.

A. T. Robertson calls attention to the fact that every book in the New Testament has been called in question by some one, as have the historicity of Jesus Christ and the very existence of God himself. But it is true that more scholars deny the genuineness of 2 Peter, than that of

any other single book in the Sacred Canon. This, however, does not mean, in and of itself, that the book in question has no right to its place among the other books of the New Testament; for, as Westcott notes, "from the close of the second century the history of the Canon is simple, and its proof clear. It is allowed even by those who have reduced the genuine Apostolic works to the narrowest limits, that from the time of Irenaeus the New Testament was composed essentially of the same books which we receive at the present, and that they were regarded with the same reverence as is now shown to them."

It has already been indicated that we do not have any definite information regarding the place from which Peter wrote the epistle now before us, and scholars are not agreed as to the time of writing; but John Dow's observation appears quite appropriate, namely, The letter entered the world noiselessly and mysteriously; and it was intended to be pronounced Peter's, with no further questions asked.

The epistle has a strong appeal to the Lord's people, urging them to develop a character, and maintain conduct, consistent with the true faith. The apostle was keenly aware of his approaching death, and he fully realized that there were many evil forces, which were bent on alienating Christian people from their Lord and Master. Troublous times were ahead, but Peter had no doubt regarding the final outcome of those who make a diligent effort to adorn their lives with the graces which were available to them.

A "like precious faith" was essential; and all who possessed it had a common relationship with the heavenly Father. All Christian experience depends upon faith; and faith can come to one, only by hearing the word of God. (See Rom. 10: 17; cf. Luke 8: 12.) And inasmuch as faith begins with knowing that which the scriptures say, we should not be surprised to learn that Peter places frequent emphasis upon the question of "knowledge." One reason for this is probably seen in the fact that biblical knowledge, when it moves freely into the heart and will of a Christian, becomes a practical synonym for faith. (Cf. Acts 2: 36; 2 Cor. 5: 1.) And when there is no hindrance to this development, all of God's gifts, such as grace and peace, are multiplied to the believer.

The term "multiplied" (*plēthunō*) carries with it the idea of continuous blessings, or, as Robertson expresses the matter, "a wish for the future." The original word is rendered by Arndt-Gingrich in this way: "may grace and peace be yours in greater measure." Barclay translates verse 2 in these words: "May God's grace and every blessing be given ever more richly to you, and may you enter ever more and more deeply into the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."

When one becomes a follower of Christ, he also becomes a child of God; and it is both reasonable and scriptural to conclude that he must become a partaker of the nature of his Father; and that is what Peter means by becoming partakers of the divine nature.

It is easy to see from the text of today's lesson, that the process is accomplished by (1) God's part, verses 3, 4; and (2) man's part,

verses 5-7. The apostle affirms that God has granted all we need "unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue"; and it was through this means that he granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; "that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature," after having escaped from the corruption that is in the world through lust. Promises stimulate the believer to better living. (Cf. 2 Cor. 6: 17-7: 1.) Or, to say the same thing in another way, promises have power to move men (1) according to the value they place upon that which is promised; and (2) according to the faith they have in the one who made the promises.

The Christian's Part in the Perfection of Holiness (2 Pet. 1: 5-7)

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.

Some one has noted that the passage just quoted suggests an organic connection; and may be likened to a cluster of graces which issue forth from the common stem of faith. The preceding section of the lesson text makes it plain that salvation begins with the divine initiative; while in this section we learn that the process must be continued by human effort. And so, in view of that which God has done, the Christian is to add on his part "all diligence," or, he must interest himself most earnestly in the accomplishment of the task before him. This is another way of saying that human effort must expand that which the Lord has made possible in the way of salvation. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.)

The end in view is the formation of the kind of character which is acceptable to God; and that can be accomplished only by the Christian's supplying the adornments, according to the divine formula. The Christian life, and its resultant personality, is no accident; and it may be

compared to a chemist diligently compounding certain elements, after a given formula, the result of which is both definite and certain, as we shall see more specifically in the next section of the lesson text. Faith is the basis of this desired character, and the other elements, or the graces which serve as its charms, must be supplied. But diligence is required; otherwise the result is certain to be disappointing. Furthermore, each grace is ordained of God, and has a certain effect upon the preceding one.

The original word for "supply" is *epichorēgeō*, a compound word made up of *epi* and *chorēgeō*. (Cf. the Greek *chorēgos* and the English *chorus*.) Literally, a chorus-leader. Vincent points out that the verb originally meant to bear the expense of a chorus, which was done by a person selected by the state, who was obliged to defray all the expenses of training and maintenance. The word, however, lost that meaning in the New Testament, and according to Arndt-Gingrich it means to provide (at one's own expense); which, in a practical sense, means that the responsibility for supplying the graces in question, falls upon the individual Christian. After speaking of the classical meaning of the verb *epichorēgeō*, Elvis E. Cochran notes that "Peter urges his readers to equip their lives generously, lavishly, *epichoreigeinly*, with every virtue. The idea is, never to be content with the mediocre or even the average but hold out for only the best and most splendid life possible." The graces which are to be added to faith are:

(1) *Virtue*. This means moral energy, manliness, courage. Convictions should be held in a way which becomes a man, and we should have the courage to stand up for that which we believe. Our faith must be translated into vigorous action; it is not enough to bluster and blow about that which we believe.

(2) *Knowledge*. This is gained specifically from the study of the Bible, and relatively from our experience in living the Christian life, and observing the righteous conduct of others. Courage without knowledge may become dangerous; and furthermore, no man is safe, nor can

he please God, without the knowledge which we are considering here. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 16; Hos. 4: 6; Matt. 11: 29; Heb. 5: 12.)

(3) *Self-control*. A person controls himself, when he is able to hold himself within due limits, as it respects pleasures, duties, and everything else.

(4) *Patience*. The marginal reading of this term is steadfastness; and Thayer defines it as "the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings." (Cf. Rev. 21: 8.)

(5) *Godliness*. This carries with it the idea of reverence, respect, and piety toward God; and this, like all other graces, must be learned, and there is no better place to begin than in the home. This is also a great responsibility of church leaders and preachers.

(6) *Brotherly kindness*. This, according to Thayer, is "the love which Christians cherish for each other as brethren." (Cf. John 13: 34, 35; 1 John 3: 13-18; 4: 20, 21.)

(7) *Love*. That is, universal love, the love for humanity, or for all mankind, and distinct from, and in addition to, the love which we have for the brethren. It is in this way that the child of God acknowledges that every man has a claim upon his soul and service. "Love tempers duty into opportunity." The kind of love which Peter has in mind here is not directed by sense and emotion, but rather by choice; for it seeks its objects highest good.

The Results Which Follow

(2 Pet. 1: 8-11.)

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 rightly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

"These things," referred to in the beginning of this section of the les-

son text, are the seven graces of the preceding portion of the lesson text. We should not, however, think of these "gems" as being strung together at random; they are, on the contrary, so related, being dovetailed into each other in a manner, so that the one influences all the others. This also implies that if one is missing, the unity will be wanting and the symmetry destroyed. If one of the seven prismatic colors is absent, there would be no glorious rainbow arching the heavens. Or, if one vital part were missing from the mechanism of a watch, there would be no measuring of time as it passes.

And so, if any one of the seven graces of this lesson is missing, there could not possibly be the kind of Christian character which is acceptable to God. The conduct of a person who claims to be a child of God, when one or more of the graces is absent, will find that his life will present a mass of inconsistencies, and will fail, miserably, in adorning the doctrine of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Too much diligence, therefore, cannot be manifested in seeking to accomplish that which Peter urges the Lord's people to do, in the lesson now before us. A specific point of emphasis is set forth in each of the four verses which make up this section of the lesson text. Read them carefully and prayerfully.

The person who "supplies" that which God has ordained for his people will, in turn, have an abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord divinely supplied to him.

Or, if we supply the graces by which the Christian life is adorned, God will supply to us the entrance into heaven. No thoughtful person expects an abundant entrance into the commercial realm, without toil, perseverance, a constant alertness to take hold of opportunities, along with perpetual and strenuous endeavors. And it is obvious, in the light of the lesson we are studying today, that these same qualities must be transferred to his spiritual career, if he is to have an abundant entrance into heaven itself. Heaven, indeed, is a prepared place, for a prepared people; and the only way any person can be prepared, is to do that which is clearly revealed as God's will for him. (Cf. Matt. 7: 21-23.)

The Speaker's Bible asks, "Will wind and tide alone bear a vessel across the ocean to some desired haven, without the incessant watchfulness and active co-operation of those on board? The elemental forces are there, but the mariner must wield and apply them. No man was ever just floated on the crest of some lucky wave, wafted by some heaven-breathed gale to those spiritual regions where life is sunniest and most fruitful, fullest of power, and of joy. It is of no use merely to gaze upon your star; you must follow it. To those distant and radiant shores the divinest of voices is calling us, as to the true destiny and home of the soul; to those blissful realms our star is ever guiding us; nonetheless must we use all diligence to make our calling and election sure."

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is Christianity, when lived as the Lord directs, such a beautiful life?
In what sense can one adorn his life as a child of God?
Why are so many professed Christians apparently indifferent to beautifying their lives?

The Golden Text

In what setting are the words of the golden text found?
What, specifically, did Peter say for the Lord's people to do?
Why, then, are Christian people exhorted to grow?

God's Purpose and Plan for His People
How do we know that 2 Peter is indeed a part of the inspired New Testament Canon?
Apparently under what circumstances did Peter write his second epistle?
What does Peter mean by a "like precious faith" and how may it be obtained?
Why does Peter place so much emphasis on "knowledge"?
What is the significance of the term "multiplied" in this section of the lesson text?
Why is it essential that the child of God become a partaker of the divine nature?
In what way is this accomplished?

The Christian's Part in the Perfection of Holiness
What important lesson do we learn from his section of the lesson text?

How alone can Christian character be formed?
 What is the basis of such a life?
 Why is diligence so essential?
 What is signified by the term "supply"?
 What, then, is its practical meaning so far as this lesson is concerned?
 What is the meaning of "virtue" and what is its place in the Christian life? Why?
 Why is "knowledge" so necessary in forming the character of a Christian?
 What is the fundamental meaning of "self-control"?
 What is "patience" and what is its place in the Christian life?

Why is "godliness" so important?
 What is the meaning and significance of "brotherly kindness"?
 What is the meaning of "love" as used here?

The Results Which Follow

What does Peter mean by "these things"?
 Discuss the relation of the Christian graces to each other.
 What will be the result if any one of them is missing?
 What specific point is emphasized in each verse in this section of the lesson text?
 Upon what condition will God supply an entrance into heaven for us?

Lesson VII—November 14, 1971

THE END OF ALL EARTHLY THINGS

Lesson Text

2 Pet. 3: 1-13

1 This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write unto you; and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance;

2 That ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles:

3 Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts,

4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

5 For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God;

6 By which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

7 But the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment

and destruction of ungodly men.

8 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.

9 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.

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

11 Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness,

12 Looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13 But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"All flesh is as grass. . . . But the word of the Lord abideth for ever."* (1 Pet. 1: 24, 25.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Pet. 3: 14-18.

Daily Bible Readings

November 8.	M.	.....	The Lord's Return (1 Thess. 4: 13-18)
November 9.	T.	.....	The Return Unexpected (Matt. 24: 45-51)
November 10.	W.	.....	Dead to Be Raised (John 5: 28, 29)
November 11.	T.	.....	Judgment Day (Matt. 25: 31-46)
November 12.	F.	.....	Wicked Separated (Matt. 13: 47-50)
November 13.	S.	.....	Picture of Heaven (Rev. 21: 1-7)
November 14.	S.	.....	Satan Destroyed (Rev. 20: 7-10)

TIME.—Second Peter was written in A.D. 67 or 68.

PLACE.—The epistle may have been written in Babylon.

PERSONS.—Peter and those to whom he wrote.

Introduction

The end of all earthly things is equivalent to the destruction of the material universe; and the Bible clearly teaches that that will take place in what may very properly be called the last day of history. There are numerous references in the New Testament to the end of the present order of things; and if one will read the inspired record carefully, it will not be difficult for him to see that the "day of the Lord" and the second coming of Christ, which will take place at the end of time, as we know it, refer to one and the same thing. (Cf. 1 Thess. 5: 1, 2; Matt. 24: 42-44; 2 Thess. 2: 1-4.) The inspired record tells us that four major events will transpire on the last day, namely, (1) the second coming of Christ—1 Thess. 4: 13-18; (2) the resurrection of the dead—John 6: 44; cf. 5: 28, 29; (3) the final judgment of the world—John 12: 48; cf. Rev. 20: 11-15; and (4) the total destruction of the material universe by fire—2 Pet. 3: 10-12.

When Jehovah finished preparing the earth as a habitation of the race which he planned to put upon it, the man, when he came forth from the hand of his Maker, found himself in a beautiful world; and there is no reason for thinking that it would not have remained so, if the creature had remained loyal to the Creator. But, with the advent of sin into the world of human beings, man soon discovered many environmental enemies to his happiness and well-being. (Cf. Gen. 3: 17-19.) But worse, the moral and spiritual decay of the race continued to gain momentum, until Jehovah saw fit to destroy the world and all of its wicked inhabitants; and give the human race a new start. This was done when the flood of water covered the earth, and cut short the life of all that had breath. But even that great catastrophe did not stop the onrush of sin, as has been fre-

quently pointed out in these studies; and it was not long before the earth was again filled with wickedness. The flood was apparently a kind of preview of the earth's final destruction, as we shall see in the study for today. These are terrible thoughts to contemplate, but they are, nevertheless, true; and they should have a profound effect upon us.

Alonzo D. Welch notes that "the importance of the last things as they pertain to the present cannot be over-emphasized. The validity of the entire Christian system is dependent upon the Biblical doctrine of eschatology. The apostle Paul suggests that if these things are not true we might as well adopt sensuality as an alternative mode of living. 'If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die' (1 Cor. 15: 32). The contemplation of this great subject, therefore, creates a perspective which reduces our affection for the world and enhances our longing for heaven. It provides the incentive for perseverance and constancy in the faith. 'Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord' (1 Cor. 15: 58). A strong belief in the inevitability of the events of the last day provides motivation for holy living, offers an unfailing resource of comfort and increases our zeal in preaching the gospel. No one can read the New Testament thoughtfully without receiving the impression that perhaps the greatest stimulant given by inspiration to the early church was the doctrine of the last things. May it never be said again, therefore, that the future is irrelevant to the problems and needs of the present. When the modern church retrieves this lost vision of the future, a new era will dawn upon the American continent and the world."

The Golden Text

"All flesh is as grass. . . . But the word of the Lord abideth for ever."
The words just quoted give expres-

sion to a contrast between the human and the divine; or, between mankind as they exist here upon the

earth, and the eternal word of God. The first part of the golden text is a quotation from Isaiah 40: 6; and, as one reads the full context of Isaiah's statement, he will see that the second part of the golden text is also a quotation of the words of the prophet: "The voice of one saying, Cry. And one said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the breath of Jehovah bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever." (Isa. 40: 6-8.)

When one reads the entire setting in which the quotation from Isaiah is found, it will not be difficult for him to see that the Lord's purpose in the prophet's message, was to comfort his afflicted people; and to assure them that better things were in store for them. The prophetic statement was expressed in figurative language, but its practical meaning was that the old order would give way to the new; and that all of this would result, not from anything which human beings would or could do, but from God's eternal word. Even such a formidable obstacle as the Babylonian captivity would not stand in the way of the divine plan; nor anything else for which mankind was responsible. Isaiah's message was addressed to

the people of Judah, some seven hundred years before the coming of Christ; but the force of the prophet's words did not stop there. They still proclaim the transience of all earthly things, and the everlasting power of the word of the living God; along with the safety and permanence of those interests and hopes of the human race, which have their foundation and warrant in God's precious and exceeding great promises.

It is in this kind of a situation that Peter takes the words of Isaiah, and applies them to the gospel plan of salvation, which was inaugurated by Christ. (Cf. Heb. 2: 1-4; 5: 8, 9.) One becomes a partaker of this salvation when he is born into the kingdom of the Lord, which the apostle says results from one's acceptance of "the word of God, which liveth and abideth." Peter then quotes the words of Isaiah, though not verbatim, but which such variations as the apostles, conscious of their own inspiration, often felt at liberty to make, when referring to the Old Testament. And then, as if to prevent any of his readers from thinking that the quotation which he gave from Isaiah, was nothing more than a historical or antiquarian passage for their consideration, Peter adds, "And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you."

The Text Explained

An Apostolic Answer to a Question
of Scoffers
(2 Pet. 3: 1-7)

This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write unto you; and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance; that ye should remember the words that were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles: knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things, continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of

old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Attention was directed earlier in these studies to the fact that some Bible students have called in question the authorship of Second Peter, and some even have contended that the apostle did not write the second epistle which is attributed to him. But, as B. C. Caffin points out, "the word 'second' forces us to make our choice between the Petrine authorship of the Epistle or the hypothesis

of a direct forgery." The epistle in question was admitted into the New Testament canon; and conservative scholars, generally speaking, are practically unanimous in their acceptance of the letter as being a genuine production of the inspired apostle Peter. And when one compares the references which are made in both epistles to such things as stirring up their minds by way of remembrance, it is not difficult to accept the fact that the same author wrote both epistles; for after all, Peter claims to have written both letters. (Cf. 1 Pet. 1: 13; 2 Pet. 1: 13.)

After a somewhat thorough discussion of false teachers and libertines in chapter 2, the writer of the epistle now in question turns to the subject of genuine Christianity; and one of the first things which he does in this respect, is to show that the entire Christian system is supported by the holy prophets, and the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostles are referred to as "your" apostles, in the sense that they were their teachers and messengers of the truth, as it is in Christ Jesus. The "prophets" were those of the Old Testament period, who foretold the coming of Christ and the new dispensation; while "the apostles" were those whom Christ commissioned to make known the truth regarding his kingdom, or church, to the entire world. The reference apparently is not to specific utterances of the prophets and the apostles, but rather to the whole body of truth which they, through inspiration, revealed.

Peter's reason for calling attention to the teaching of the prophets and apostles, was due to the fact that mockers would challenge the whole concept of Christian teaching. Before Christ left this world to return to the Father, he promised to return: but he made no prediction as to the actual time of his second advent. (Cf. Matt. 24: 36.) The very indefiniteness which was created in the minds of the followers of Christ by his promised return, caused some of them to speculate freely regarding the time of his second coming, and it appears that practically all of them were looking forward to that day with early expectation (cf. the Thessalonian let-

ters); and it was not until further apostolic teaching was done on the subject that the full truth was made known to the church as a whole. (Cf. 2 Thess. 2: 1-3.)

But while the Lord's people eagerly looked forward to his second coming, the mockers, taking advantage of the "apparent delay," sought to destroy the faith of the believers. Some one has noted that "to deny Christ's return with its attendant judgment is to weaken moral incentive and to invite careless living. More than we know, the prevalent looseness of our day may be associated with the cherished illusion that any abrupt end of the age is a foolish fancy of fanatics and that an awful judgment by a Christ in flaming glory is utterly impossible." The "last days" apparently refer to the period known to us as the Christian dispensation; and it is doubtful that if at any given time, throughout the age, scoffers were not, and will not be, plying their trade. When Paul wrote his final letter to Timothy, he said, "But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. . . . But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (Read 2 Tim. 3: 1-13.)

It is obvious that the scoffers about whom Peter wrote were not trying to please God, for they were "walking after their own lusts", and, as The Interpreter's Bible points out, the apostle speaks in the present setting about a condition which is still with us. He had his ear to the ground, to use a human way of expressing the matter, and was listening to that which was being said regarding the promised coming of the Lord. Peter was not doing like some preachers do, namely, answering questions which were not in the people's mind; he was endeavoring to deal with a situation which would trouble any devout believer. The apostle Peter knew of the false claims which were being made regarding the hope of the Lord's people; and he sought to deal with them appropriately.

The very question of the mockers was designed to undermine the faith of those who were relying upon the promise of Christ to return at some future time—"Where is the promise of his coming?" Their question

could be expressed in this way, "What has happened to his promise? and they apparently meant to imply that it had utterly failed, and that there was not the slightest reason for thinking that it would ever be fulfilled; and that those who were looking forward to it were entirely deceived." The scoffers continued their assault by calling attention to the fact that since the "fathers"—evidently the early generation of Christians—passed away, all things continues as they were from the beginning of creation. "Sleep" is used in the sense of death. (Cf. Acts 7: 60; 1 Cor. 15: 51; 1 Thess. 4: 13-15.)

Inasmuch as mockers will continue to be with the Lord's people, we should be exceedingly glad that Peter shows Christian people how to deal with such subversions. People who undermine the faith of others are usually deliberate in their action, and they are not without condemnation; for they *could* know better. "For this they *wilfully* forget." It is exceedingly unfortunate to see some otherwise respectable people try to catch the unsuspecting off guard, in an effort to get the "best" of them. This was the method employed by the serpent in the garden of Eden; and it was inspired by the devil. (See Gen. 3: 1f; cf. 1 Tim. 2: 14.) Peter's three-fold answer to the scoffers' type of "reasoning" is found in verses 5-9, which constitute the closing part of this section of the lesson text, and the entire second section. The apostle's first argument is an appeal to history, which involved the destruction of the ancient world by a flood of waters, and the reservation of the entire material universe for destruction by fire. (1 Pet. 3: 5-7.) The mockers simply disregard the facts in the case.

God's Apparent Delay and His
Benevolent Purpose
(2 Pet. 3: 8, 9)

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 long-suffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Peter's second argument against

the scoffers has to do with the law of contrast; or, God and man do not view the situation in the same way. There is no "time" with God, but only *eternity*; but man can visualize the promises of the Lord's only in the light of the concept of time. This is another way of saying that time, as we know it, is not a factor in determining the faithfulness of the Lord with respect to his promises. Man's outlook is necessarily limited; and he is not therefore in position to judge as to the status of that which is in the hands of the Almighty. There is no "long" or "short" time with God; and any suspected delay on his part in keeping his promises, must not be regarded as unfaithfulness.

The apostle's third argument with reference to the mockers, has to do with the question of opportunity. God's extension of time to sinful mankind, is entirely in keeping with his benevolent nature, and is in perfect accord with his grace, as both the Old and the New Testaments plainly set forth. When Jehovah spoke to rebellious Israel through Ezekiel, his words were, "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 33: 11.) And Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, says, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." (Read 1 Tim. 2: 1-4.) Thus, instead of accusing the Lord of failing to keep his promise regarding his second coming, men should regard any delay as a further opportunity for the impenitent to get themselves right with God; and that is exactly what Peter says about the matter. "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation." (2 Pet. 3: 15.)

The Day of the Lord and the
Christian Attitude toward It
(2 Pet. 3: 10-13)

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth

and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

It has already been pointed out that the "day of the Lord," as used in this context, is always equated with the final day of history; and both Christ and the inspired apostles have repeatedly and consistently warned that it will come unexpectedly to those who are not looking for it. (Cf. Matt. 24: 36-44; 1 Thess. 5: 1-6.) The fact that the day of the Lord and the coming of Christ refer to one and the same thing, is remarkable for a reason which is overlooked by many Bible students, namely, the exclusion of any idea of millenarian teaching, which apparently made its appearance among some of the early disciples of Christ. (Cf. 2 Thess. 2: 1-3.) But when the full revelation was completed, and the inspired record was made, that doctrine was, once and for all, laid to rest, so far as any scriptural authority for it is concerned.

The apostle Peter, in the text now before us, gives an inspired description of the manner in which the material universe shall come to a complete and final end. It is, of course, impossible for human beings to conceive the full meaning and significance of that terrible destruction; but the words of Adam Clarke may help us to get a better idea of that which will take place, when the fire and the watery particles in the atmosphere are brought together. He says, "Put a drop of water on an anvil, place over it a piece of iron red hot, and strike the iron with a hammer on the part above the drop of water, and the report will be as loud as musket; when, then, the whole strength of those opposite agents is brought together in a state of conflict, the *noise*, the *thunderings*, the *innumerable expositions*, (till every particle of water on the

earth and in the atmosphere is, by the action of the fire, reduced into its component gaseous parts,) will be *frequent, loud, confounding, and terrific*, beyond every comprehension but that of God himself." This, apparently is the "great noise" of verse 10.

Dr. Clarke goes on to say that when the fire has conquered and decomposed the water, the latter's elements—hydrogen and oxygen gases—the former highly inflammable and the latter an eminent supporter of all combustion, will occupy distinct regions of the atmosphere, hydrogen by its very levity ascending to the top, while oxygen from its superior specific gravity will keep upon or near the surface of the earth; "and thus, if different substances be once ignited, the fire, which is supported in this case, not only by the oxygen which is one of the constituents of atmospheric air, but also by a great additional quantity of oxygen obtained from the decomposition of all aqueous vapors, will rapidly seize on all other substances, on all terrestrial particles, and the whole frame of nature will be necessarily torn in pieces, and thus *"the earth and its works will be burned up."* Either this or a similar situation will mark the end of the material universe. We are not specifically told how the great conflagration will be started, whether by a direct act of God himself; or by some means inaugurated by man, which he permits. The threat of a nuclear war, which could easily engulf the entire world, is enough to cause thoughtful people to have some idea of what the final day of history will be like, so far as the destruction of the material part of the universe is concerned.

Inasmuch as there is no doubt about the coming of that great and terrible day, so far as the Lord's people are concerned, the only question which should be uppermost in their minds is, What shall we do about it? The answer is found in the type of lives they should live, and the attitude they should manifest. Notwithstanding the awfulness of the day, it will be one of rejoicing for those who are ready to meet the Lord in peace; and they are exhorted to look for and earnestly desire (*hasten*, margin) the

coming of that day. Trench and others think that Christians can cause "the day of the Lord to come more quickly by helping to fulfil those conditions without which it cannot come; that day being not inexorable fixed, but the arrival of which it is free to the church to hasten on by faith and prayer." If this is true, then it is easier to understand why no one but God knows when that day will come. (See again Matt. 24: 36.)

Bible students are not agreed on

the significance of the statement made in verse 13. It is the opinion of some that destroying the earth, does not mean total annihilation, but cleansed of its dross and evil, and made into a dwelling-place for the righteous. Others think that the earth will be completely destroyed (cf. Rev. 20: 11), and that only heaven, the eternal dwelling-place of God will remain. At any rate, only the righteous will be privileged to occupy the new heavens and the new earth.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is meant by the end of all earthly things?

What are the four major things which will happen on the last day of history?

What has been the general history of the world all through the ages?

What effect should the doctrine of last things have upon the people of the earth today?

The Golden Text

What is the nature of the words of the golden text and in what setting are they found?

Why are all things, as they relate to God's plans and purposes, dependent upon his word?

What application does Peter make of the prediction of Isaiah?

An Apostolic Answer to a Question of Scoffers

Against what background did Peter write the text for today's lesson?

What kind of support does the Christian system have?

Why does Peter call attention to the teaching of the prophets and apostles?

How did the early Christians feel about the Lord's second coming?

How alone can we learn the full truth about that great event?

What basis did the mockers think that they had for their mockery?

To what do the "last days" refer?

Why did Peter deal so thoroughly with the false teaching of the mockers?

What was the argument of the scoffers and how does Peter reply to it?

Why is the answer which Peter gave so essential to us?

In what does the first part of the apostle's answer consist?

God's Apparent Delay and His Benevolent Purpose

Discuss the second part of Peter's three-fold reply to the mockers.

In what does the third part of his answer consist?

What has always been God's attitude toward the lost of mankind?

The Day of the Lord and the Christian Attitude toward It

What is meant by the "day of the Lord"? Give reasons for your answer.

What vital lesson do many Bible students overlook in connection with this teaching?

In what way does Peter describe the end of all material things?

Discuss the meaning and significance of this destruction.

In what manner could the "great noise" be produced?

Why can not any one speak with certainty regarding the actual details of the destruction of the material universe?

What should be the attitude of Christians toward the last great day?

What do Christians look forward to after the passing of the material universe?

Lesson VIII—November 21, 1971

OUR HEAVENLY ADVOCATE

Lesson Text

1 John 2: 1-11

1 My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Je'-sus Christ the righteous:

2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

3 And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him:

6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked.

7 Beloved, no new commandment write I unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word which ye heard.

8 Again, a new commandment write I unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth.

9 He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now.

10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him.

11 But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus."* (1 Tim. 2: 5.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 John 1: 1-10.

Daily Bible Readings

November 15.	M.	.....Christ, Our Lord (Phil. 2: 5-11)
November 16.	T.	.....Christ, Our Righteousness (1 Cor. 1: 26-31)
November 17.	W.	.....Christ, Our Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5: 1-4)
November 18.	T.	.....Christ, Our Mediator (1 Tim. 2: 1-5)
November 19.	F.	.....Christ, Mystery of Godliness (1 Tim. 3: 14-16)
November 20.	S.	.....Christ, Our High Priest (Heb. 9: 11-15)
November 21.	S.	.....Christ, Head of the Church (Eph. 1: 19-23)

TIME.—Probably about A. D. 90.

PLACE.—The letter was written in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—John and Christians.

Introduction

The expression "our heavenly Advocate" indicates one of the many ways in which Christ blesses us. Some one has noted that Bible students can find a different way of expressing Christ's relationship to his people, for every day in the year. When Paul wrote the letter which we know as Ephesians, he said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 1: 3.) All Christians are in Christ (cf. Gal. 3: 26,

27), and it is in him that they are made full or complete. (Read Col. 2: 9, 10.) Hendriksen points out that the entire essence and glory of God is concentrated in Christ, as in a body; and it is in that sense that it can be said that the fulness of the Godhead, that is, all that enters into the idea of God, is embodied, given concrete expression, and fully realized in the Son. And since all of God's people are in Christ, they have reached the Source from which flows the stream of blessings that will supply every need which any

Christian will ever have, in this world or in the next. (Cf. Col. 3: 1-4; Rev. 21: 22; 22: 1-5.)

Christian people therefore can do nothing better than to search the Scriptures, in order to learn that which is available to them in Christ. Man was created in the image of his Maker, but when the creature allowed the evil one to alienate him from the Source of all spiritual blessings, a new dimension was added to his fundamental needs, namely, that of redemption from sin; he was given a Saviour. This, of course, involves the initial step back into God's favor; and we are told by the writer of Hebrews that Jesus is fully qualified for that great transfer. "Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7: 25.) The emphasis here is probably on his relationship to Christians; but the principle is the same, whether with reference to salvation from alien sins, or to his ability to lead his people to eternal peace with God. (Cf. Heb. 5: 8, 9.) It is in

this last relationship that his work as our Advocate is accomplished, as we shall see further on in this study.

But there are other needs which Jesus is able to supply, and which the child of God must experience, if his well-being is to be kept in perspective and achieved, namely, (1) he must have some one who can speak to him with absolute authority, or, he must have an absolute Ruler; and this is exactly what every saved person has in Christ Jesus. (Cf. Matt. 28: 18; Eph. 1: 22, 23; Phil. 2: 9, 10.) (2) The child of God must have a prophet, that is, a teacher who speaks God's message to him; and that is what Jesus does. (Acts 3: 22, 23; Matt. 7: 24-27.) (3) As long as the Christian remains in the flesh, he will be plagued by sin, and he will be in continuous need of a priest, who can stand between him and God, and through whom he can approach his heavenly Father in worship and service. (See Heb. 4: 14-16.) Christ, then, is our Prophet, Priest, and King; and, as such, we can trust in him supremely and be assured that all is well with our souls.

The Golden Text

"For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus." The passage just quoted can best be understood in the light of the context in which Paul wrote it, namely, "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all; the testimony to be borne in its own times; whereunto I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I speak the truth, I lie not), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth." (1 Tim. 2: 1-7.)

The original word for "mediator" is *mesites*, and it is found in the New Testament in the following places: Galatians 3: 19, 20; 1 Timothy 2: 5; Hebrews 8: 6; 9: 15; 12:

24. The idea which the term, as used in the golden text, is meant to convey, is that of a person who stands between two estranged parties, for the purpose of trying to reconcile their differences, or, to bring them together again. The estranged parties, in the case now before us, are Jehovah and the sinful people of the earth. The entire responsibility for this alienation between God and man is due, in whole and in part, to the sinful attitude and conduct of men. (Cf. Isa. 59: 1, 2.) Jehovah alone is the God of the universe, and it is for that reason that there is only one mediator between him and the human race. All men were created by him (Acts 17: 26-28); and since there is no respect of persons with him, he has an equal interest in the salvation of the human race. (Cf. Acts 10: 34, 35.)

And in order to make it possible for sinful mankind to understand how to get back to God, a mediator who is both God and man was appointed for that purpose. An effective mediator must understand, and

be in sympathy with, both of the estranged parties; and he must be recognized by both as having their interest at heart. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18-21.) And so, not only did God give his Son to be the Saviour of men (cf. John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 6-8); but the Son himself was willing to take the form of a man, and make the supreme sacrifice for their sins (cf.

John 10: 17, 18; Phil. 2: 5-8). And then, in addition to making the divine arrangements for the salvation of every interested sinner, Paul says that the testimony regarding the plan for the redemption of the race was, in due time (Gal. 4: 4), authorized to receive world-wide proclamation. (Cf. Mark 16: 15, 16; Col. 1: 23.)

The Text Explained

The Remedy for the Sins of Believers (1 John 2: 1-6)

My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world. And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him: he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked.

Even a casual reading of the epistle from which our lesson today is taken, will enable one to see that there is a close connection between the last paragraph of chapter 1, and this section of the lesson text. Both paragraphs deal with the over-all question of the moral tests of fellowship with God, and, consequently, fellowship with all other faithful followers of Christ. Fellowship with God is first mentioned in the prologue of the epistle; and it is based on a correct knowledge of that which has been divinely revealed regarding his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God is light, and no one can possibly have fellowship with him, unless he, too, walks in the light; and that can be done only by obeying that which has been commanded by the Lord.

If light is the symbol of wisdom and holiness, then darkness may be said to represent folly and sin. Any professed follower of Christ, therefore, who claims to have fellowship with God, while walking in darkness, is both a liar and one who fails to live as the truth directs. This is

a fearful indictment; and what makes it all the more impressive, is that it comes from an inspired apostle, whose record has been preserved for all generations. The only possible way to keep from walking in darkness, is to make sure that one is doing his best to learn the truth, and to live as it directs. "And this is the judgment, that the light has 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.)

The conditions of enjoying fellowship with God imposes a great responsibility upon a child of God; and, unless he is very careful in his outlook upon such matters, he is likely to become discouraged, or to be characterized by self-deception. There are some people who are so conscious of sin, as to feel that if righteousness is a condition of fellowship with God, then they can never attain that station in life; while others may hastily conclude that they have been lifted above sin, and that there is no obstacle in their way of continuous fellowship with the Father. John, however, makes it plain that no human being can live above and beyond isolated acts of sin, but that the conscientious and dedicated Christian has access to the "cleansing fountain," which will cleanse him from everything displeasing to the Lord.

And then, as the writer begins the section of the lesson text now before us, he makes it plain that the child of God is under continuous obligation to do his best to keep from doing that which is wrong in the

Lord's sight. But the apostle wants the Christian to know that if, and when, he does fall into sin, he is not alone in his fight against the evil one. This is true, because the Father has provided an "Advocate" for all of his people who stand in need of such assistance. The original term for "Advocate" is *paraklētos*, and the word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in the writings of John. (See John 14: 16, 26; 15: 26; 16: 7.) The references in John's gospel record, are all to the Holy Spirit. (Cf. Rom. 8: 26, 27, 34.) The original word is rendered "Comforter" in each of the references in John, with the marginal reading of *Advocate, Helper, Paraclete*, the latter term being the Anglicization of the Greek.

The literal and practical meaning of an advocate, is that of a helper, or one who is called to the side of one who is in need of assistance, which he is not able to provide for himself. Kittel, in commenting on the original term, makes this observation, "In 1 John 2: 1, where Jesus Christ is called the *parakletos* of sinning Christians before the Father, the meaning is obviously 'advocate,' and the image of a trial before God's court determines the meaning." The Advocate who has been made available to us in both righteous himself, and has become the "propitiation" for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world, that is, for the sins of all mankind.

The term "propitiate" means to appease or render favorable; and this, of course, presupposes an offense which makes the offended ill-disposed toward the offender; or shows that an alienation has been brought about, which calls for the good offices of a mediator. And so, to propitiate the offended is to do something which will please him, and thereby gain his good will. The "propitiation" is the means by which this is done; or, to say the same thing in another way, the offering, action, or sacrifice which makes the offended favorably disposed toward the offender, is what is meant by the term now under consideration. The place and purpose of a propitiation in the scheme of human redemption, is clearly stated by Paul in the following passage:

"But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." (Rom. 3: 21-26.)

Keeping in mind the fact that the basic idea inherent in an advocate is, as Moulton and Milligan suggest, "a friend of the accused person, called to speak to his character, or otherwise enlist the sympathy of the judges" (this being its secular use of that day), we can picture Christ at our side, so to speak, pleading our case before the Father. We should remember, however, that our Advocate does not, as David Smith points out, "plead that we are innocent or adduce extenuating circumstances. He acknowledges our guilt and presents his vicarious work as the ground of our acquittal. He stands in the Court of Heaven *a lamb as it had been slain* (Rev. 5: 6), and the marks of his sore passion are a mute but eloquent appeal: 'I suffered all this for sinners, and shall it go for naught?'"

Neither the atoning sacrifice of Christ for alien sinners, nor his plea for the acceptance of erring Christians, will benefit those who have no knowledge of him and the scheme of human redemption. (Cf. Matt. 28: 19, 20; John 6: 44, 45; 2 Pet. 1: 3, 4.) But it is not enough to know something about the theory; we must put into practice that which has been divinely commanded. Any professed Christian who claims to know God, but is indifferent toward, and indolent regarding, the will of the Lord, is, according to John, a liar, and the truth is not in him. This is enough to fill the average person, who claims to be a Christian, with fear and trembling. (Cf.

1 Cor. 4: 4.) We usually think of John as the apostle of love, and indeed he was; but it is also true that he employs the term "liar," to designate unfaithfulness on the part of the Lord's people, more than any other New Testament writer. Any one who really loves the Lord delights to do his will. (Cf. John 14: 15; 1 John 5: 3.) When one follows the example of Jesus, he knows that he is pleasing to God. (Cf. 1 Pet. 2: 21-25.)

Two Aspects of the Lord's Commandment

(1 John 2: 7, 8.)

Beloved, no new commandment write I unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word which ye heard. Again, a new commandment write I unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth.

As John begins this section of his letter, he assures his readers that he has nothing new in the way of a commandment to set before them. The old teaching which begins with the acceptance of the gospel of Christ, is sufficient for all the needs of the child of God. The teaching of the Lord Jesus is not subject to change. Jude writes: "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3.) The apostle Paul, in the following passage, tells what will happen to those who seek to change the inspired record:

"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.)

Although the commandment about which John was writing was old, in the sense that it belongs to the original teaching of Christ; it is, nevertheless, a fact that familiarity, with even the basic requirements of the Lord, can cause us to take them for granted. John identified the old commandment as "the word which ye heard."

The time will never come when teachers and preachers of God's word should cease to tell the old, old story, and call to men's attention that which is found in the New Testament; but it is also true that they must be ready at all times to emphasize and teach the new. This is true because, in the words of James Russell Lowell, in *The Present Crisis*,

New occasions teach new duties;
Time makes ancient good uncouth;

They must upward still, and onward,
who would keep abreast of Truth:

Lo, before us gleam her camp-fires!
we ourselves must Pilgrims be,

Launch our Mayflower, and Steer
boldly through the desperate winter sea,

Nor attempt the Future's portal
with the Past's blood-rusted key.
Many a sensitive soul, in the service
of Christ, has seen new applications
for the truth, which he has known
all along; and it is in that way that
the old commandment often becomes
a new one. (Cf. John 13: 34, 35.)

Christianity Is Impossible without Brotherly Love

(1 John 2: 9-11)

He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes.

It would not be out of place to speak of this section of the lesson text as the stewardship of Christian love; for that is exactly the obligation which the Lord has placed upon his people. All people in the church of the Lord, who are true to their

commitment, have been redeemed from the kingdom of darkness, and are now children of light. They have been redeemed from the realm of hate, and have been set gloriously free in the realm of love; and it is utterly impossible for them to conduct themselves according to their former standards of living if they love God as he commands. Paul, in speaking of the Christian's new relationship in Christ, says, "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." (2 Cor. 5: 17.) And he further 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.) These two passages are sufficient to show that the people who have been redeemed by Christ, have a new outlook on life, and a new motive, as well as a new standard, for living. John's conclusion is, "He that saith he is in the light," while at the same time hating his brother, "is in the darkness even until now." This is another way of saying that it is utterly impossible to live in the light of the gospel, while hating one's brother. This is a lesson which many professed Christians need to learn.

The word for "love" is *agapao*, the highest form of love that one can manifest. It is not based on sentiment, but rather on moral choice; and its aim is to do the best it can for a fellow Christian. The original term for "hate" is *miseo*, and, as used by John, it is an exact antonym of "love." Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines an "antonym" as "a word so opposed in meaning to another word that it negates or nullifies every single one of its implications; as, 'good' is the *antonym* of 'bad'." Vincent notes that the sharp issue is maintained in the words of John, just as it is the saying of Christ, namely, "He that is

not with me is against me." (Luke 11: 23.) Vincent then goes on to say, "Men fall into two classes, those who are in fellowship with God, and therefore walk in light and love, and those who are not in fellowship with God, and therefore walk in darkness and hatred."

Bengel, who argues that hatred is the direct opposite of love, points out that where there is no love, there is hatred; for "the heart is not empty." And in the words of *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, "St. John recognizes no neutral attitude between 'love' and 'hatred.' Love is active benevolence, and less than this is hatred, just as indifference to the Gospel-call amounts to rejection of it (cf. Matt. 22: 5-7). Observe the climax: 'in the darkness is, and in the darkness walketh, and knoweth not where he is going.' . . . The penalty of living in the darkness is not merely that one does not see, but that one goes blind. The neglected faculty is atrophied. Cf. the mole, the *Crustacea* in the subterranean lakes of the Mammoth Caves of Kentucky." And so, in the words of J. Swain,

How sweet, how heav'nly, is the
sigh,
When those that love the Lord
In one another's peace delight,
And so fulfil the word.

When each can feel his brother's
sigh,
And with him bear a part;
When sorrow flows from eye to eye,
And joy from heart to heart.

When, free from envy, scorn, and
pride,
Our wishes all above,
Each can his brother's failings hide,
And show a brother's love.

Love is the golden chain that binds
The happy souls above;
And he's an heir of heav'n who finds
His bosom glow with love.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is implied by the expression "our heavenly Advocate"?
Why are Christians so richly blessed in Christ?

What is meant by saying that Christ can save to the uttermost?
What are some of the fundamental needs which all men have and why is this true?

The Golden Text

In what setting did Paul write the words of the golden text?

What is the idea involved in a "mediator"?

What are the basic qualifications of a mediator?

The Remedy for the Sins of Believers

In what way is this section of the lesson text related to the last paragraph of chapter 1?

What does it mean to walk in light? in darkness?

Why are people "liars" who say they know the Lord, but who do not keep his commandments?

What possible attitudes are sometimes developed when people read the demands made by John?

In what sense is Christ our "Advocate"?

What is the meaning of "propitiation" and in what way has the Lord accomplished that?

What plea does Jesus make before God for his people?

What place does "knowledge of the truth" have in the scheme of human redemption?

What important lesson should we learn from all of this?

Two Aspects of the Lord's Commandment

In what sense is the commandment which John is discussing not new?

What does the New Testament teach regarding the sufficiency of God's revealed truth?

In what sense is the commandment a new one?

What important lesson should teachers and preachers learn from these truths?

Christianity Is Impossible without Brotherly Love

In what other way would it be appropriate to describe this section of the lesson text? Give reasons for your answer.

What is the basic reason why Christians must love each other as brethren?

What change in relationship and attitudes takes place when people become Christians?

Why, then, is it true that a Christian who does not love his brother is in darkness?

What is the nature of the "love" which John is discussing?

In what way are "love" and "hatred" related?

What, then, is implied by the term "hate"?

Why is it impossible to love while hatred remains in one's heart?

What happens to the people who remain in darkness?

Lesson IX—November 28, 1971

GENUINE LOVE

1 John 3: 13-24

Lesson Text

13 Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you.

14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death.

15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

16 Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

17 But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?

18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth.

19 Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him:

20 Because if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God;

22 And whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.

23 And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Je'sus Christ, and love one another, even as he gave us commandment.

24 And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God.*" (1 John 4: 7.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 John 3: 1-12.

Daily Bible Readings

November 22.	M.	.....	Superiority of Love (1 Cor. 13: 1-13)
November 23.	T.	.....	Love, the Test of Discipleship (John 13: 34, 35)
November 24.	W.	.....	Love, a Command (John 14: 1-15)
November 25.	T.	.....	Love Fulfills the Law (Rom. 13: 8-10)
November 26.	F.	.....	Brotherly Love Enjoined (Heb. 13: 1-3)
November 27.	S.	.....	Love Explained (1 John 4: 19-21)
November 28.	S.	.....	Preeminence of Love (Gal. 5: 13-15)

TIME.—Probably about A.D. 90.

PLACE.—The letter was written in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—John and Christians.

Introduction

The transition from our last lesson to this one, is both natural and easy. This is true, because the command to love each other as brethren, is grounded in the message of truth, the message which the Lord's people have heard from the beginning. The closing words of the devotional reading are as follows: "For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another: not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Love of the brethren, as we saw in the last lesson, is the direct opposite of hate of the brethren; and both attitudes come directly from the hearts of those who manifest the traits just mentioned. It is utterly impossible for an evil heart to love God's children; and, conversely, it is not possible for a true follower of Christ to hate his brethren. (Cf. Matt. 12: 33-35.) Love of all brethren, in the New Testament sense of the term, is not optional with God's people; it confronts them with a categorical Christian imperative: "And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also." (1 John 4: 21.)

The people who are commanded to love their brethren, and others too, are the ones who make up the church of the Lord. But love is not a mere abstraction, a lifeless visionary notion. In the words of Paul, in

his letter to the Corinthians, love, when it dwells in one's heart, is going to manifest itself in its various relationships with others. (Read 1 Cor. 13: 1-7.) Luther said, "Love is an image of God, and not a lifeless image, but the living essence of the divine nature which beams full of goodness."

When Peter wrote of the "seven Christian graces" (see 2 Pet. 1: 5-11), he placed brotherly kindness and love last. "Brotherly kindness" is the love which Christians cherish for each other as brethren (Thayer), while "love" is for all humanity, as distinct from, or in addition to, the love of the brethren. It is in this way that the Christian acknowledges, in every man, one who has a claim on his soul and service. No child of God, with the love of his Father in his heart, can live unto himself; and it is ever true that "love tempers duty into opportunity." It should be emphasized, however, that the love we are now considering, is not directed by sense and emotion, but by deliberate choice; it is the love which seeks its object's greatest good. (Cf. John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 6-8.) The Italian poet Petrarch says, "Love is the crowning grace of humanity, the holiest right of the soul, the golden link which binds us to duty and truth, the redeeming principle that chiefly reconciles the heart of life, and is prophetic of eternal good."

The Golden Text

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God." There is, of course, no possible way to avoid the force of this exhortation. The term "love," either as a verb or a noun, is used more than twenty-five times in

the fourth chapter of First John, beginning with verse seven; and when one thinks of such questions as "What is the meaning of love?" "How does it originate?" and "What is its ultimate end?" he can begin to

realize how little the people of this materialistic age know about that grand subject. Some one has noted that the degrading crime of robbing love of its virtue, and filling it with unholy vice, apparently began in the garden of Eden. One would naturally think that the Lord's demonstration of pure and holy love on the cross would have corrected that grievous error; but in a little more than a half century, after the crucifixion of Jesus, both he and his beloved John were calling his people back to the love which they experienced, when they became his followers. (Cf. Rev. 2: 4, 5; 1 John 2: 7-11.) Paul's great statement regarding love is always relevant in any discussion of that subject: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor. 13: 1-13.)

The words of the golden text are found in this context: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God 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: 7-

11.) The original words for love, in the passage just quoted, are *agapao* (verb) and *agape* (noun). This kind of love comes, not as a matter of emotion or feeling; but as the result of moral choice. It is a much stronger word than *phileo*, which expresses natural affection, such as a parent feels for a child, or one close friend, for another. *Phileo* indicates a love which gives itself up to another; while *agapao* expresses a love which would give itself for another.

The love which the children of God have for their fellow Christians is, therefore, as The Speaker's Bible notes, a deliberate correspondence with the declared mind and purpose of God. The root principle, at once the most difficult and the most attractive of Biblical doctrines, is the doctrine that God is love. This is not an obvious point by any means; but it is the central point of that positive self-disclosure of God, which the Bible conveys to us, and the central meaning of the incarnation of God in Christ Jesus. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18, 19.) Or, to say the same thing in another way, the meaning of the incarnation is that the real character of the Being, who made and rules the world, has been for us translated out of that difficult and unintelligible region of abstract things beyond our sight, into the intelligible lineaments of a Divine-human character, that of Jesus of Nazareth, which all can see and appreciate. (Cf. John 14: 8, 9; 12: 44, 45.) And it is through Jesus that we have been able to learn the meaning of love; and with this kind of love in our hearts, we can learn to love people whom we do not admire, which, indeed, is a large part of our Christian duty. (Cf. Matt. 5: 43-48.)

The Text Explained

The Meaning and Place of Love in the Christian Life

(1 John 3: 13-18)

Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding

in him. Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth.

Those Bible students who are familiar with the *Gospel of John*, and his epistles, are aware of the many parallel passages and thoughts, which are found in the two records just referred to. There is hardly a paragraph in the first epistle of John, which does not call one's attention to a similar idea, found in the *Gospel of John*. When the apostle says, "Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you," we immediately think of that which Jesus said, a short time before his death on the cross, namely, "If the world hateth you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also." (John 15: 18-20; cf. 17: 14; Matt. 10: 24, 25.)

There is no reason to be surprised at the attitude of the world toward the Lord's people, for the simple reason that it is natural for the world to hate those whose lives contradict its maxims, and condemn its practices. People of the world do not love the righteous life; if they did they would practice it. And so John, in effect, is saying to the Lord's people, Cease marvelling, stop wondering, and do not be astonished at the attitude of the world toward you; for, after all, that is not the important thing—the world's hatred of you is only natural. (Cf. 1 John 2: 15-17; James 4: 4.)

The question which should concern us, is that "we know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death." Love therefore means life, while hate means death; and the test of our relationship with God is not that the world hates us; but that we are filled with love for the brethren. This is the reason why John goes into such great detail to explain the true meaning of love, as it respects the people of God; it is absolutely essential to our own spiritual well-being.

The first thing that John does is to show what love is not, namely,

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." Love is benevolent, while hate is destructive. The reason why one who hates his brother is a murderer, is because he has in his heart that which is potentially capable of murder. "The thought is father of the deed." Hatred which issues forth in actual murder differs from incipient hatred, felt but restrained, only as a mild attack of some malady differs from a virulent attack of the same thing. (Cf. Matt. 5: 27, 28.)

The apostle John next shows how we may know the true meaning of love: "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Jesus, before he left his disciples, said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15: 13); and he was evidently speaking of the greatest love which human beings are capable of manifesting, and, for the moment, he was measuring his love by that standard; but if we turn to Romans 5: 6-8, we shall see that his love for the human race was infinitely greater than the love of men. One has only to read such classic love stories as that of Damon and Pythias, in order to see the effect which such devotion has on the world; but when we take into consideration the matchless love, which Christ enjoined upon his followers, we are completely overwhelmed by its intensity. To lay down one's life is to give it up in death; or, at least, to be willing to do so.

There are not many instances, however, in which people in this day are called upon to give their lives for their brethren; but there are many other ways in which we can demonstrate our love for our fellow Christians, namely, by the application of the principle of self-sacrifice. Westcott expresses the matter in this way: "There is a danger in indulging ourselves in lofty views which lie out of the way of common experience. We may therefore try ourselves by a far more homely test. The question is commonly not of dying for another but of communicating to another the outward means of living." (Cf. Gal.

6: 1, 2, 6; James 1: 27.) We can live, not for our own pleasure, but to make gladness more possible for those who walk in the shadows of great sorrow; and in order to make goodness more possible for those who stand in the tense darkness of great temptations. When we assume this kind of attitude toward our brethren, we pass into the life of the world each day, not to be ministered unto, but to minister unto its needs; and those who do these things have heard the voice of the greater love. (Cf. Matt. 20: 20-28.)

An Infallible Test of Our Christianity (1 John 3: 19-22)

Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him: because if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God; and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.

When the Lord's people put into practice the truths which are taught in the preceding section of the lesson text, that is, when they demonstrate their love for their brethren, according to God's will, in deed and in truth; they have the right to be persuaded, or be certain, that they are living in keeping with the revealed will of the Lord. The original word for "assure" is *peithōs*; and it means, according to Arndt-Gingrich, to conciliate, pacify, set at ease, or at rest. The forthright teaching of John may have caused some of his readers to question as to Whether or not they had been as faithful as they should have been: and the apostle, in order to reassure them, makes it plain that any consecrated child of God can know how he stands in God's sight. When people understand the will of the Lord, they can know Whether or not they have acted in accordance with it; and if they are certain that they have, they will have no doubt regarding his attitude toward them. (Cf. Rom. 8: 16.) This is the same thing as having a good conscience; and this confident attitude results from our having acted according to the revealed will of God, and not merely because we feel good. We

do indeed feel good; but that is because our conscience is clear, and we can point to the fact that we have a sound basis for a clear conscience.

But that is only one side of the question. Suppose that our attention is called to the teaching of the Lord regarding the love of the brethren; and we are compelled to admit that we have not done that which the Scriptures clearly require of us. Or, again, suppose that we have not been sincere in our profession of love for some of our fellow Christians—what then? In that case, if we have any desire to please the Lord, our heart, that is, our conscience, would condemn us. Some of the people who heard Peter preach on the first Pentecost, following the Lord's ascension, were conscience-stricken; for Luke says that they were pricked in their heart (Acts 2: 37); and any one who has had that experience, realizes the seriousness of it. But there is something which is far worse than to be condemned by one's heart, and that is to be condemned by God; for he is infinitely greater than our heart, and knows all things: there is nothing which can be hidden from him. (Cf. Heb. 4: 12, 13.) But even if the faithful is disturbed, God knows his true condition and will bless him.

However, if our heart does not condemn us, and there is sufficient reason for its not doing so; then we have boldness toward God, and can expect our prayers to be answered; because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight. The writer of Hebrews says, "Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need." (Heb. 4: 16.) God has not promised to answer the prayers of people who are not faithful to him; and when professed followers of Christ feel that their prayers are not being answered, it would be well for them to inquire regarding their lives in his sight. However, we should always keep in mind the fact that we are not authorized to judge, as to which of our prayers should be answered, or when. (Cf. Matt. 26: 36-46; Heb. 5: 7-9; 2 Cor. 12: 7-10.)

The Divine Criterion for Measuring Our Faithfulness

(1 John 3: 23, 24)

And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, even as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us.

The first verse of this section of the lesson text, has been called the theme of the entire epistle; and it puts in concise form the content of the message of eternal life, to which the apostle refers again and again. The command to "believe" is apparently directed toward the heretics who denied that "Jesus" and "Christ" were one and the same person; or, as John himself has it, "that Jesus Christ came in the flesh." (1 John 4: 2.) The command to "love" appears to have been intended for the false teachers of antinomianism, who held that since salvation was already assured, there is no need for active Christian effort, or morality. (Cf. Phil. 3: 12-4: 1.) The term "antinomian" is not a New Testament word; but its etymology is easily recognized, namely *anti*, against, and *nomos*, law. Antinomianism therefore stands for the doctrine which held that the moral law was made void through faith, and that faith alone is the only requirement for salvation, a teaching which both Paul and James, along with John, soundly denounced. It should be noted, however, that neither of these inspired writers limited the application of his denunciation to the time in which he wrote: the truth which they taught is applicable for all time.

For one to believe in the name of Jesus Christ, is to accept that which the Scriptures teach regarding him; while to love one another is to wish and work for the best that can come to God's children. With this kind of faith and love motivating one, there is no principle of Christianity which would be deliberately ignored by any sincere and dedicated follower of the Lord. (Cf. Mat. 28: 20; Acts 2: 42; James 2: 10.) All people who endeavor to live, as this section of the lesson text teaches, will abide

in Christ, and Christ will dwell in them. (Cf. John 15: 1ff.) This same truth is set forth in John 14: 23, where Jesus says, "If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The language just quoted makes it plain that the Divine Presence will not be temporary; as long as loving obedience continues, the Father and the Son will remain. (Cf. Eph. 2: 19-22.) The original word for "abode" is *mone*; and it is the very same word which is used for "mansions," *abiding-places*, margin, in John 14: 2. These are the only two occurrences of the original word in the New Testament. Our consciousness of the presence of the Father and the Son, and of our exalted abiding-places, which are promised us, should inspire us with a greater determination to make their abode with us pleasing to them. In the words of Bede, "Therefore let God be a home to thee, and be thou a home of God: abide in God, and let God abide in thee."

"And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us." "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.)
 More about Jesus let me learn,
 More of his holy will discern;
 Spirit of God, my teacher be,
 Showing the things of Christ to me.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

In what way is this lesson related to the one for last week?
 What can you say of the importance of brotherly love to the Christian life?
 What proof do we have that we abide in Christ?
 What does brotherly love lead one to do for others?

The Golden Text

What emphasis does John place upon love in this part of his epistle?
 In what context are the words of the golden text found?
 What is the nature of the love which Christians have for each other?

The Meaning and Place of Love in the Christian Life

In what way are the *Gospel of John* and his epistles related?
 Why should Christians not be surprised if the world hates them?
 What is the vital question with which we should be concerned in this connection?
 What does John say regarding those who hate their brethren and why is this true?
 How can we determine the meaning of true love?
 What should this example make us willing to do?

What practical manner can one implement this teaching?

An Infallible Test of Our Christianity

What do the Lord's people have the right to expect when they put into practice his teaching?
 What is the meaning of "shall assure our heart before him"?
 How can people know whether or not they have done that which the Lord commands?
 What is the meaning of "our heart condemn us"?
 What does God know about his people and what should that mean to the faithful?
 What always happens to the person who always, and rightly so, maintains a clear conscience?
 How many people profitably test their lives with reference to their prayers?

The Divine Criterion for Measuring Our Faithfulness

What is John apparently saying, and to whom, in the first part of this section of the lesson text?
 What were some of the false teachings which were prevalent in John's day?
 What does it mean for one to believe in the name of Jesus Christ?
 When Christians truly love each other, what do they always do?
 What, then, is the value of true faith and genuine love?
 How do Christian people know that the Lord abides in them?

Lesson X—December 5, 1971

DIVINE TESTS

Lesson Text

1 John 5: 1-12

1 Whosoever believeth that Je'-sus is the Christ is begotten of God: and whosoever loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

2 Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do his commandments.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

4 For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, *even* our faith.

5 And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Je'-sus is the Son of God?

6 This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Je'-sus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood.

7 And it is the Spirit that beareth

witness, because the Spirit is the truth.

8 For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one.

9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for the witness of God is this, that he hath borne witness concerning his Son.

10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son.

11 And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

12 He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us."* (1 John 4: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 John 5: 13-21.

Daily Bible Readings

November 29.	M.	How Know We Love God's Children? (1 John 5: 1, 2)
November 30.	T.	How Know We Love God? (1 John 5: 3; 2: 4)
December 1.	W.	A Test of Devotion (John 14: 15-24)
December 2.	T.	Test of Discipleship (Luke 9: 57-62)
December 3.	F.	Test of Cross-bearing (Luke 14: 25-35)
December 4.	S.	Test of Life (2 Thess. 3: 6-15)
December 5.	S.	Test of Soundness (Rom. 16: 17-20)

TIME.—Probably about A.D. 90.

PLACE.—The letter was written in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—John and Christians.

Introduction

One of the principal purposes John had in writing the epistle from which these lessons are taken, was to prove that Jesus Christ, who came in the flesh, was indeed God's Son. This truth (cf. Matt. 16: 16) was being denied by the antichrists of that day; and if their contentions were allowed to go unchallenged, the very foundation of Christianity would be threatened. And too, the very nature of Christianity is such that only those who are motivated

by love, can have a vital part in it. One of the marvels of our time is why so many people, who profess to be Christians, deny so many things which the New Testament says about Jesus Christ, and who manifest such little love toward their brethren. There are preachers today in so-called "Christian pulpits," who positively deny that Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary; and even the superficial observer beholds, only too well, the hatred

among those who profess to be the Lord's people, which is abroad in the land.

Just before Jesus left the earth to return to his Father, he said, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." (Matt. 28: 18.) This was in keeping with the commission which had been given unto him. He came to the earth to rescue men from sin; and it was with that purpose in mind, that all the resources of heaven and earth were placed at his command. (Cf. 1 Pet. 3: 22.) He is both God's agent and his representative, in the great work of human redemption; and so essential is the work of Jesus in this great undertaking, that he is able to say, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14: 6.) The Jewish leaders tried desperately to get rid of Jesus, and they apparently thought that they had succeeded, when he was put to death upon the cross. However, they still experienced some misgivings, after his body had been placed in the tomb; as may be seen by their request which they made to Pilate. (See Matt. 27: 62-66.) But their efforts failed miserably; and when the time came for the first gospel sermon to be preached, on the following Pentecost, the Jewish people who had had a part in the crucifixion of the Lord of glory, were confronted with the truth that they would have to reckon with the name of Jesus Christ, if they made peace with God. (See Acts 2: 37-39.) Peter, in fact, said a little later, "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; cf. Eph. 1: 22, 23; 5: 23; 2 Tim. 2: 10.)

It probably was not many days after Pentecost, before Peter preached his second sermon before a Jewish audience; and it was in that sermon that he made this observation, "Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me; to him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you. And it shall be, that every soul that shall not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3: 22, 23; cf. Deut. 18: 15-19.) Jesus frequently pointed out to his critics the abundance of the testimony, which was borne in his behalf (cf., for example, John 5: 30-47); and when he came to close his personal ministry here among men, he said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak." (John 12: 48-50.) This kind of testimony could be multiplied from the pages of the New Testament; but this is sufficient to show that any one who denies the inspired truth regarding Jesus, denies both the Father and his revelation to the human race.

The Golden Text

"We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us." The full force of this statement by John, can be best understood in the light of the context in which it was written, namely, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the spirit of the antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it com-

eth; and now it is in the world already. Ye are of God, my little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they as of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." (1 John 4: 1-6.)

The apostle John, throughout the paragraph just quoted, is dealing with a situation which may be de-

scribed as a critical problem for believers. Error has been in the world, since Satan first introduced it to the first human pair; and this means that the conflict between right and wrong has been in progress since that time. John told his first readers that many antichrists had already arisen in his day; and it appears that they were but the fore-runners of other such false teachers who would come later, and especially the one who would come in the last day. (Cf. 1 John 2: 18; 2 Thess. 2: 8-12.) John, incidentally, is the only New Testament writer who uses the terms "antichrist" and "antichrists." (Cf. Matt. 2: 24.) It appears that the religious erroneous system, known as *Gnosticism*, was full grown, when John wrote his first epistle; and it was they who denied that Jesus and Christ were one and the same person. They denied that Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, and claimed that the Divine Christ descended upon the human Jesus, at the latter's baptism; and then, as the human Jesus was dying on the cross, Christ took his flight from him, and therefore never died.

People who live in a world where truth and error are both taught, as if they were both the truth of Almighty God, must have some way of distinguishing between what is acceptable to the Lord, and what is not. This is a responsibility which each individual must assume for himself; for no one can believe for another. Or, to state the same thing in another way, each individual Christian must make his own test, as to whether or not the teacher is sound, and his teaching is according to the revealed will of God. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 1-5; Acts 17: 10-12.) Inspired teachers, such as the apostles and others, during the early days of the church, were able, by the signs which they were permitted to manifest, to make it plain that they were speaking for God; and after the full revelation was reduced to writing and made available to all Christians, they can easily test any teaching which is placed before them. People who sincerely and truly want to please God, will always listen to that which they know to be the will of the Lord.

The Text Explained

Genuine Love Is Demonstrated by
Stedfast Obedience

(1 John 5: 1-3)

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God: and whosoever loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

Every Christian should make it his daily aim to improve his standing before God. He is building a character which will have to stand before him in the last day; and he will certainly not want to be disappointed when that occasion shall arrive. We are going to be tested, as the Bible clearly shows; and if we are as wise as we should be, we will make frequent checks regarding our progress in living the Christian life. The lesson for today furnishes us with a wonderful opportunity to see something of the progress, or lack of

progress, which we are making toward an acceptable life before God.

While probably no violence is done the Scriptures, when we take the first verse of this section of the lesson text, as a basis for a study of the new birth (cf. John 3: 3-5); we should, nevertheless, recognize the fact that that is not John's purpose in making the statement. This is one of the many instances, in the English versions of the Scriptures, where the chapter divisions are misleading. John, in the closing verses of chapter 4, has just pointed out the impossibility of loving God, while at the same time hating one's brother in Christ. The apostle's words are, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." (1 John 4: 20, 21.)

This clearly stated truth could

easily cause some one to ask, "And who is my brother?" It is in answer to this hypothetical question, that John addresses himself in this section of the lesson text. If one loves the Father, who is responsible for each individual child in his family (cf. Eph. 3: 14, 15), it would be both unnatural and unreasonable for that individual not to love the children whom the Father has begotten in his likeness. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 17; Eph. 2: 10; Col. 3: 10; Tit. 3: 5, 6.) Love for God therefore, and love for his people, are inseparable.

But how can one be certain that he loves his brethren, as the Lord requires? John provides the clear and unequivocal answer, namely, "Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do his commandments." We might, without this divine criterion, be mistaken regarding our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ; but when our love for God is clear, that is, when it issues forth in active obedience to his will, we know, by the same token, that our love for his children is both real and genuine. This a divine test which cannot, with impunity, be dispensed with.

The one great test, however, of our love for God, is given in verse 3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." (Cf. John 14: 15, 21, 23.) A. R. Fausset notes that the reason why believers feel any degree of irksomeness in God's commandments, is that they do not realize fully by faith the privileges of their spiritual life. What better practice, then, could Christians engage in, than to read the commandments of the Lord, and make an honest and thorough appraisal of their own attitude toward them?

The Way to Victory and the Three Witnesses

(1 John 5: 4-8)

For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood.

And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one.

The term "whatsoever," with which this section of the lesson text begins, is in the neuter gender, instead of the masculine; and that gender is employed, according to Robertson and other Greek scholars, "to express the universality of the principle (Rothe) as in John 3: 6, 8; 6: 37, 39." The term "world" has reference to the sum total of all the forces which are antagonistic to the spiritual life. (Cf. Gal. 1:4.) It includes such things as endowments, riches, advantages, pleasures, and the like, which stir desires, seduce from God, and which are obstacles to the manner in which Christians should conduct themselves. (Cf. 1 John 2: 15-17; James 4: 4.) Furthermore, it should be noted that the world does not always appear the same, to every generation (cf. the world of Nero, with that of our day); but whatever the difference in its appearance, the principle of opposition to the Lord and his people, is always the same. (Cf. Eph. 6: 10-12.) The world is a gigantic power, and it is not easily resisted; and having flowed through the ages, it is charged with the force of an accumulated prestige; and with each generation contributing something new to this enormous tradition of regulated ungodliness, none but the most vigilant, who put their trust in the Lord, can escape its clutches." (Read Rev., chapters 17, 18.)

When John says, "And this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith," the verb "hath overcome" is in the aorist tense, which is literally *overcame*. Vincent, in commenting on this passage, says, "The aorist is to be held here to its strict sense. The victory over the world was, potentially, won when we believed in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. We overcome the world by being brought into union with Christ. On becoming as he is (4: 17) we become part-takers of his victory. (John 16: 33). 'Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world' (4: 4)."

The "faith" about which John is

speaking, is equivalent to being a Christian; or, to say the same thing in another way, it is the conquering principle of Christianity, which is ours as a result of our having obeyed the gospel. Again, "our faith" is that spiritual force within the soul, which enables us to turn our backs upon the world, and cling to those realities which have been revealed by God. (Cf. Heb. 11: 7, 8, 24-26.) The power of the faith we are now considering lies in its object; for faith, in and of itself, is no better than some other instrument which we may have in our possession. It is our Christ-centered faith which makes the victory over the world possible; for it is that faith which marks the difference between overcoming the world, and being overcome by it. With our faith in the Lord, the world loses its power over us; for we are continually looking to him to make all things work together for our good. (See Rom. 8: 28; 1 Cor. 15: 57, 58; Rom. 8: 31-39.)

"And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." This is to say that only those who are obedient believers in Christ, have the assurance of ultimate victory over the world. Someone has said, "Survey the whole world, and show me even one of whom it can be affirmed with truth that he overcomes the world, who is not a Christian, and endowed with this faith." Plummer call the faith which we thus possess, our spear and our shield. The article with the present active participle (ho *nikōn*, "he that overcometh") denotes that which is habitually or continuously being done. Robertson points out that there is a sharp antithesis between "Jesus" (humanity) and "the Son of God" (deity) united in one personality. The antichrists, as already noted, denied that Jesus and Christ were united in one personality.

The identity of Christ Jesus is further set forth in verse 6: "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with water only, but with the water and with the blood." Bible students, as is so often the case, differ widely regarding the meaning and use of the terms "water" and "blood," as they are employed with reference to the

identity of the Lord. But inasmuch as faith in the Incarnate Son of God, is the victory which overcomes the world; it appears both natural and reasonable to understand the two terms in question, as referring to two of the prominent incidents of the Incarnation, namely, water to baptism, which marked the beginning of his public ministry; and blood to his death on the cross, at the close of that ministry.

After giving explicit and redemptive meaning to the Incarnate life of Jesus, John goes on to cite the evidence which attests its validity. This is done by naming the three prominent witnesses, namely, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood. The Spirit is called the truth, probably because it is he who revealed the truth regarding the Son of God, and especially the truth regarding the water and the blood. (Cf. John 15: 26, 27; 16: 13, 14.) The present participle indicates that the testimony of these three witnesses is continuous. John says that "the three agree in one," which is to say that their testimony is for one purpose, namely, to declare that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. (Cf. Matt. 16: 16.) Vincent notes that the three witnesses "converge upon the one truth, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, come in the flesh."

God's Greater Testimony Concerning His Son

(1 John 5: 9-12)

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for the witness of God is this, that he hath borne witness concerning his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life.

John's use of the indicative mood ("If we receive") implies that the testimony of men is a matter of fact; and a literal reading would run something like this: If we receive the witness of men, as indeed we do, the witness of God is greater. Any one who has any conception of

the character of God certainly realizes this truth. If therefore human testimony is accepted, regarding Christ or any other Bible proposition, then there is absolutely no ground for rejecting divine testimony regarding the same subject. The Spirit, the events in the life of Jesus, already noted, and the Father, all testify to the truth that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. Jesus frequently referred to the testimony of his Father.

The result of the acceptance, or the rejection, of the God-given witness, is stated in verse 10. Therefore, he who believes in the person of Christ, has the witness of inward experience. External evidence is always essential; but it can never take away the need for inward experience. Some one has said that there are some religious truths, which we cannot understand until we believe them; and there are, likewise, some truths which we cannot believe until we experience them. This is substantially what Jesus sought to impress, when he said, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself." (John 7: 17.) Unless one is in sympathy with the divine purpose, he is not in position to understand the divine will.

But any one who does not believe that which God has said regarding his Son, makes him a liar; and, as The Interpreter's Bible points out, these words should frighten the man who ignores or rejects the gospel; for they convict of blasphemy and insult. His very attitude in rejecting the truth of the Incarnation, is ridiculous; it is as if the little man were shaking his fist in the face of God, and crying, "Liar, liar." The terrible consequences of rejecting the gospel, is set forth in such passages as 2 Thessalonians 2: 7-10; 1 Peter 4: 17-19.

"And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." (Cf. John 17: 3.)

The lesson text now before us says, specifically, that God *gave* unto us eternal life; and the apostle was writing to and about people still possessing their physical life. The verb "gave" is in the aorist tense; and, as any Greek student knows, it represents a completed action in the past, without reference to the specific time of its occurrence, and with no reference to its continuance or repetition. Any reader who is not familiar with the Greek, should consult an English dictionary.

Huddilston (*Essentials of New Testament Greek*) says, "The aorist is the most common tense in Greek to represent that *has taken place*." (Emphasis, Huddilston's.) People who live in sin are declared to be dead, insofar as their relation to God is concerned (cf. Eph. 2: 1-6; 1 Tim. 5: 6); but when they become obedient to the gospel, they are given a new kind of life, which will endure for ever, if they will hold on to it. People are dead, when they are cut off from the source of life; but when they are created anew in Christ, they are united with life which is eternal. Paul, in writing to the Colossians, said, "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory." (Col. 3: 1-4; cf. John 11: 25, 26.) And John, in the closing verse of today's lesson text, says, "He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life." (Read also verse 13.) The life which we have in Christ is eternal in quality; but it will not be ours to keep for ever, unless we remain united with him as long as we are in the flesh. Paul said, we have "hope of eternal life." (Titus 3: 7.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What appears to be one of John's principal purposes in writing his first epistle?

Why do so many professed Christians deny so many vital truths regarding Christ?

Why was all authority in heaven and on earth given into the hands of Jesus?

What vital lesson did his early opponents learn concerning him?

What are some of the truths which have been stated regarding his Messiahship?

The Golden Text

In what context are the words of the golden text found?

Why is it essential that Christians test the teachers who come their way?

How can one be sure that he knows the difference between truth and error?

Genuine Love is Demonstrated by Steadfast Obedience

In what important way can this lesson prove valuable to all of us?

What was John's purpose in speaking of the relationship which Christians have with God?

Why, then, is it impossible for one to love God while hating his brother?

How can one be certain that he loves his brethren?

In what way, alone, can the child of God know that he loves his Father?

What valuable lessons, then, should we get from this study?

The Way to Victory and the Three Witnesses

What is the significance and force of the term "whatsoever" in verse 4?

What is the world which all of God's people must overcome?

What is the victory which overcomes the world?

What does John mean by the expression "our faith"?

How is it possible for our faith to do so much for us?

Who, then, is the one who overcomes the world?

What is the significance of the present active participle—"he that overcometh"?

What further proof does John set forth regarding the truth that Jesus is God's Son?

What use does he make of the "water" and the "blood"?

What, then, are the three witnesses, and why is the Spirit called the truth?

God's Greater Testimony Concerning His Son

Why does John mention the fact that we receive the witness of men?

Why is the witness of God greater than the witness of men?

What is said regarding the person who believes that which God says regarding his Son?

What about the one who denies the Father's witness?

What does John say that the witness is?

In what sense did God give us eternal life?

What should the knowledge of God's great gift to us cause us to do?

Lesson XI—December 12, 1971

JOHN WRITES TO A LADY AND HER CHILDREN

Lesson Text

2 John 1-13

1 The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the truth;

2 For the truth's sake which abideth in us, and it shall be with us for ever:

3 Grace, mercy, peace shall be with us, from God the Father, and from Je'-sus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

4 I rejoice greatly that I have found *certain* of thy children walking in truth, even as we received commandment from the Father.

5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

6 And this is love, that we should walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it.

7 For many deceivers are gone

forth into the world, *even* they that confess not that Je'-sus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the an'-ti-christ.

8 Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward.

9 Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son.

10 If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into *your* house, and give him no greeting:

11 For he that giveth him greeting-partaketh in his evil works.

12 Having many things to write unto you, I would not *write them* with paper and ink: but I hope to come unto you, and to speak face to face, that your joy may be made full.

13 The children of thine elect sister salute thee.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*And this is love, that we should walk after his commandments.*" (2 John 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Pet. 3: 1-6.

Daily Bible Readings

December 6.	M.	.....	New Commandment (John 13: 31-38)
December 7.	T.	.....	John, On Love (1 John 3: 13-17; 4: 7-11)
December 8.	W.	.....	Danger of Deceivers (1 Tim. 4: 1-15)
December 9.	T.	.....	"Another Doctrine" (Gal. 1: 6-17)
December 10.	F.	.....	Errorists Named and Condemned (2 Tim. 2: 14-26)
December 11.	S.	.....	Destructive Heresies (2 Pet. 2: 1-11)
December 12.	S.	.....	No Fellowship with Error (Eph. 5: 1-11)

TIME.—Probably about A.D. 90.

PLACE.—The letter was probably written in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—John, the elect lady, and her children.

Introduction

Bible students are now, and have been throughout the ages, in wide disagreement regarding both the authorship of Second John, and the identity of the addressee. It is probably safe to say that the majority of conservative Bible students regard the apostle John, the son of Zebedee, and brother of James, as being the author; and that he also wrote the other two epistles which bear the name of John, along with the Fourth Gospel and The Revelation. But it is only fair to say that there are many other students of the Scriptures, especially those who are considered liberal in their attitude toward, and their approach to, the Bible, who categorically deny that the John mentioned above wrote any of the five books just referred to. These divergent views, however, should not disturb us, at least not to any great extent; for if the question of the identity of the author had been a vital issue, he would have attached his name. The view which is adopted here is that the apostle John wrote all five of the books which bear his name.

But the question regarding the addressee is not so easily dealt with; and it also is fair to say that students of the Bible are likewise widely divided in their views regarding his issue. Guy N. Woods, after calling attention to the fact that some students of the Bible conclude that one or the other of the terms "elect" and "lady" should be regarded as a proper name, makes this observation: "Others have thought that a *church* is thus figuratively designated by the apostle, using the allegory of a woman in

keeping with the mystical use of Revelation 12. This, however, is highly improbable. To reach this conclusion, one must translate the Greek word *kuria* as 'lady,' interpret the word 'lady' as a church, and then construe the Greek word *tekna*, children, as members of the church! Only in the highly figurative portions of the scriptures is the church ever referred to as a woman; and it seems very unlikely that the apostle, in this brief treatise, should have used the word thus figuratively. Moreover, other serious difficulties in the way of such a rendering are immediately apparent. If the 'lady' was the church, who were the children of the lady addressed? The church has no existence apart from those who constitute its membership. The elect lady had a sister who also had children. (Verse 13.) On the assumption that the elect lady was the church, and her children the members of the church, who then was the sister, and what did she and her children represent? From all the facts in the case, the preponderance of evidence seems logical to lead to the conclusion that the terms under consideration are to be literally interpreted; that the elect lady was some faithful sister known to John; and that she may have borne the name Cyria. More than this it is not possible to know." (*A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude*, p. 338.)

Neither Brother Woods, nor any other thoughtful commentator, wants to be dogmatic about the identity of the elect lady; and, as had already been pointed out, there

is no way to be absolutely certain about the question. If the issue had been vital to our understanding of the subject matter of the epistle, we would have been told by the inspired writer just exactly who the "elect lady" was. However, if John was referring to a church, then the idea is that of a *congregation*, and not to the church as a whole; and in that case the "children" would be the members of the congregation—both the "lady" and the "children" being used figuratively. And, by the same token, the "sister" would be another congregation, and her children its members. Findlay thinks that the church to whom the letter now under consideration was sent, was Pergamum (*Fellowship in the Life Eternal*, p. 31); and if that is true, then the church in Ephesus, probably John's home congregation, would likely be the "elect sister," whose children saluted the former. (Cf. Gal. 4: 21-31 for a similar use of the relation of the terms women and children.)

The original word for "elect" is *eklekte*, while the Greek term for "lady" is *kuria*; and, transliterated,

the words are thought by some to be used as proper names, (1) Eclecta, (2) Cyria, or (3) Eclecta Cyria. This view, of course, is possible, but hardly probable. It seems more reasonable, as The Interpreter's Bible points out, to regard the terms as indicating a gracious personification of a particular church, especially in view of the contents of the letter in which they are found. The church of the New Testament is frequently referred to as the bride of Christ and is, in such instances, in the feminine gender, in keeping with the idea of a woman or "lady." (Cf. Eph. 5: 22-33; 2 Cor. 11: 2.) It can be seen from the two references just cited, that the application is the same, whether with reference to the church as a whole, or to a single congregation. When Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16: 18), the pronoun "it" is in the feminine gender; and the statement therefore literally says, "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against her," meaning, of course, the church.

The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is a part of the principal text, and it will be considered in its regular order.

The Text Explained

Address and Greeting

(2 John 1-3)

The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the truth; for the truth's sake which abideth in us, and it shall be with us for ever: Grace, mercy, peace shall be with us, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

The term "elder" (*presbuteros*), in and of itself, means either older in years (cf. Luke 15: 25), or an appointed officer in the church (Acts 20: 17). We have no way of knowing whether John referred to himself as one who was advanced in years, or because of his relationship to the church. Peter was an elder in the church (1 Pet. 5: 1), and it is entirely possible that John was too. Paul referred to himself as "Paul the aged" (*presbutes*, Phile. 9; Luke 1: 18; Tit. 2: 2, the only other in-

stances of the word in the New Testament). The marginal reading of Philemon 9 "an *ambassador*"; and some Bible students think that that is what Paul had reference to. (Cf. *presbeuō*, the word which Paul used to describe his apostolic work as an ambassador for Christ (Eph. 6: 20; 2 Cor. 5: 20), the only occurrences of the word in the New Testament. Robertson notes that there is no real reason why Paul should not have referred to himself as "Paul the aged," meaning one advanced in years.

The high and affectionate manner in which John addressed those to whom he wrote, is in keeping with the exalted relationship, which Christians have with Christ. They are members of his body, whether as individuals, or as a congregation. The Interpreter's Bible, in commenting on the expression "unto the elect lady and her children," asks,

Doesn't this gracious phrase rebuke the want of dignity and good taste, with which people so often speak of the church? A group of the Lord's people bound together in Christian fellowship are indeed a congregation; but they are more, as may be seen by the exalted language which inspired men applied to them, as, for example, "So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." (Eph. 2: 19.) "Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof." (1 Cor. 12: 27.) "That he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5: 27.) And then John, as he was permitted to see the Lord's people in their final glory, wrote, "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." (Rev. 21: 2; cf. 19: 6-8.)

John's entire attitude toward the elect lady and her children, is based upon the solid foundation of truth, which makes love for each other possible. As long as the truth abides in the Lord's people, they will remain loyal to each other, and to him. The elder assured those to whom he wrote of his own love for them, on the basis of truth; but he did more than that: he told them that all who knew the truth loved them too. And it should be noted that this truth shall be with the Lord's people for ever. John is about to warn his readers against false teachers; but he has no fear for the elect lady and her children, while the truth remains with them; for to be forewarned is to be forearmed. No one who loves the truth will object to having it called to his attention. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 1-5.) It is interesting to note that John says, "Grace, mercy, peace shall be *with us*, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, *in truth and love*."

The Call to the Way of Love

(2 John 4-6)

I rejoice greatly that I have found certain of thy children walking in that we should walk after his com-

mandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And, this is love, that we should walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it.

The use of italics in the American Standard Version, and some other translations, of the Bible, indicates that there is no corresponding word in the original language, for the term in question. Such a word, in some instances, is supplied, in order to complete the meaning, as the translators conceive it to be; but it sometimes happens that what they are doing, is actually adding another idea to the inspired text. (Cf. John 3: 34, King James Version; Acts 2: 41.) However, in the case now before us, it is evident that the reading of the original text makes some additional word essential, in order to make intelligible the translation in another language—in this case, the English version.

And so, instead of saying "thy children," which would have implied *all* of them, John actually said, "I rejoice greatly that I have found 'of thy children' [*ek ton tek'iden*] walking in truth." The expression "of thy children" certainly implies *some* of them, or, less than *all* of them; and it was apparently for that reason that the translators inserted the term "certain," which indicates the actual meaning, without regard to the precise number involved. Many present-day versions use the term *some*, instead of *certain*. Williams, as for example has it: "I am happy to find that some of your children are living by the truth, just as we have been commanded from the Father to do."

While John does not mention the circumstances under which he found certain of the elect lady's children walking in the truth, it is very probable that the information came to him, in somewhat the same manner as that referred to in 3 John 3, 4: "For I rejoiced greatly, when brethren came and bare witness unto thy truth, even as thou walkest in truth. Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth." We also

know that Paul evidently received information in this manner, regarding the activities of some of his disciples. (See 1 Cor. 1: 11; cf. 16: 17, 18.)

The exhortation contained in verses 5, 6, is substantially the same as that which is contained and emphasized in the apostle's first epistle. The commandment to love one another is not new, in the sense that it had not been given before; but inasmuch as all true obedience is based on love, no one can please the Lord who does not make love the ruling principle of his life. This is essential, whether with reference to those who are closest to us, in the bonds of Christian fellowship and/or family ties, or those who have remained in or who have fallen back into the clutches of sin. It is God's will that all men be saved; and he expects his people to do that which they can to bring about the salvation of the lost. This can be done, only as we endeavor to live our own lives according to the commandments of the Lord.

Warning against Error and Concluding Remarks

(2 John 7-13)

For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Look to yourselves that ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward. Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh of his evil works.

If John were living and writing in our day, he probably would employ the current terminology, to which we are accustomed; and if that were the way of it, he would likely draw the distinction between the advanced thinkers or liberals, and the conservatives, as it respects the attitude toward and the approach to the word of God. It has already been noted that only when people walk in the way of loving obedience, they

are in less danger of being led astray; or, to say the same thing in another way, people who have the proper attitude toward the Lord, and others, will themselves be more secure in the way of righteousness. The reason why this was true in John's day, and is still true now, is that many false teachers have gone out into the world.

The particular brand of false teachers referred to by John, were those who denied the New Testament teaching with reference to the Incarnation of the Word of God. The inspired record plainly says that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, which is another way of saying that the Word of God appeared in history as Jesus Christ. This, however, was denied at the time of this lesson, has been denied all through the intervening years, and is still denied by many religious teachers today. The false teachers whom John had in mind, were apparently the Gnostics; but it is interesting to note that no such unbeliever, whether Gnostic, or by whatever name he was called, denied that "Jesus" lived as a man, during the time assigned to him by history; but the Gnostics, and many other false teachers, denied that he was the Christ. That was the claim which the unbelieving Jews, during the time of Christ, made concerning him.

As John continues his warning against false teachers, he says, "Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward." This is simply another way of saying that the Lord's people should always be on the alert, keep check on themselves, that is, make an effort to see that they are taking full advantage of the blessings and opportunities which come their way. Unless we keep ourselves in the favor of the Lord, and continuously maintain the proper attitude toward him and our contemporaries, we will be in danger of losing the very thing for which we *think* we have been working. (Cf. 1 Cor. 9: 27.) Bible students, generally speaking, are not sure whether the pronoun in the expression "which we have wrought," should be "we" or "ye." (See marginal note.) Either reading, however, would set forth a true

picture of the situation, depending upon where the emphasis is placed. It is certain that John did not want his labors in their behalf to be lost; and it is just as certain that they themselves, which is also true of us, should make every effort to conserve the fruits of their own labors. (Cf. Phil. 3: 12.) A full reward can be had, only when one has done his best.

It is not enough, however, for one to keep an eye on himself; he must also examine those who profess to be teachers of the word of God. (Cf. 1 John 4: 1-6; Acts 17: 10-12.) The first passage just cited shows *what* is to be done by God's people, along with the results which will follow; while the second shows *how* one should go about testing professed teachers. While John evidently had the Gnostics in mind, his word "whosoever" includes any false teacher, in any age of the world. We are not troubled with Gnostics today, but there are many teachers who advance beyond the limits of the doctrine of Christ; and they are the ones about whom we should be concerned.

The only way in which one may be sure that he does not go beyond that which Christ teaches, is to make certain that he says, and does, only those things which have been authorized by Christ and his inspired teachers. Jesus, for example, says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day [that is, the judgment day,] Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7: 21-23.) The term "iniquity" describes "the condition of one without law [cf. 1 John 3: 4, where the same original word occurs]—either because ignorant of it, or because violating it." (Thayer; cf. Luke 12: 47, 48.)

Thus, when Jesus says at the judgment day, "I never *knew* you," he will be saying, in effect, "I never recognized you, or authorized that which you did; for you did not act

in harmony with the will of my Father." When people permit false teachers to lead them astray, they must, of course, share in the false teacher's fate. (Cf. Matt. 15: 13, 14.) Therefore, if a false teacher goes beyond the teaching of Christ in presenting the plan of salvation, for example, he will be condemned for his action; and all who accept his teaching must likewise suffer. It is well to note that it is just as fatal for one to stop short of the Lord's teaching, as it is to go beyond it; for in either case he would "miss the mark," which is one of Paul's ways of describing sin. (Cf. 1 Tim. 6: 21, marginal note; Gal. 1: 6-9; Rev. 22: 18, 19.)

Jesus, in what was his final public discourse before going to the cross, 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.) Is it any wonder, therefore, that John says, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son?"

We usually think of "going onward" as making progress, and that is usually the case; but when people presume to go beyond the bounds of New Testament teaching, they are ignoring the will of the Father; and no one can abide in that realm and live. No responsible teacher can afford to neglect, or to transgress, that which has been divinely revealed. (Cf. Heb. 2: 1-3; James 2: 10; 4: 17.) Unauthorized progression and retrogression are alike unacceptable to the Lord; for he will not tolerate any change whatsoever in his revealed will. (Read again Gal. 1: 6-10.)

Any responsible person therefore who shows any sympathy for erroneous teaching, will himself be identified with the false teacher; and he must, as a result, suffer the consequences which such teachers

must endure. Living Letters—The Paraphrased Epistles renders verses 10 and 11 in these words: "If any one comes to teach you, and he doesn't believe what Christ taught, don't even invite him into your home. Don't encourage him in any way. If you do, you will be a partner with him in his wickedness."

It is probably true that the "greeting" of John's day involved more than a simple "Good day"; but the whole idea seems to be that faithful Christians must not, under any circumstances, leave the impression that they endorse, or in any way encourage, erroneous teaching. There does not appear to be any prohibition to ordinary kindness and hospitality, so long as they can be shown without leaving the impression that sympathy is being shown for the error involved.

Having many things to write unto you, I would not write them with paper and ink; but I hope to come unto you, and speak face to face, that your joy may be made full. The children of thine elect sister salute thee.

The Interpreter's Bible thinks that John knew when to close a letter. His purpose had been accomplished: he had encouraged his readers to follow the truth, walk in love, and abide in the doctrine of Christ; and he had also pointed out to them the consequences of encouraging false teachers and erroneous doctrines. There were other things about which the apostle would like to write; but he preferred to communicate with his friends and brethren in person.

If the original term for "elect" in verse 1 indicated a proper name, transliterated *Eclecte*, the same reason would demand that the "elect sister" of verse 13 also be the sister's proper name; and if this were true, both sisters would have the same name—*Eclecte*! This is another reason why some think that both women represented congregations, possibly Pergamum and Ephesus; while the children referred to in verses 1 and 13 were the members of the respective churches. Both women and children, according to this view, are used figuratively, as indicated earlier in this lesson.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

How does the author of the letter we are studying today refer to himself?
What was probably the author's name and to whom did he apparently send the letter?
How important is the answer to these questions to our understanding the contents of the epistle?
Why is the church of the Lord so often referred to in the feminine gender?

Address and Greeting

What is the meaning and significance of the term "elder" as used in the New Testament?
What lesson should we get from the high and affectionate manner in which John addressed his readers?
What are some of the ways in which the New Testament writers refer to the Lord's people?
Upon what did John base his attitude toward the elect lady and her children?
Why is the truth so vital to the Lord's people?
What, then, should be the attitude of professed followers of Christ toward the efforts to get the truth before them?
But what is often the case in this respect?

The Call to the Way of Love

What is the meaning and significance of italics in the Scriptures used in these studies?
What, then, was John actually saying about the elect lady's children?
How did the apostle probably learn about that condition?
What exhortation did John express in the letter now before us?
What was the nature of the commandment and why is it so important to the Lord's people?
How can we know just what it means to love?

Warning against Error and Concluding Remarks

How would John likely express himself, if he were writing at the present time?
Into what "camps" are many of the teachers of our day divided?
What is the best possible way for one to make certain that he is not led astray?
How many people know that they are actually obeying the Lord?
What was the false teaching against which John was warning his readers?
Who are the principal false teachers of our day?
What has been the usual attitude which they manifest toward the Lord Jesus Christ?
What warning did John give his readers in verse 8?
In what way is the same principle applicable to us?

What should be the attitude of the people toward the teachers who propose to teach them?
 How alone may one be certain that he is abiding in the teaching of Christ?
 What has the Lord Jesus Christ himself

said about this question?
 How should the Lord's people regard and treat false teachers who come their way?
 Why did John write such a short letter to the elect lady?

Lesson XII—December 19, 1971

JOHN WRITES TO HIS FRIEND GAIUS

Lesson Text

3 John 1-12

1 The elder unto Ga'-ius the beloved, whom I love in truth.

2 Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

3 For I rejoiced greatly, when brethren came and bare witness unto thy truth, even as thou walkest in truth.

4 Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

5 Beloved, thou doest a faithful work in whatsoever thou doest toward them that are brethren and strangers withal;

6 Who bare witness to thy love before the church: whom thou wilt do well to set forward on their journey worthily of God:

7 Because that for the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing of the Gen'-tiles.

8 We therefore ought to welcome such, that we may be fellow-workers for the truth.

9 I wrote somewhat unto the church: but Di-6t'-re-phes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

10 Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he forbiddeth and casteth *them* out of the church.

11 Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

12 De-me'-tri-us hath the witness of all *men*, and of the truth itself: yea, we also bear witness; and thou knowest that our witness is true.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good.*" (3 John 11.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—3 John 13, 14.

Daily Bible Readings

December 13.	M.	.....	Gaius, The Beloved (3 John 1-5)
December 14.	T.	.....	Gaius, the Faithful (3 John 5-8)
December 15.	W.	.....	Diotrephes, a Wicked Man (3 John 9, 10)
December 16.	T.	.....	Demetrius, a Good Man (3 John 11, 12)
December 17.	F.	.....	Warmth of Friendship (3 John 13, 14)
December 18.	S.	.....	Doing Good unto All (Gal. 6: 1-10)
December 19.	S.	.....	Showing Hospitality (Heb. 13: 1-3)

TIME.—Probably about A.D. 90.

PLACE.—The letter was probably written in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—John, Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius.

Introduction

There are four letters in the New Testament which do not have chapter divisions, namely, Philemon, Second and Third John, and Jude. The last epistle was a general letter, and it is probable that Second John was written to an entire congrega-

tion; but it is practically certain that Philemon and Third John were addressed to individuals. In other words, they were both purely personal communications; and they are the only such letters which are contained in the New Testament collec-

tion. William Barclay calls attention to the fact that behind Third John is one of the most interesting and important situations to be found in the New Testament period. This is to say that there were two kinds of ministry in the early church. (1) There was the *settled* ministry, or, which is the same thing, the ministry of the local congregation, involving, as it did, elders, deacons, and sometimes a gospel preacher, such as Timothy and Titus. (Cf. Phil. 1: 1; 1 Tim. 1: 3, 4; Tit. 1: 5ff.) This kind of ministry did its work in one place, and within one congregation, pretty much as such work is carried on today. (2) But there was also an *itinerant* ministry, involving such men as the apostles and prophets, whose work was not confined to one congregation. They operated on a much wider base, and exercised a universal authority. More will be said about these two types of ministry, as the lesson progresses.

The apostle John, as we shall see in this study, had a definite reason for writing to Gaius; or, at least, he said some things which needed to be brought to his attention, as well as to the attention of some of the other brethren, who were in the congregation with Gaius. Professor M. B. Riddle, in his Introduction to John's third epistle, says, "This letter and the second also are of great historical value, revealing as they do the inner life of the Christian communities of Asia Minor at the close of the first century. There are evidences of speculative error, personal ambition, occasional insubordination to apostolic authority, and of an opposition on the part of local leaders to travelling evangelists. The recently-recovered 'Teaching of the Twelve Apostles' shows a similar state of things." And to this we

might add a similar statement from The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: "This epistle presents one of the most vivid glimpses in the New Testament of a church in the first century. The characters, Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius, are sketched with bold strokes of the apostle's pen. Characteristics of church life are also clearly seen in the epistle. The independence of the believers is outstanding, and their personalities, as well as their doctrinal problems, are patent. This brief and very personal letter shatters the notion that the state of things was ideal, or nearly so, in the first century. Contrariwise, it reveals the problems of a vigorously growing faith."

It has already been indicated that the letter which we are to study today, was a private communication; and that it was sent from one individual to another. There is no reason to think that John intended it for publication for public consumption; but, in the providence of God, that is exactly what did take place, at a later date. Any private or personal letter, of course, usually implies situations which are known to the writer, and the person or persons to whom he wrote, but which are not always known to others, and especially those who are far removed, both in time and space, from those who were directly involved. But we should not overlook the fact that personal letters are very important, as sources of information, and as historical documents, especially for the time and place from which they came. Indeed, we are told by eminent scholars that "there are no better sources known to the historian." We should therefore be grateful for these letters, and for the opportunity of studying them; for they are indeed a part of God's inspired revelation to us.

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

Address and a Prayer for the Reader's Prosperity

(3 John 1-4)

The elder unto Gaius the beloved, whom I love in truth.

There can be but little doubt re-

garding the identity of the writer of this epistle: he apparently is the same "elder" who wrote the letter which we studied last week, and that means that he was evidently the beloved apostle John, the

brother of James, and the son of Zebedee. It is the thinking of many-Bible students that his mother, who apparently was Salome (cf. Matt. 27: 55, 56; Mark 15: 40, 41; John 19: 25), was the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus; and if that was true, then Jesus and John were first cousins; and that may account for the Lord's selecting John to care for his mother, after his death on the cross (John 19: 26, 27), instead of committing her to the care of one of her own sons, who did not believe in Jesus (John 7: 1-5). John was probably about ninety years old when he wrote his three epistles; and he was indeed an elder in years, and may also have been an elder in the Lord's church. But whatever may have been his status in that respect, there can be no doubt about his being grounded in the truth.

The name "Gaius" occurs several times in the New Testament (Acts 19: 29; 20: 4; Rom. 16: 23; 1 Cor. 1: 14, in addition to 3 John 1), and it is possible that some of the passages may refer to the same person; but, as The New Bible Dictionary notes, they may very well represent different men who had the same name. It seems reasonable to conclude, from this section of the lesson text, that the Gaius of this lesson was converted by John. The basis for the apostle's love for him was the truth; and that apparently means about the same thing that Paul had in mind, when he referred to some of his disciples as his children in the faith (1 Tim. 1: 2; Tit. 1: 4); and it is easy to see from such scriptures as Acts 6: 7 and Ephesians 1: 13, that the faith, the gospel, and, the truth, are used interchangeably.

Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoice greatly, when brethren came and bare witness unto thy truth, even as thou walkest in truth. Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

It is very probable that Gaius was an influential member of one of the churches in Asia Minor; and that he took particular interest in the over-all work of the Lord in that area. He apparently was using his

"health" and his "means," or, which is the same thing, all of his talents or the abilities and resources with which he was blessed, in the service of Christ. And it was for that reason that John prayed for his continued physical health and his material prosperity, in keeping with the prosperity of his soul. The portion of the lesson text just quoted, is rendered by Barclay in these words: "My dear friend, it is my prayer that everything is going well with you, and that you are in good health. I know that it goes well with you soul. It made me very happy, when some of our fellow-Christians came and told me of your devotion to the truth. I am well aware that you make the truth the rule of your life. Nothing gives me greater pleasure than to know that my children are making the truth the rule of their lives."

Those who are familiar with the teaching of the Bible, are aware of the fact that the term "soul" is used in various senses in the Scriptures. Vincent defines the word in this way: "The *soul (psuche)* is the principle of individuality, the seat of personal impressions. It has a side in contact with both the material and the spiritual element of humanity, and is thus the mediating organ between body and spirit. [Cf. 1 Thess. 5: 23; James 2: 26.] Its meaning therefore constantly rises above *life* or the *living individual*, and takes color from its relation to either the emotional or the spiritual side of life, from the fact of its being the seat of the feelings, desires, affections, aversions, and the bearer and manifestor of the divine life-principle (*pneuma*). Consequently *psuche* is often used in our sense of *heart* (Luke 1: 46; 2: 35; John 10: 24; Acts 14: 2); and the meaning of *psuche* *soul*, and *pneuma* *spirit*, occasionally approach each other very closely. Compare John 12: 27, and 11: 33; Matthew 11: 29, and 1 Corinthians 16: 18. Also both words in Luke 1: 47. In this passage *psuche* *soul*, expresses the soul regarded as a moral being designed for everlasting life. (See Heb. 6: 19; 10: 39; 13: 17; 1 Pet. 2: 11; 4: 19.) John commonly uses the word to denote the principle of the natural life. (See John 10: 11, 15; 13: 37;

15: 13; 1 John 3: 16; Rev. 8: 9; 12: 11; 16: 3.)"

When people manifest the proper attitude toward the Lord, and keep their soul (heart) with all diligence; it is always in order that interested brethren pray that they may have the necessary health and means to accomplish their soul's desire in the work of the Lord. The good report which some of the brethren brought to John regarding Gaius, caused the old man to rejoice greatly, and to be thankful that his child was walking in the truth, along with others in the same relationship.

Gaius and the Itinerant Missionaries
(3 John 5-8)

Beloved, thou doest a faithful work in whatsoever thou doest toward them that are brethren and strangers withal: who bare witness to thy love before the church: whom thou wilt do well to set forward on their journey worthily of God: because that for the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to welcome such, that we may be fellow-workers for the truth.

Some Bible students regard the pronoun "I," in the expression "whom I love in truth" (verse 1), as being emphatic; and if this is true, the implication is that there were some who did not love Gaius, and were opposed to the work which he was doing, and for which John commended him. The general tone of the letter seems to confirm this view. This section of the lesson text is translated by Phillips in these words: "You are doing a fine piece of work, dear friend, in looking after the brothers who come your way, especially as you have never seen them before. They have testified to your love before the church. It is a fine thing to help them on their way—it shows you realize the importance of what they are doing. They set out on this work, as you know, for the sake of 'the name' and they accepted no help from non-Christians. We ought to give such men a real welcome and prove that we too are cooperating with the truth."

This commendation by John makes us think of a similar one by

Paul, also rendered by Phillips in this way: "Since, then, I have heard of this faith of yours in the Lord Jesus and the practical way in which you are expressing it toward fellow Christians, I thank God continually for you and I never give up praying for you." (Eph. 1: 15, 16.) G. G. Findlay (*Fellowship in the Life Eternal*) thinks that Gaius may have been the one link which held the congregation, in which he had membership, to the other faithful churches in that area of the country. It often happens that such is the case, even in this age of the world. The devotion to the cause of Christ, by even one faithful brother or sister, may stimulate others to greater loyalty to the Lord. The reason which the itinerant preachers, referred to in this section of the lesson text, took nothing of the Gentiles, that is, of non-Christians, to whom they preached, was doubtless to keep the latter from misconstruing their motives. Or, to say the same thing in another way, the preachers wanted the people out of the Lord to understand that they were seeking them, rather than their possessions. This was also the plan which Paul adhered to, during his ministry among the Gentiles.

Although the words of this section of the lesson text was originally addressed to Gaius, there is, as The Interpreter's Bible points out, a valuable lesson for every member of the church today, namely, that of supporting the mission work of the church; and no congregation of the Lord's people can be what it should be, without being missionary-minded. The true mission of the church is to make an effort to reach the lost with the gospel of Christ; and that generally involves that which we have come to think of as mission work. A missionary is one who goes, or is sent, on a mission, usually outside the membership of the church of which he (or she) is a member, in an effort to bring the lost to Christ; and the field in which he labors may be his own home land, or in some foreign country. The missionary's brethren should give him whatsoever support he needs, to the extent of their ability and opportunity; and if a given worker in the mission field does not need material support, then the

brethren at the home base should turn their attention to a missionary who does need, and will gladly accept, their help. There will never be too many faithful workers in the mission field. (Cf. Matt. 9: 35-38; John 4: 35-38.)

Apostolic Reproof and
Commendation
(3 John 9-12)

I wrote somewhat unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he forbiddeth and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: he that doeth evil hath not seen God. Demetrius hath the witness of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, we also bear witness; and thou knowest that our witness is true.

Whatever may have been his official position in the church, Diotrephes assumed the part of a dictator. One would naturally gather from John's words regarding him, that he was one of the elders of the congregation. Nothing is said regarding any official position which Gaius may have occupied in the church: he may or may not have been a fellow-elder with Diotrephes; but there is one thing of which we may be certain, namely, their characters were the exact opposite. Diotrephes, it appears, made every effort to counteract the good work, which Gaius and others were endeavoring to do.

When Paul wrote to Titus regarding the qualifications of elders, he said that the bishop must not be self-willed. (Tit. 1: 7.) The self-willed man seeks to have his own way, regardless of the will of God, and the wishes of his fellow-elders and the congregation itself. Such a spirit will often lead its possessor into vicious interpretations of the Scriptures, in an effort to justify his course, and to accomplish his purpose. Instead of gently caring for the weakest of the church, like a good shepherd would do, an elder of

this stripe lays the foundation for, if he does not actually bring about, a split in the body of Christ; all because of his determination to have his own way. And, too, such a person does not hesitate to blame some one else for the result of his ungodly conduct.

The statement "I wrote somewhat unto the church" does not tell us *what* letter John was referring to; but it is evident that the communication was with reference to the itinerant preachers, and was addressed to the church of which Gaius and Diotrephes were members. It is, indeed, quite probable that it was a letter of introduction which preceded the visiting missionaries, or one which they themselves carried from John to the church in question. If the letter ever reached the congregation itself, it is certain that the brethren had no chance to receive the visiting brethren; for Diotrephes took it upon himself to see that that did not happen. The result was a clear confrontation between an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of the church (Eph. 1: 22, 23), and a dictator in one of the congregations, who resented the authority of John and flatly refused to receive his message and the visiting preachers.

The trouble with Diotrephes was that he wanted to have the preeminence. John, in view of his earlier experience with Jesus (Matt. 20: 20-28), probably well understood the motive which actuated Diotrephes; but it is exceedingly unfortunate that the spirit which characterized the latter, did not die with him. A. T. Robertson, in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, says, "Some forty years ago I wrote an article on Diotrephes for a denominational paper. The editor told me that twenty-five deacons stopped the paper to show their resentment against being personally attacked in the paper." The three sins which John charged Diotrephes with, were (1) his love for the preeminence; (2) his refusal to give heed to an apostle of Christ (cf. Luke 10: 16); and (3) he turned the church into an opponent of the gospel, by casting the missionary-minded brethren out of its fellowship. Russell Bradley Jones, in commenting on this, says, "All this adds up to a sin of

terrific proportions. When one gets in the way of the progress of the gospel, he commits a crime against Christ, against the Word of truth, against his servants, against the eternal welfare of immortal souls, against himself, against all that is high and holy. No wonder John describes Diotrophes as one who prates with malicious words. What a warning to us! Non-participation in the spread of the gospel marks us as of the tribe of Diotrophes!"

The Speaker's Bible, in speaking of the desire to dominate, notes that in the life of the church there is a great deal of work to be done behind the scenes, which can seldom ever be recognized publicly; and there are always some elect souls who are willing to undertake this work, and who neither expect nor desire the praise of men. But there are others who are hurt, if their efforts are not publicly praised, and who will do only that work which will bring them into prominence, so that they may be seen and heard of men. And still worse, there are churches which are afflicted with members who, by reason of their wealth, social influence, et cetera, claim the right to dictate the policy of the church, and to dominate its activity. Here and there, men possessed of such gifts, ascend naturally, by virtue of their dedication to the Lord, to the place of preeminence, and occupy it with ease to the great advantage of the congregation. But in other instances, those who aspire to and claim the preeminent place, do not possess sufficient weight of character to sustain the position in which they thrust themselves. It is people of this stripe who call to mind the words of Bishop Blougram:

There's power in me and will to dominate

Which I must exercise, they hurt me else:

In many ways I need mankind's respect,

Obedience, and the love that's born of fear.

Not only did Diotrophes refuse to receive the brethren whom John recommended: he even forbade them who wanted to welcome them, and cast them out of the church. Some may wonder why a congregation would permit a man to mani-

fest such an attitude, and to act so wickedly; but there are scores of others who will testify to the fact, that such is often the case. Diotrophes did not content himself with merely talking—"prating against us with wicked words"; he acted in character, as the remainder of the verse shows. The original word for "parting" (*phluareo*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; and it means, according to Thayer, Arndt-Gingrich, et al, to utter nonsense, to bring idle or unjustified charges, to accuse one falsely with malicious words. (Cf. 1 Tim. 5: 13, where the kindred word for "tattlers"—*phluaroi*—is found, also nowhere else in the New Testament.) John threatened Diotrophes with the same type of treatment, which Paul said that he would give to the rebellious Corinthians. (See 2 Cor. 13: 1-3.) We have no way of knowing how many clashes occurred between the apostles and "puffed up" church leaders; but the two just cited are sufficient to show that such problems were present in the early church; and we know that the same situation, in principle, is seen today: that is, when so-called elders are determined to have their own way.

The apostle John, before referring to Demetrius, exhorts Gaius imitate the good, rather than the evil; and thereby please God and avoid being like Diotrophes. In other words, John's idea seems to be something like this: God's people must be like their Father; and in order to do this, they must make every effort to follow the good. This, of course, requires that they not permit evil-doers to influence their conduct. As a practical example of what it means to avoid evil and do good, read Romans 12: 17-21.

The peculiar manner in which John commends Demetrius, has led some Bible students to think that he was the possible bearer of the letter which Diotrophes refused to accept. It is also possible that he could have been one of the itinerant missionaries, as already indicated. The apostle's testimony regarding Demetrius is threefold, namely, (1) he "hath the witness of all men." The italicized "men" indicates that there is no original word for that term; and the idea may mean that Deme-

trius had the testimony of the entire church, probably Ephesus, John's home congregation. (2) "Of the truth itself," which was indicative of his Christian character; for the truth would never bear testimony to the character of a person, who was not living as he should. (3)

"We also bear witness," that is John himself. Robertson calls the "we" a literary plural, and he quotes Westcott as saying, "The words of John 21: 24 sound like an echo of this sentence." The character of Demetrius is placed in direct contrast with that of Diotrephes.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What are the New Testament letters which do not have chapter divisions?
In what respect are the epistles of Philemon and Third John alike?
What are some of the prominent features of Third John?
What two specific types of ministry characterized the early church?
What appears to have been John's purpose in writing his third letter?
Why are his second and third epistles so valuable to students of the Scriptures?
Who are the principal characters whom John refers to in his third letter?
What is usually the nature of private letters and why are they so valuable to the students of history?

Address and a Prayer for the Reader's Prosperity

What reason can you give for thinking that the apostle John wrote this letter?
How old does it appear that John was when he wrote his three epistles?
What appears to have been the relationship between John and Gaius?
Why was the apostle's love so great for him?
How are the expressions "the faith," "the gospel," and "the truth" related in the New Testament? Give reasons for your answer.
What appears to have been the standing

of Gaius among the churches of Asia Minor?
What was the nature of the prayer which John offered for him?
Why is such a prayer appropriate for any dedicated child of God?
What is meant by the term "soul," as used in this lesson?
What was the reaction of John to the faithfulness of Gaius?

Gaius and the Itinerant Missionaries

What appears to be the significance and force of the pronoun "I" in verse 1?
What did John think of the work which Gaius was doing?
What should always be our attitude toward faithful members of the church in similar situations?
Why were the travelling-missionaries in need of support from the churches?
Why did they decline to accept anything from the Gentiles?
In what way does the same principle apply in our day?
What important lesson should we learn from the incident now before us?

Apostolic Reproof and Commendation

What appears to have been the character of Diotrephes?
Why would a professed leader in the church manifest such an attitude and do such wicked things?
What does the New Testament teach regarding such situations?
What was Diotrephes' principal trouble?
What did he actually do?
What did John say regarding Demetrius?

Lesson XIII—December 26, 1971

DIVINE WARNINGS AGAINST UNGODLINESS

Lesson Text

Jude 3-11

3 Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.

4 For there are certain men crept in privily, *even* they who were of old written of beforehand unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Je'-sus Christ.

5 Now I desire to put you in remembrance, though ye know all things once for all, that the Lord, having saved a people out of the land of E'-gypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

6 And angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

7 Even as Sod'-om and Go-mor'-

rah, and the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over to fornication and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire.

8 Yet in like manner these also in their dreamings defile the flesh, and set at nought dominion, and rail at dignities.

9 But Mi'-cha-el the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Mo'-ses, durst not bring against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

10 But these rail at whatsoever things they know not: and what they understand naturally, like the creatures without reason, in these things are they destroyed.

11 Woe unto them! for they went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Ba'-laam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Ko'-rah.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.*" (Jude 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Jude 12-25.

Daily Bible Readings

December 20.	M.	Jude, Servant of Jesus Christ (Jude 1, 2)
December 21.	T.	A Valuable Servant (Luke 12: 45-48)
December 22.	W.	Servants of Righteousness (Rom. 6: 17, 18)
December 23.	T.	Warning of Evil Men (Jude 8-16)
December 24.	F.	No Pleasure in Death of Wicked (Ezek. 33: 7-20)
December 25.	S.	Destruction of Wicked (Matt. 25: 31-46)
December 26.	S.	Sin's Entanglement (2 Pet. 2: 12-22)

TIME.—Probably between A. D. 65 and 70.

PLACE.—The place of writing is unknown.

PERSONS.—Jude and Christians.

Introduction

The Epistle of Jude is the last of the seven letters of the New Testament, which are usually referred to as the general or catholic epistles. The term "catholic" is used in the sense of general, and should always begin with a small "c," except when, for grammatical reasons, a capital "C" is preferable. The reason for employing the term "general" or "catholic," when referring to these

epistles, is due to the fact that they are not addressed to any particular congregation or individual, with the exception of Second and Third John, as may be seen by reading the opening words of each of them. First John is a general epistle, if indeed it is actually a letter: it is more like a printed sermon or tract. It appears that Second and Third John were placed after 1 John, since they all

were written by the same author; and in that way the second and third letters of John became a part of that group of letters, known as the seven "general epistles."

If Jude wrote his epistle within the period indicated, that is, between the years of A.D. 65 and 70, he must have been somewhat familiar with the early phases of that subtle philosophy, which was the forerunner of what later became known as Gnosticism. Paul wrote a letter to the Colossians, in which he discussed the initial phase of that false teaching, which came to be known as the *Colossian Heresy*. One of the tenets of the vicious system held that since the body is essentially evil, and its deeds were not to be accounted for, license therefore was to be granted for evil conduct; so that sinful passions were indulged at pleasure and with impunity. (Cf. Col. 3: 5-10.) Licentiousness and ungodly immorality therefore became rampant, even in the days of Paul and Jude; and it was against these unrestrained vices that Jude turned his attention in his brief, but trenchant, epistle. When Gnosticism finally resulted

from the earlier false teaching, the leaders of that antichristian movement still insisted that sin does not matter, and did not hesitate to twist the grace of God into an excuse for wrongdoing. (Cf. Rom. 6: 1, 2.)

Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, about the same time that Jude penned his epistle; and it was in that letter that the apostle to the Gentiles said, "But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof: from these also turn away." (2 Tim. 3: 1-5.) This was the kind of background against which Jude wrote; and the picture which he paints should give us some idea of the desperate effort which Satan is making to win as many people away from the Lord as possible. (Cf. 2 Pet. 2: 1ff; 1 Pet. 5: 8, 9.)

The Golden Text

"Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James." The name "Jude" is a contraction of *Judas*. Judas of the New Testament and Judah of the Old Testament have the same meaning. The names Jude, Judas, and Judah, in the New Testament, are all from the same original root. The name "Judas" was common among the Jews, during the time of Christ and the early church; as, for example, Judas Iscariot (Matt. 10: 4); Judas the son of James (Luke 6: 16); Judas of Galilee (Acts 5: 37); Judas of Damascus (Acts 9: 11); Judas called Barsabbas (Acts 15: 22); and Judas the Lord's brother (Matt. 13: 55). We do not know just how long it was after Judas Iscariot committed his infamous crime of betraying Christ, before people ceased to give the name Judas to their children; but it is certain that no believer in the Lord Jesus Christ today, would think of giving that name to his child. One may well wonder if Jude used the abbreviated form of

the name, in order to dissociate himself from the traitor.

Jude calls himself the brother of James, but he does not indicate which James he has in mind. There were several disciples of Christ, or among those associated with the Lord, whose name was James; but there is only one who was sufficiently outstanding among the early followers of the Lord, to be called *James*, with no further word to indicate his personal identity, namely, James the Lord's brother. (Cf. Acts 21: 17, 18; 15: 13f; Gal. 1: 19; 2: 9, 12.) Furthermore, we learn from Matthew that Jesus did indeed have two brothers, that is half-brothers, called James and Judas. (Matt. 13: 55.) The fact that Jude does not make any reference to his family relationship to Jesus, may be explained on the theory that natural relationship was, in his mind, subordinate to the spiritual. (Cf. Luke 11: 27, 28.)

When one considers all the facts in the case, it appears reasonable to suppose that Jude would shrink, as

did his brother James (James 1: 1), from emphasizing a distinctive relationship with the Son of God, which not even the apostles themselves could claim; and especially in view of his former attitude toward Jesus. (Cf. John 7: 5.) Jude's mention of his natural relationship to James, was probably made because the latter was both well and favorably known; and that fact would be

helpful to Jude in getting his message before the people; or, to say the same thing in another way, it would give him great prestige among potential readers of his letter. When we consider that which the New Testament says about James the Lord's brother, it can easily be seen that he became one of the most influential men in the Jerusalem church of his day.

The Text Explained

The Occasion Which Prompted the Epistle

(Jude 3, 4)

Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old written of beforehand unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

It is easy to see, from verse 3, that Jude had been diligently preparing to write a somewhat formal treatise, on a subject which was of common interest to all of his prospective readers, namely, the salvation which had been provided through Christ. But before Jude had the opportunity to finish that worthy undertaking, a situation arose which made it imperative that he issue a severe warning, and urge the brethren to contend for the faith, that is, for the gospel, in the face of certain insidious assaults, which were being made upon it. It sometimes happens that even the best of people make plans of noble intentions, only to learn that they will have to be changed. The apostle Paul, like Jude, was an inspired man, and wrote and acted under the supervision of the Holy Spirit; and that was his experience on at least one occasion. (See Acts 16: 6-10.)

We do not know whether or not Jude was ever permitted to complete his treatise on our common salvation; but we do know that he wrote the letter from which our lesson text for today is taken. In the expression "I was constrained," the

latter term literally means, "I was under compulsion," or "I was put to the necessity." The New English Bible renders this section of the lesson text in these words: "My friends, I was fully engaged in writing to you about our salvation—which is yours no less than ours—when it became urgently necessary to write at once and appeal to you to join the struggle in defence of the faith, the faith which God entrusted to his people once and for all. It is in danger from certain persons who have wormed their way in, the very men whom Scripture long ago marked down for the doom they have incurred. They are the enemies of religion; they pervert the free favour of our God into licentiousness, disowning Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord."

The same situation which is described by Jude, is still present in our day; and it is doubtful if there has ever been a time since the days of inspiration, which has been free from this moral and spiritual blight. Opponents of the truth have made it their business to "worm" themselves into the midst of God's people; and that means that those who are loyal to him must never relax in their efforts to preserve the faith, or, the gospel of Christ. (Cf. Acts 6: 7; Gal. 3: 23; 2: 3-5.) The original word for "contend earnestly" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; and its literal meaning is to fight for, involving "a vigorous, intense, determined struggle to defeat the opposition." (Wuest; cf. Phil. 1: 27.) The faith of the gospel must be preserved; for no other revelation will be given. This is a strong motive for resisting all the enemies of the Lord's purpose and plan for his people.

We are not specifically told who

the "certain men" were, to whom Jude referred; but it is reasonable to suppose that they were the same, as those who were described by Peter: "But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that brought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose sentence now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not." (2 Pet. 2: 1-3; cf. Acts 20: 28-30; Gal. 2: 4, 5.) Any careful observer today is aware of the fact, that many professed preachers of the gospel, both those to the right (the so-called "antis") and those to the left (the "liberals") of the center of truth, are doing untold damage to the cause of truth and righteousness; and diligence on the part of the faithful is required, if their assaults are to be checked and neutralized.

The conditions which were described by Jude and other New Testament writers, is enough to show the urgency of the situation, and why Jude altered his plan. The obnoxious people to whom reference is made, had sneaked in, or slipped in by stealth, instead of letting their real purpose be known. They had come in, as it were, by the side door. This is the way in which false teaching gets its start with unsuspecting people; but the eternal punishment of such characters, will not be turned aside. The fact that the things which Jude is discussing had been foretold by the Scriptures, shows something of the character of God as the punisher of sin. He has made plain his attitude regarding such vicious people; and has made certain that their punishment will be in keeping with their sin. Such people therefore are to be sternly opposed by the faithful; rather than to be feared. They may seem dangerous, but they cannot succeed against Almighty God. The reference to "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness" was probably to the vicious teaching of anti-

nomianism, which held that since the gospel had released them from the law, they were at liberty to give free reins to their fleshly desires and passions. (Cf. 1 Cor. 6: 12-20; Rev. 2: 20-23.)

History's Warning to the Ungodly (Jude 5-7)

Now I desire to put you in remembrance, though ye know all things once for all, that the Lord, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over to fornication and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire.

The three cases which are cited in this section of the lesson text, those of the people who came out of Egypt, the angels who gave themselves over to sin, and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the surrounding cities, are intended to illustrate the impending judgment, which is hanging over the ungodly people of the Christian dispensation. (Cf. Jude 4.) When Jude says that they "knew all things once for all," he doubtlessly had in mind the things which they had previously learned, and about which there was no doubt. It was his purpose therefore to refresh their memory, regarding these unmistakable scriptural examples. God demonstrated his mercy in delivering the Israelites from Egyptian bondage; but that was no guarantee that they would, for all time to come, remain in his favor. Any one who is familiar with the Old Testament history, is aware of the fact that all the men, with two exceptions, were destroyed in the wilderness, because of their unfaithfulness. (Cf. Num. 14: 26-38; Heb. 3: 7-4: 2.)

The apostle Peter, in speaking of the destiny of the wicked angels, says: "For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved

unto judgment; . . ." (2 Pet. 2: 4.) Even angels themselves, while pure and holy at first, cannot remain in God's favor, without being faithful to him. Their own "principality" has reference to the domain or sphere of influence, of the angels; while their proper "habitation" was their place of dwelling. The angels we are now considering were at first in God's favor, and had received their regularly ordained assignments; but when they rebelled against God, they were cast into pits of darkness to await the judgment of the great day; because they failed to keep themselves within the sphere of influence, to which they had been assigned, and to abide within the dwelling-place, which had been divinely ordained for them. This is even a more striking example of the possibility of apostasy, than those involving human beings.

The historical account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is found in Genesis 19, while two of the "cities about them," Admah and Zeboiim, are mentioned in Deuteronomy 29: 23. (Cf. Hos. 11: 8.) The two specific sins which were charged against those wicked cities, were fornication and going after strange flesh, the latter being what is today known as "sodomy," that is, carnal copulation, which is both unnatural and forbidden. (Cf. Lev. 18: 22, 23; Gen. 19: 1-5; Rom. 1: 26, 27.) Jude says that the punishment of these wicked cities is laid out in plain view, and held up as a warning of the eternal destruction of the unrighteous in hell fire. It is remarkable, in the light of Jude's testimony here, how any thoughtful person can doubt the possibility of one's falling away from God's favor, to the extent of being forever lost. It appears certain that no one but those who are blinded by a false theory, can doubt that the Scriptures clearly teach such a possibility. (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 5-11; 2: 20-22.)

The Arrogance of the Wicked (Jude 8-11)

Yet in like manner these also in their dreamings defile the flesh, and set at nought dominion, and rail at dignities. But Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of

Moses, durst not bring against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. But these rail at whatsoever things they know not: and what they understand naturally, like the creatures without reason, in these things are they destroyed. Woe unto them! for they went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah.

The expression "yet in like manner" implies a connection between this section of the lesson text, and the preceding one, especially verse 7. Jude, in verses 5-7 shows how punishment follows a departure from the Lord's favor; but those examples which the writer cites, did not have any restraining effect on the sinners of his day. He makes it crystal clear that the sinners against whom he was writing persisted in their vile deeds, notwithstanding the unmistakable evidence that their sins would be punished. Verse 7 mentions by name the vicious sins, which the people of the cities of the plain committed; but the terrible example of their punishment did not deter the libertines of Jude's day. (Read again 1 Cor. 6: 12-20; cf. Rev. 2: 14, 15, 20-24.)

The dreamy state of the people about whom John wrote, led them into three deadly sins, namely, (1) the defiling of the flesh; (2) the setting at nought of dominion; and (3) the railing at dignities. The term "dreamings" implies that their own inflated imaginations led them to mistake the real for the unreal, or vice versa. They were deluded and blinded, and did not hesitate to engage in the basest sins of the flesh, including the assumption of authority outside their own rightful sphere of influence and service. The word "dominion" probably refers to angelic dignities. (Cf. Eph. 1: 21; Col. 1: 16; 2 Pet. 2: 10.) It is possible, of course, that the term includes high authority, both human and divine; but whatever may have been in the mind of Jude, the libertines, about whom he wrote, did not hesitate to refuse to recognize them, or reject them: for that is the meaning of "set at nought." The last word in verse 8—"dignities"—(glories, margin) probably refers to angels, that is, to "glorious angelic beings"; whom the ungodly

men of the text did not hesitate to blaspheme.

The heavenly Michael is set forth as an example of the kind of restraint, which should characterize the Lord's people. (Cf. Acts 1: 25.) Michael was one of the archangels (cf. Dan. 10: 13, 21; 12: 1; Rev. 12: 7), and was in God's favor, and doubtless knew the truth regarding both the devil and the body of Moses; but even at that he did not dare to pronounce a railing judgment against the evil one, but left the matter in the hands of God. There is no record as to when or where the dispute referred to took place. (Cf. Deut. 34: 6.)

Some Bible students have assumed that Jude was referring to some apocryphal writing, when he mentioned the dispute between Michael and the devil, but that is by no means a necessary conclusion, that is, if we are to regard Jude as an inspired writer. The apostle Paul, for example, put into his speeches and letters statements of fact, concerning which we have no further information regarding their origin. (See Acts 20: 35; 2 Tim. 3: 8; cf. Acts 7: 22.) Jannes and Jambres were probably some of the Egyptian magicians who sought to keep Pharaoh from listening to Moses and Aaron; but their names are nowhere mentioned in the Book of Exodus. (Cf. Ex. 7: 11, 22.)

There are many professed Christians today, who are not nearly as high in the councils of heaven as Michael was at the time Jude wrote, but who did not hesitate to bring railing judgments against their own brethren, who are much better than the devil. Such a practice does not meet with the Lord's approval; and we all should benefit by the example of the archangel now under consideration. (Read James 4: 11, 12; 2 Pet. 2: 10-12.) But when ungodly men turn the grace of God into lasciviousness (verse 4), it is only natural for them to disregard anything which is not to their way of thinking. Not only will they not listen to the warnings of godly teachers and fellow Christians; they even mock that which they consider the narrowness and want of enlightenment on the part of those who accept the word of God as being liter-

ally true, and who are in earnest about their obedience to it. Furthermore, if the false teachers make light of authority, and treat spiritual things with irreverence, if they foam out their own shame and utter proud and impious words, and if they deny both the Father and the Son, it will, of course, be natural for them to ridicule the idea of a judgment to come. Such a course is but the inevitable outcome of lustful living, both then and now.

The word "woe," as used in verse 11, is found frequently in the gospel records and in Revelation; but it occurs in the epistles only here and in 1 Corinthians 9: 16. It is an interjection, denoting pain or displeasure. The sins which Jude denounced in the closing part of this section of the lesson text, are illustrated by Cain, Balaam, and Korah. The way of Cain was the substitution of his own will and way, for the will and way of God; or, to say the same thing in another way, he was the father of religious rationalism. (Cf. Gen. 4: 1-8.) Balaam's sin is seen in his effort to seduce Israel, through Balak, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication, for his own personal gain, that is, so that he would gain the favor of Balak and receive his reward. (See Num. 22: 1-25; 18; Rev. 2: 14; 2 Pet. 2: 15.) The gain-saying of Korah was rebellion against divinely constituted authority. (See Num. 16: 1-50.)

Some one has observed, in speaking of Jude's denunciation of the sins of the libertines of his day, that "it is an impassioned invective, in which the writer heaps epithet on epithet, and image on image, and returns again and again to the licentious apostates against whom he warns the church, as though all language were insufficient to give an adequate idea of their profligacy, and of his own abhorrence of their perversion of the grace and doctrines of the gospel." It appears that these false teachers used whatever gifts, they may have had, for the purpose of self-aggrandizement, and endeavored to make their services attractive by excluding from religion all that is strenuous and difficult, thereby opening the door to every kind of indulgence.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

In what general setting of the New Testament is the Epistle of Jude found?
In what sense is it a "general" epistle?
What was the condition of the world at the time Jude wrote?
What light do some of the epistles of Paul throw on Jude's letter?

The Golden Text

Tell something of the name of the writer of the last of the New Testament epistles.
What other names are associated with the name of this writer?
In what way does he identify himself?
What James did he apparently have in mind? Give reasons for your answer.

The Occasion Which Prompted the Epistle
What had been engaging Jude's attention prior to the writing of this epistle?

What did he say prompted the writing of the letter which we have from him?
What is the meaning of the expression "I was constrained"?
What was it that brought Jude under this compulsion?

How does the time of Jude's writing compare with our day? Give reasons for your answer.

What "faith" does Jude exhort the Lord's people to contend for?

Why was it so urgent that this be done and is the same need present today?

How does one turn the grace of God into lasciviousness?

History's Warnings to the Ungodly

What three cases did Jude cite from the storehouse of history?

What are the facts regarding each of these three examples?

What lesson should we learn from them regarding the possibility of complete apostasy?

Why do so many religious people today contend that the Lord's people cannot be lost after their salvation has become a reality?

What is the strongest New Testament passage you can think of regarding this possibility?

The Arrogance of the Wicked

In what way is this section of the lesson text connected with the last one?

What effect did the Old Testament examples which Jude cited have on the people he was condemning?

What three specific charges did he bring against them?

Why was it possible for professed followers of Christ to be so wicked?

Who was "Michael" and for what purpose did Jude bring him before his readers?

What effect should his example have on us?

Where did Jude apparently get his information regarding Michael's dispute with the devil?

Why can professed followers of Christ say such hard things about their brethren?

What is suggested by the term "woe" in verse 11?

What three outstanding sinners did Jude cite at the close of the lesson text for today?